You may use Gigi as my name! I am 45.

I grew up playing with the boys in rural Minnesota. I was outside from sun up to sun down every day. It was a story book life of freedom to be who I wanted to be. That is, until I turned 13, and got my period. Little did I know that it would change my life. The first two cycles were fine, no big deal, but that was about to change.

Every cycle after that was an absolute nightmare. I had pain so bad for the first three days that I would pray to get my cycle on a weekend. Back in the 90s, there wasn't a lot of pain management options, so aspirin was the option. Well, what does aspirin do? It makes you bleed more! I've had so many embarrassing episodes, I cannot even count. I had to leave school for either the pain or excessive bleeding. The feminine products at the time were not sufficient for the blood output my body was producing (the aspirin being a huge contributor).

As time went on, the period products got better (but much more expensive), and Advil liquid gels became my saving grace. I popped those babies every four hours to be able to function (not at all good for the kidneys). The Advil at least gave me a "chance" to be present those first three days of my cycle. However, I still missed out on many events in life due to the pain. I have estimated I have suffered 3 years of my life.

Two years ago, I had a horrible incident on my cycle. I literally collapsed on my bathroom floor from the pain and the fatigue. I was shaking, sweating, chilled, I had no clue what was going on! I was certain that I was going to have to call an ambulance. I picked myself up off that bathroom floor and wrapped myself in blankets on my bed, unsure if it would pass. After about two hours, I finally felt "ok", but that was not something I wanted to go through again.

I had my yearly OBGYN appointment in two months. My OB is amazing, she had been talking to me about my options for the past 4 years or so. And every time, I said, "No, I'm fine." Really, I wasn't fine. I had PTSD from my childhood, my mother telling me to "suck it up" "tough it out", and other similar phrases. So, I never pursued any medical options prior to 2023.

After the bathroom floor incident, I said "no more". I discussed my options with my OB and decided to meet with a surgeon. The surgeon explained the procedure (DaVinci robot) which she would use to remove my uterus and cervix. I decided to move forward, as there was no reason not to do this surgery, if it meant a better quality of life!

I was supposed to get the surgery in December of 2023, however, the surgeon left and my date had to be moved. So, I met with a new surgeon and set a new date. A Thursday in April, 4/4/24, changed my life! The surgery was so smooth, and my uterus (who I had been calling Ursula - you know, as in the sea witch) was removed from my body.

The recovery was quick and smooth, not one iota of pain. I think the years of suffering had primed me for anything! I sent the surgeon a thank you note and waited for my post-op appointment.

I was back 6 weeks later to discuss my healing and to laugh a bit with the surgeon. She showed me the photos of my uterus and the fibroid that was the same size as my uterus! When a surgeon says, "I've never seen that before", and it's no wonder I was in pain. I also wondered why I waited so long to take care of my women's health issue. The surgeon then showed me the endometriosis that is on my intestines. She was unable to remove that due to potential perforation (the endometriosis still impacts me today and will continue to impact me). We both got a little teary-eyed talking about things and she left me with a clean bill of health.

My life has changed. I no longer experience long bouts of pain, fatigue, and period stress. I'm finally free again, free to live my life, thanks to science and sympathetic women's health providers.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story!