

Applicators hurt environment

Menstrual products can help reduce environmental problems

It was the thought of thousands of applicators swirling around in the ocean that finally made me use fewer tampons.

I first heard of this problem at a presentation of alternative menstrual products at the last Environmental Studies Conference in April. Although I had known about the products being discussed for quite some time, I was not aware that a large portion of all the garbage in the ocean is the packaging from tampons and other such items.

Think about it. The average woman goes through about 20 disposables per period, and that adds up to about 7,000 during a lifetime. Multiply that by how many millions of menstruating women there are in the world, and the sum goes into the trillions, according to the Web site for GladRags, a type of reusable pad.

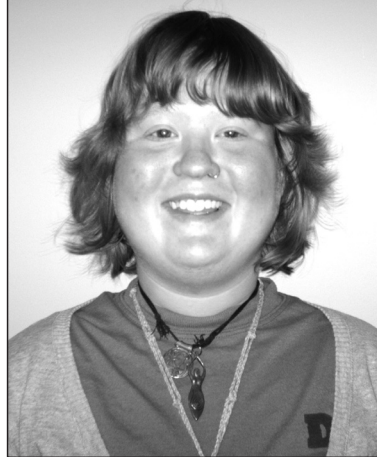
That's a lot of plastic going

into the trash, down the toilet and inevitably into the sewers and oceans. Speaking of which, in June, tampon applicators began to noticeably litter the shores of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The detritus was due to a sewage treatment plant that had to be closed down in May because its filters were being clogged with the applicators, among other items. The city has since released an ad campaign telling citizens not to flush plastic items down the toilet.

Tampons pollute in another way. Standard tampons and pads are made from bleached rayon and cotton. A by-product of the bleaching process is dioxin, a known carcinogen, and traces of dioxin have been found in tampons. Dioxin is harmful for both the environment and women's bodies — the substance has been linked to cancers of the reproductive organs. Many companies no longer use a bleaching process that produces dioxin, but it's always possible there are still a few that do.

Fortunately, there are options

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Chris Boning

for women who wish to save the environment — and some money — by way of their period. The first option is the Diva Cup, a small medical-grade silicone device that resembles a funnel with the bottom closed off. The cup collects menstrual flow when inserted into the vagina. The Diva Cup Web site suggests

replacing it after a year, but I know women who have kept theirs for years. It is silicone, after all — it's made to last. Menstrual cups have been around in some form since at least the 1930s, but it was only recently that companies started making them en masse again. Diva Cups are neat because they come with a storage pouch and a pin in the shape of the company's cheerful logo. The only items accompanying boxes of tampons are stark warnings about toxic shock syndrome. Similar in function to the Diva Cup are The Mooncup and The Keeper, the latter being made from latex, which is easier for some women to maneuver into place.

For those who prefer pads, there are GladRags, which are reusable pads made from colorful cotton that can be purchased in packs of one or three. I know of more intrepid women who have made their own GladRags, as it were. The concept is pretty simple, but figuring out how to attach the pad to underwear and how to make it absorbent can be

rather difficult.

Sea sponges also work as menstruation devices. One of the advantages to using a cup or sponge-like product is that it can be emptied. Menstrual blood is a great fertilizer for plants. Sponges are probably the most straightforward of the alternatives and the least expensive, although women should take care to buy sponges that have been harvested sustainably. For those who would like to try sponges but feel uncomfortable just bringing them home from the store, at least one company, Jade and Pearl, sells them in packs along with an instruction booklet.

The best part about all of these products is none of them are ever flushed down the toilet or made with dangerous chemicals, and some of them are even biodegradable. Using alternative menstrual products means no longer harming your body with harsh cotton tampons or contributing to the pollution of the ocean, and I think an ocean free of trash is something we could all appreciate.

COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES:

Jed condemns student 'sinners'

By MEGAN BURIK
Columnist

Brother Jed, I applaud and lambaste you.

One man stood on the quad this week, his only companions: the woman fruitlessly passing out flyers, the good Lord above and his vociferous words damning the deviant debauchery of devilish college students. The condemned students respond with varying interest levels. Some stop to form a circle around him, maybe jeering at him or baiting him with insults. Others look on with morbid curiosity, unable to look away, as though watching a lion pounce on a straggling gazelle on the Discovery Channel. Still others ignore him completely. You all know the man.

What compels Brother Jed to make a fool of himself in front of all of these young adults? Passion. What makes him think that his opinion is more righteous than any of the damned college students' opinions? Passion, maybe bridging on lunacy.

I'm going to take an unpopular stance on this Brother Jed phenomenon and temporarily defend the man and others of his kind who plague Truman like locusts. Then I'm going to offend them in due turn.

Congratulations, Brother Jed. You have found a calling. You live to spread the

Word to all of us unsaved children. I wish I could find something that I am passionate enough about to hit the road and set venues afire far and wide. But I have yet to stumble upon my personal burning bush and de-sandal myself in the face of the Almighty, receiving instructions on fulfilling my destiny. I have yet to find that driving purpose, and I might never find it.

I don't know if I ever will believe in something as much as Brother Jed believes in his version of Christianity, skewed from usual beliefs as it might be. I don't know if I ever will exploit my First Amendment rights with the gusto that Brother Jed does. A lot of us meander through life collecting opinions like loose change but never really stop to sort out what we actually believe. We never take a strong stance on any issue, fearing judgment and exclusion from peers. Or maybe we are just too lazy to self-analyze and form solid, defensible positions. Brother Jed has given up

such wastrel ways and found a driving purpose.

Yet I wonder, is it more comfortable to go to bed snuggled up with a solid black-and-white version of the world than with my constant gray companion?

Let's be honest. Living in a black-and-white world is probably isolating and boring.

Anchored by believing the hand of

"I'd be willing to bet my Quran that you drive more people away from Christianity than you draw in, and you shame your fellow Christians. Unleash your passion and become a little: that is to say, be compassionate."



God blesses his message, Brother Jed is unflinching in his beliefs. He denies any other way of interpreting the Good Book and insults those who might not adhere to it, but prefer something, oh, a little more Arabic. He keeps himself on an ideological island that refuses any highways bridging it to the mainland of sanity.

What a small way to view the world. If he cannot open himself up to other cultures or other beliefs, how can he possibly know that those ideals he holds eternally dear are truly the end-all-be-all? Obviously the Four Horses of the Apocalypse would come trampling down and bring about the end of the Earth if Brother Jed fluxed a bit in his views. What would happen if Brother Jed meditated on some non-Christian principles and realized that maybe there are other paths to righteousness that aren't paved with denouncing all earthly pleasures and following Christ?

Brother Jed, hear me out buddy. I've witnessed your houndstooth-jacket-clad shenanigans for the last three years on my campus and rolled my eyes a-plenty. You need to change your scare tactics. In a world where nuclear arms could be

taken up at any time, and we could all be obliterated in seconds, the youth are hard to intimidate. In a world where so many voices are yelling at us — including the media, our peers and our authorities — you just add a little to the white noise. I'd be willing to bet my Quran that you drive more people away from Christianity than you draw in, and you shame your fellow Christians. Unleash your passion and come a little: that is to say, be compassionate.

If you parade on campus with the true intention to touch hearts and minds, I think you'd give up shock therapy and genuinely converse with us instead of enduring student questions and insults simply to scream audacious things back. But if you actually relaxed the vocal chords, sustained eye contact and had real conversations with students, you could make a difference in people's lives. I'm sure you have great knowledge of the Bible. But great knowledge without empathy will get you nowhere, and students will stay on their supposed road to Hell. With the way you approach us now, you make us love both the sin and the sinner more.

Close friendships extend life

Close friends reflect social networks and physical appearance

Barney told us when we were little. Chandler, Joey and the rest of the gang made millions by reminding us every week. And the Beatles sang it to us for years: You gotta have love, you gotta have friends.

Look around at the new freshmen. You can pick them out on Friday evenings walking slightly lost from party to party in enormously large groups. You know them in class because they're the ones who talk to you once and immediately you're besties. They might as well have their name, hometown, major and dorm etched into their forehead for the number of times they've said it. It's OK, freshmen — we were all there once, whether we'll admit it or not. When everything and everyone is so new, we're bound to try to make ourselves as comfortable as we can by making social communities.

But what's wrong with that? People with a close network of friends supposedly live longer. Those people with close friends can better cope with stress. My friends serve as confidants of my deepest secrets, hopes and fears. They provide a social network

for me to go out with on the weekends, and it's a comfort to chill out with them after a long day. Friends make you happy.

But there's a catch. As a general rule, people kind of suck at knowing who is good for us when we try to make friends. Experts say you've only got about seven seconds to make a first impression before people form their opinion of you. Although it's hard to admit, human beings are incredibly lazy, shallow beings by nature. We pass judgments on people as a means of simplifying. How else could we possibly take in all that we learn about a person and make it significant and memorable?

We also look for people similar to someone we already like: Ourselves. And we know that friends are a status symbol. You only have to watch 10 minutes of "Mean Girls" to know that your own worth and value is indicated by the people you hang out with. So, in a situation of rash friendship-making, like the first week of college, a study abroad program or a summer camp, we're bound to be dummies and go for the most alluring people, passing judgments on them, all based on the most readily available information: What they look like. Psychologically, you're looking to be friends with people you

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Elizabeth Necka

think are physically attractive, whether they're men or women.

A recent study by Arizona State psychologist Doug Kenrick took a closer look at how people select those they want to form relationships with. Ten male subjects and 10 female subjects dressed identically, but each wore a different number on their head. They were randomly ranked from 10 to one, most to least attractive. Their goal was to match themselves up into pairs, trying to get a partner with the highest number possible. A male would offer a hand-

shake to a female (or vice versa) he'd like to "mate up" with and the female would accept or decline based on the guy's number and her guess as to her own number. After many men flocked to the 10, or many women declined the three, subjects began to become aware of their rank in this false reality. Remarkably, nearly all of the subjects paired up within one number of their own.

Though his study applied particularly to romantic mate selection, many studies suggest a nearly identical transaction occurs to a lesser degree in selection of friends. After all, your friends are pretty good reflections of you. It's in our best interest to have good-looking, wealthy, intelligent and kind friends because it helps our social image.

I recently got a new phone and decided I'd clean out the contacts I don't really talk to anymore. And there they were, by the dozen. Ryan Truman Week. Patty Truman Week. Sam Truman Week. Caught up in the Truman Week tizzy, with so many faces and activities, not to mention classes, I often missed catching people's last names. Thus, I would enter them in my phone this way, hoping that knowing when I met them would

spark the memory later of who the heck they were. Clearly, since I never got to know them well enough to enter their last names, they didn't end up being my closest friends. This isn't to discount all of my Truman Week friends, but most of them served their purpose as a social networking and support system when my world was rapidly changing, and I really needed one. I might have taken the easy way

out in selecting them as friends, but the ones I've made and maintained after that initial "must find friends" stage are much deeper.

Look, we're human. It's just in our nature that we're going to "judge the book by its cover." But the Joey-Chandler relationships are the ones that make you dig deeper and are immensely more gratifying. My friends probably do approximately match up with me in terms of attractiveness, but I'd like to think our sense of humor, our intellect and our agreeableness determine our social attractiveness more than our physical looks.

And if your friends are still objectively pretty hot, then hey, lucky for you, looks like you probably are, too.

"Experts say you've only got about seven seconds to make a first impression before people form their opinion of you."