Over the past few decades, I have accumulated many hilarious, heart-warming and mortifying stories that feature my period as the main character. Pretending to be sick so I could sit out of gym class for fear that my pad would fall out right in the middle of dodgeball. That time when I was first starting out with tampons and I had absent-mindedly put another one in before removing the previous one. Or that one time I unexpectedly got my period while camping with my friends as a teenager and I was too embarrassed to say anything, so I just used wadded-up toilet paper for the entire trip, not realizing that we would then run out of toilet paper, causing the boys on the trip to ask pointed questions about where all of the TP went.

But now that I'm 45 and am currently in the early stages of perimenopause, having a regular period has become a hit-or-miss event. While part of me is grateful that my "transition" has begun, it's really hard to have an unpredictable period at this point in my life. I'm usually too preoccupied with my kids, my job, etc. to even notice whether or not it's "that time of the month."

Add to this that I recently became a single woman again for the first time in a long time. I have two beautiful children and did not want more. Dating at this age comes with its own set of nightmarish obstacles, and having a surprise period at inconvenient times is only one of them. But it's a big one.

When I recently started seeing someone special and we both felt ready for intimacy, we talked about it first. This was open and healthy and awesome. But I didn't realize how underprepared I might be to have this conversation. Before I knew it, I was rambling on and on about how I haven't been on birth control for so many years that I really haven't kept up with the newest methods or products. I went on to explain that even if I did decide to commit to one specific form of birth control, I don't think I want to go back on it because it may mess with my hormones and my now-somewhat-irregular periods seeing as how I am now in perimenopause.

My new partner's head was spinning. This was all great stuff to talk about, but maybe I should have thought it through a bit before that conversation. We moved forward using a method of birth control that would not add fuel to my hormonal fire; we used condoms.

But I had forgotten how cumbersome condoms can be, especially at our age. It was awkward and reminded me of the sexual encounters of my younger days, where the biggest fear with having unprotected sex was getting pregnant. While that was still a concern, my biggest fear now was getting an STD from someone as a 45-year-old mother who really doesn't have the time or desire to deal with a totally preventable medical issue, like getting an STD.

The first time we tried to be intimate, we fumbled with the condom, but kept our sense of humor and laughed a lot through the awkwardness. A few minutes into the sex, I realized that I had gotten my period. For the first time in three months. He was so surprised by this, as was I. In fact, I was so shocked and embarrassed that I ended the moment right there. Getting my period before this well-thought-out sexual encounter never even occurred to me. It wasn't part of the plan.

We dated for a bit longer before going our separate ways, not as a result of that humiliating night (I hope - although you never know!). We simply didn't have enough in common to go the distance. But I learned so much through that experience. It brought forth a lot of awareness about myself and my body in this new stage in life. It reminded me that in the near future, I will go through menopause and everything that that entails. I'm not sure how much longer I'll have a period, but I do know that it's going to be an unpredictable ride from here on out. And I'm OK with that.