Could You? Cup
And The Adventures With Alima

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Hi, I'm Alima! This is my family and I live with my mom, dad, sister and 2 brothers.

I'm 12 years old. I like going to school and my favorite subject is reading.

Good job, Alima.
WHEN I'M NOT IN SCHOOL, I LIKE TO HANG OUT WITH MY BEST FRIEND SALIMA.

WE LIKE TO DANCE AND HELP MOM SELL VEGETABLES.
UGH, MY STOMACH REALLY HURTS.

MOM, I'M NOT FEELING WELL.

SORRY, LINDEZA, YOU STILL HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL. IT'S IMPORTANT.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?!?! WHY AM I BLEEDING?!?!
I THINK I'M BLEEDING!

WHERE ARE YOU BLEEDING, LINDEZA?

MOM...

MOM... SOMETHING'S WRONG, I THINK I'M BLEEDING!
OH...

WHAT IS HAPPENING? AM I GOING TO DIE?

NOTHING IS WRONG, LINDEZA, THIS IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS TO EVERY YOUNG GIRL,

IT MEANS YOU ARE A WOMAN NOW. IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN EVERY MONTH FROM NOW ON. IT'S CALLED A PERIOD.

USE THESE, I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN GET AT THE STORE.

DO I HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL?

YES, ALIMA IT'S IMPORTANT TO GO TO SCHOOL,

I DON'T WANT YOU FALLING BEHIND.
HOW ARE WE GOING TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD THIS?

I WONDER IF ANYONE CAN TELL I'M WEARING RAGS?
IT’LL BE FINE, ALIMA.

YOU SHOULD START WALKING TO SCHOOL OR YOU’LL BE LATE.

HERE, TAKE YOUR BROTHER.
I DON’T KNOW WHAT I’M GOING TO TELL ALIMA.
IT WILL BE HARD TO BUY THIS EVERY MONTH.

LEO, I HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.
ALIMA GOT HER PERIOD TODAY.

YES, I MADE HER GO, BUT SHE WAS NOT HAPPY.

I GAVE HER RAGS, CHECKED THE STORE FOR PADS BUT WE JUST CAN’T AFFORD THEM.

I DON’T WANT HER QUITTING SCHOOL LIKE HER SISTER, SHE’S SO BRIGHT.

I KNOW. SHE HAS TO KEEP GOING, WE CAN’T LET HER QUIT. WE’LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.

HOW IS SHE? SHE WENT TO SCHOOL, RIGHT?
I HOPE NO ONE NOTICES I'M BLEEDING.

4x SQUARED EQUALS 16. WHAT DOES x EQUAL?

WHAT?

ALIMA.

4x SQUARED EQUALS 16.

WHAT DOES x EQUAL?

... EQUALS... FOUR.

SORRY, THAT'S... INCORRECT.

BUT SHE ALWAYS GETS THE RIGHT ANSWERS.

LELE, CAN YOU ANSWER?

... EQUALS... TWO. YES, THAT IS CORRECT.
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU ALWAYS GET THE RIGHT ANSWER.

BUT TODAY YOU ARE SO QUIET.

YEAH, SALIMA, IT'S JUST THAT I STARTED MY PERIOD THIS MORNING.

I STARTED MINE A FEW MONTHS AGO.

I USUALLY STAY HOME WHEN I HAVE IT. IT'S EASIER.

YEAH, I KNOW. IT'S HARD TO CATCH UP WITH SCHOOL WORK.

BUT I LOVE SCHOOL, I DON'T WANT TO MISS ANYTHING.

I FEEL LIKE EVERYONE IS STARING AT ME.

IF I COULD, I WOULDN'T COME TO SCHOOL EVEN IF I WERE OFF MY PERIOD.
CLASS, IT’S TIME FOR BREAK!!!

ALIMA, THERE’S BLOOD ON YOUR SKIRT.
YOU OK?! TAKE MY SHAWL AND COVER YOUR SKIRT.

THANK YOU, I JUST WANT TO GO HOME.

THIS IS WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST STAYED AT HOME.

I WILL DEFINITELY STAY TOMORROW.

I'LL GET YOUR BROTHER TO WALK YOU HOME.
YOU HAVE A DISEASE! SOMETHING IS WRONG WITH YOU!

EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT HOW YOU HAD BLOOD ON YOU!

SHUT UP, BENNY! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

BENNY, WE NEED TO TALK. ALIMA TOLD ME YOU WERE...

...MAKING FUN OF HER TODAY, YOU TOLD HER SHE HAS A DISEASE.

BENNY, QUIT BEING A TROUBLEMAKER, ESPECIALLY TO YOUR SISTER.

WELL, SHE WAS BLEEDING THROUGH HER SKIRT! THAT'S DISGUSTING!
BENNY, THAT'S NOT OK. THIS HAPPENS EVERY MONTH TO GIRLS.

IT'S NOT A DISEASE, IT'S CALLED A PERIOD.

IT'S A PART OF GROWING UP AND BECOMING A WOMAN.

IT CAN BE PAINFUL OR UNCOMFORTABLE, AND SOMETHING YOU SHOULD BE SYMPATHETIC ABOUT. WE STILL WANT YOUR SISTER TO GO TO SCHOOL...

DAD! I WAS ONLY JOKING!
BUT I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL TOMORROW!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO TOMORROW.

I EXPECT YOU TO TREAT WOMEN WITH RESPECT. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOU DOING THIS AGAIN. TELL YOUR SISTER YOU'RE SORRY.

OKAY...I'M SORRY, LIMA. I DIDN'T KNOW.

THANKS, BENNY.

FROM THEN ON OUT, ALIMA MISSES SCHOOL A FEW DAYS A MONTH DURING HER PERIOD. SHE STRUGGLES TO KEEP UP AND MAKE UP THE WORK SHE MISSED...
I can't figure this out, I missed that class where she explained it.

Alima, where's Monday's work?

Sorry, I had so many other things to do I forgot about it.

School isn't working anymore, I should help my parents on the farm.

I miss being in school and with my friends.

Over a year passes... It is Christmas
I'VE MISSED YOU.

HEY COUSIN! HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

I'VE MISSED YOU.

I'M GOOD. I'VE JUST BEEN HELPING MOM SELL VEGETABLES.

THAT'S GREAT. SCHOOLS REALLY GOOD.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? HOW'S SCHOOL?

COLEGE IS CHALLENGING BUT I LOVE IT.

HOW'S SCHOOL GOING FOR YOU?

I STOPPED GOING ABOUT A YEAR AGO, WHEN I GOT MY PERIOD.

I WASN'T COMFORTABLE GOING WITH RAGS. I QUIT WHEN I GOT REALLY BEHIND ON MY SCHOOLWORK.

I'M SO SORRY, ALIMA, BUT I HAVE THE SOLUTION!

WHAT'S THAT?
EMPOWERED GIRLS AROUND THE WORLD CHOOSE THE MENSTRUAL CUP.

IT'S CALLED THE COULDYOU? CUP AND IT IS REUSABLE!

GIRLS! COME JOIN US AND HELP US COOK!

COMING!
MOM, CAN I GO WITH MAIMUNA BACK TO MONROVIA AND STAY WITH THEM FOR A FEW DAYS?

SURE, LINDEZA, BUT FOR A FEW DAYS ONLY.

IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE I'VE BEEN TO THE CITY.

THANKS, MOM!

OKAY, IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL YOU GIRLS ARE GOING TO DO?

MAIMUNA WANTS TO SHOW ME THIS COULDYOU? CUP THING.

THE COULDN'T YOU? CUP? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT.

WELL, I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT WHEN I GET BACK.

I'M GOING TO GO PACK SOME CLOTHES.
C'MON ALIMA, THEY'LL ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS, DON'T BE SHY.
Hi girls! How are you both?

How can I help you?

My name is Maimuna and she is Alima.

Very nice to meet you girls! Let me get the cup and I'll show it to you.

So this is the couldyou? Cup. It is completely safe to use because it is made from medical grade silicon. You won't get sick from it like you would from rags.

And it eliminates the risk of toxic shock syndrome from tampons.

But I don't understand... how do you use it?
WELL, FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANTLY IS TO WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE YOU INSERT IT.

THE MOST COMMON WAY TO FOLD IS CALLED THE "C" FOLD, YOU FOLD IT IN THE MIDDLE USING YOUR FINGER SO THAT IT LOOKS LIKE A C.

TO INSERT IT YOU CAN EITHER PUT ONE LEG UP OR SQUAT AND PUT IT IN.

TO TAKE IT OUT JUST PULL ON THE TAIL OF THE CUP, YOU WILL HEAR A SUCTION NOISE AND IT WILL COME OUT.

OKAY, SOUNDS A LITTLE BIT SCARY STILL BECAUSE IT SEEMS SO BIG.

ONCE YOUR PERIOD IS DONE YOU NEED TO BOIL IT FOR 5 MINUTES.

LET IT DRY AND PUT IT IN ITS BAG SO IT IS CLEAN AND READY TO USE FOR THE NEXT TIME!

I KNOW! I'VE TALKED TO A LOT OF GIRLS AND THEY ALL SAY THE SAME THING

BUT AFTER THEY USE IT A FEW TIMES MOST OF THEM DON'T EVER WANT TO USE SOMETHING ELSE.

WHAT IF I CAN'T FIND THE TAIL?

THE CUP WON'T GET LOST OR STUCK IN ME?
I promise it won't. If you can't feel the tail right away just reach in a little further. Scientifically it cannot get lost.

Okay, ummm... Will I still be a virgin if I use it?

Yes, you will still be a virgin.

Inserting a menstrual cup is not sex. You lose your virginity after you have had sex with a male. So the menstrual cup is different.

Okay, I understand.

Would you like to try it?

Yes, but I need to talk to my parents about it first.

Okay sweetie, that's fine. I'm going to give you this brochure and comic book.

It will answer any other questions you might have.
WHAT DID YOU THINK?

I WANT TO TRY IT! WHEN I GET BACK I CAN TELL MY PARENTS ABOUT IT TO SEE IF WE CAN AFFORD IT.

HI ASSIA, IT IS SO NICE TO SEE YOU HERE IT HAS BEEN AWHILE.

YEAH, I KNOW I'VE BEEN BUSY LATELY WITH THE FARM AND I'VE BEEN SENDING ALIMA HERE, SINCE SHE IS NO LONGER GOING TO SCHOOL.

WHY IS THAT?

WHEN SHE STARTED HER PERIOD AND WE Couldn'T AFFORD MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS SHE JUST STOPPED GOING.

OH NO! I'M SO SORRY, BUT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW.

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE COULDYOU? CUP?
ALIMA MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT IT AT CHRISTMAS.

YOU’LL LET YOUR DAUGHTER USE IT WHEN SHE GETS HER PERIOD?

ABSOLUTELY! ASSIA, I GIVE YOU MY WORD, I LOVE THIS PRODUCT.

I WISH WE HAD IT WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP.

I TRUST HIDAYAH. I THINK WE SHOULD GET THE CUP.

IF WE SACRIFICE A LITTLE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS I KNOW WE WILL HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY IT.

WITH THE COULDYOU? CUP WE WON'T HAVE TO BUY ANOTHER PRODUCT FOR AT LEAST 10 YEARS.

AND AFTER THAT...

I'M GOING SAVE UP SO YOU CAN GET ONE AS WELL.
THANKS! THESE ARE MY FAVORITE.

MINE TOO! SO HOW’S IT BEEN SINCE YOU HAVEN’T BEEN AT SCHOOL?

HELPING OUT AT HOME HAS HELPED MY PARENTS AND SPENDING TIME WITH THEM HAS BEEN NICE, BUT I REALLY MISS SCHOOL AND BEING WITH MY FRIENDS.
I'm sorry, but now with the cup you can go back to school and continue learning and then eventually even go to the same university as me!

Yeah! I have a lot of catching up to do, though.

Yeah but it'll totally be worth it! It's never too late to go back to school and now you don't have an excuse, Lima.

Yeah, you're right. How are your classes?

Great! Not going to lie, they're harder than last year.
STUDYING ENGINEERING IS HARDER THAN I THOUGHT BUT I LIKE IT.

WAY MORE READING WHICH MAYBE YOU’D LIKE, SINCE I KNOW YOU WERE BORN TO READ!

WELL, I’M SO GLAD YOU’RE LIKING IT! THE WHOLE FAMILY IS SO PROUD OF YOU!

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WANT TO BE?

I DON’T KNOW, I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT, ESPECIALLY SINCE I STOPPED GOING TO SCHOOL.
WELL, YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT IT!

HMMM... 

WHAT ABOUT A DOCTOR OR A TEACHER?

TEACHERS ALWAYS READ.

I LIKE THAT!

I COULD BE A TEACHER.

KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT

BUT I THINK YOU'D BE A GREAT TEACHER.

YEAH, MAYBE! HEY, SHOULDN'T WE BE GOING TO GET MY STUFF FROM YOUR HOUSE

SO I DON'T MISS THE TRAIN BACK?

OH, YEAH! LET'S GO.
HEY, MOM!

HI, LINDEZA!

HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?

IT WAS GREAT!
I'm glad Lindeza! I ran into Hidayah yesterday, she's been using the could you? cup and loves it!

Your father and I are going to save a few months so we can buy you one.

She said we can get it at the clinic on the next town whenever we are ready.

And this Saturday we can go to a workshop there to learn all about it.

3 months pass...

It must be my period. But how am I ever supposed to use the cup? It's scary and big.

It seems so big. What if I can't get it in? Or out?

I think maybe I need the bigger size. Cause it leaked a bit today.
6 MONTHS LATER...

NO...THE BIGGER SIZE IS FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE HAD A BABY.

IT LEAKED CAUSE YOU DIDN'T PUT IT IN ALL THE WAY.

GO HOME AND TAKE IT OUT... AND TRY AGAIN.

ONCE YOU HAVE IT IN, TIGHTEN UP LIKE YOU'RE HOLDING YOUR PEE, SEE IF THAT HELPS.

I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER FIGURE IT OUT!

OF COURSE YOU WILL. I PROMISE YOU. IT TOOK ME TWO FULL CYCLES TO FIGURE IT OUT 100%.

AND REMEMBER HOW THE WOMAN IN THE VIDEO TOOK 3 FULL CYCLES.

I PROMISE YOU... STICK WITH IT. IT WILL BE WORTH IT!

6 MONTHS LATER...
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU SEEM EVEN HAPPIER THAN NORMAL!

I JUST LOVE THAT I'M BACK IN SCHOOL. I LOVE THAT I'M DANCING WHILE ON MY PERIOD AND THAT TIME OF MONTH IS NO BIG DEAL ANYMORE!

THEIR VIDEO WAS RIGHT, I LOVE BEING ONE OF THE MOST EMPOWERED WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD WHO ARE CHOOSING THE MENSTRUAL CUP.

THANKS, SALIMA! BUT WHO KNOWS, ONE DAY I MIGHT BE A HEAD MASTER OF A SCHOOL OR A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR. I HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHASE MY DREAMS AND BE ANYTHING I WANT!

THAT'S GREAT! SOME DAY YOU'LL MAKE A GREAT TEACHER.
Congratulations!
You are joining a new generation of empowered women around the world who are choosing the menstrual cup!

Your monthly period does not have to be a source of discomfort or shame. With good care of the cup, you'll be able to use it for 10 years or longer.

Walk, run, dance free!

How to Insert

1. Make sure your hands are clean. Wash hands with soap and water. If there is no sink nearby, you can also rinse with drinking water.

If it’s your first day and you are taking it out of the storage bag, rinse out cup with clean water.

2. Get into a comfortable position. (sit, squat, kneel or stand with one leg up)

3. Fold the cup in one of these ways:

   - C-Fold
   - Punch Down
   - Seven Fold

4. Once folded, guide the cup into vagina with the opening pointed up towards your back.

5. Wash hands with soap and water when you’re finished.

How to Remove and Empty Cup Between Uses

The cup can remain in your body for up to 12 hours - if you bleed heavier you might need to empty it more frequently. You won’t need water.

With clean hands, simply pull down on the “tail” of the cup. You will hear a little suction noise as it comes out.

If you are near a sink, you can rinse out cup and re-insert. 
**DO NOT use soap.**

If you are WITHOUT WATER, no problem… simply take out the cup, dump it, and put it back in. The cup is made from a very safe material, which does not let bacteria grow. There is no need to wash your CouldYou? cup each time you empty it as the vagina has its own self-cleansing system. **Only rinse it if you have clean water. Do not use soap to clean your cup because it will cause irritation inside your vagina.**

Wash hands with soap and water when you’re finished.

How to Clean and Store

Once your period is over, simply take the cup and submerge it in boiling water for 5-7 minutes. Do not let the water boil dry, as the pan will burn the cup.

Remove it from the water and it will dry instantly.

Place the cup in the cotton storage bag (which allows it to breathe) and keep it there until you need it next month.

**Warning:** Do not store in a plastic bag where mold or mildew can form. Do not leave your cup out where bugs, rodents, or other things could contaminate it. Keep it in a safe place where no one can take it from you.
Frequently Asked Questions

How long can I wear the cup?
Up to 12 hours.

Will I still be a virgin if I use the cup?
YES! Virgins may absolutely use the cup. Girls are virgins until they have sex.

Will the cup affect my hymen?
The hymen is a thin membrane at the entrance of the vagina. When a girl reaches puberty the hymen becomes more elastic. It is safe to use the CouldYou? cup for girls whose hymen is still intact as the hymen has spaces that allow menstrual blood to flow through. The hymen can be broken in childhood, from a fall, while playing sports or activities, and with sexual intercourse. A broken hymen does not mean a girl is no longer a virgin; a girl stops being a virgin when she has sex.

Can I use it in a latrine? What if there are no sinks near me?
No problem! Empty the cup carefully in the latrine, taking care not to drop it on the floor, then immediately reinsert. It is safe to reinsert without washing and reduces the risk of dropping it or getting it dirty. Wash your hands after reinserting.

What do I do if I drop my cup?
If the cup falls on a clean surface, it can be rinsed with clean water and reinserted. If it falls onto a dirty floor or latrine it must not be used again until it has been boiled to kill any bacteria.

What if the long tail of the cup is uncomfortable?
The CouldYou? cups are made with a long tail to make it easier to remove. If it is uncomfortable or sticking out too much, you can cut the tail using scissors or a knife. Cut only a little bit to see if this makes it more comfortable to wear, but long enough to pull out the cup.

I have really heavy periods, can the cup handle this?
Yes. The cup can collect up to three times more menstrual blood than sanitary pads and 5 times as much as tampons. During the first months of use, empty the cup every three to four hours to get familiar with your flow. Leaking can occur if you have a heavy period so you might need to empty it more frequently. With continued use, you will get to know your body and how often you need to empty the cup.

Is it ok to use the cup with a light flow?
Yes. The cup is perfect for light flow, as it collects without drying the vaginal walls. This means that removal will be less frequent than during the heavy days of your period. It is safe to keep the menstrual cup in for up to 12 hours.

Is it safe to wear the cup at night?
Yes. The cup is safe to wear at night. Make sure it is empty before going to bed and then empty it when you wake up.

Can the cup cause vaginal infections?
No. The vagina has protective secretions that maintain the correct balance (Ph) and also help prevent infections. Cups do not absorb these secretions, so the vagina remains healthy during your periods. Using soap on the cup can upset the Ph balance of your vagina, so use only water.

What is toxic shock syndrome (TSS)?
When sanitary tampons have been left inside the vagina too long, a very small number of females became ill with TSS. This illness causes high fever, flu-like symptoms, dizziness, and can rapidly lead to severe illness, coma, and sometimes death. Toxic shock has not been reported with cups alone but has occurred with an intra-uterine device (IUD) for birth control, so do not use together. If you have suffered from TSS previously, it is recommended not to use any internal form of sanitary protection, including the cup.

Do I need to remove the cup before doing other things?
The cup stays inside when you urinate or defecate; as urine and feces come from different openings. The cup stays inside when you play sports or swim. If a girl wants to have sex, she must remove the cup first. The cup will not protect against pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection.

Do not use an IUD (Intra-uterine device for birth control) when using the cup.

Can the cup get lost inside me?
No, the cup can NOT get lost! You can use your own vaginal muscles to help lower the CouldYou? cup. Make small downward pushes with your vaginal muscles until the cup shifts and you can reach it. Relax, take your time, and your vaginal muscles will relax making it easier to remove.

What else should I watch out for?
An allergy to the material that is used to make cups (silicone) is very rare. If you experience pain, burning, irritation, inflammation in the genital area, or discomfort during urination, remove the cup and contact a healthcare professional immediately.

Remember!
• It takes a little while to get used to using your cup. It may take 3 cycles to master it, so don’t give up too soon!
• Always wash your hands before and after emptying the cup
• Stop using the cup and contact a nurse or doctor if you experience general pain, burning, irritation or inflammation in the genital area or discomfort during urination
• Never share your cup with another person
• You should not leave your cup inside your vagina after your period ends
• The cup does not protect against pregnancy
• The cup does not protect against sexually transmitted infections

For a video on how to insert the CouldYou? cup go to www.couldyou.org
A Lima is a young girl in rural Liberia. We meet her as she has gotten her period for the first time and doesn’t know what to do. Her family can’t afford monthly products and the rags her mother made keep distracting her at school leading her to drop out. One day her cousin from Monrovia tells her of this new product - a menstrual cup - that has changed her life. What could it be? How does it work? Can her family afford it? Will she try it out? Find out in Adventures with Alima and follow her story in discovering a new way to become an empowered woman!