

Menopause: A Hot Topic

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Now I lay me down to sleep: Sleep Issues and Menopause

Disrupted Sleep

- Early waking due to hot flashes or NOT

Fatigue

- Resulting from lack of sleep
If you are tired this can lead to lack of clarity in thinking.
- Impact on thinking and problem-solving
If you are tired your ability to problem-solve suffers because you cannot think straight.
Therefore, you may also have a hard time making decisions.
- How it affects mood and feelings
You might feel robotic, just trying to make it through your day.
You might feel irritable and impatient.
This can lead to having a short fuse with the people around you.
- How it can increase the risk of obesity
I recently read a study that suggested that obesity levels are higher in people who are chronically tired. Why is this?

When we are tired we may mistake the body's fatigue signal as hunger, so we may eat when not hungry.

We also risk making poor food choices, or grab whatever is easiest to make and eat, such as higher calorie fast food.

Or we may be too tired to eat and skip a meal, making up for it next time with more calories and fat.

Also our stress levels may be higher due to fatigue and mood swings, and stress produces a hormone in the body called cortisol.

High levels of stress can lead to high levels of cortisol and this may cause us to gain weight around the middle.

It can be a cycle at that because when we are tired and stressed, we need to exercise yet we may feel too tired to move, let alone exercise.

Memory and Concentration Difficulty

- Due to changing hormones
We know the effects of hormone levels on our concentration and memory, well menopause can impact this with fluctuating hormone levels.
- Due to fatigue
It is also difficult to remember simple things and concentrate when you are tired.

(Give example of driving in wrong lane and having no clue why police officer stopped me.)

Mood Swings and Mood Disorders

- Due to hormone changes
Again, during PMS, our moods can change due to hormone levels...this can be amplified during premenopause or menopause.
- Due to fatigue – if I am tired, I am more emotional
When you are tired you may feel more emotional.
Problems seem bigger and more difficult to overcome when you feel tired.
- Questioning self: Am I losing it here?
The fatigue, the stress, the difficulty concentrating and the mood swings are enough to make us ask that question!

Self-Renewal : A time for reflection and change

Perimenopause and menopause are not a time of death and loss of our reproductive years. Instead, we can see it as a chance for us to renew the self!

Dr. Christiane Northrup of *The Wisdom of Menopause*, talks about perimenopause and menopause as a time for renewal in a woman's life.

During peri-menopause and menopause, a woman may...

- Be doing internal housekeeping
She may be doing internal housekeeping the same way she did during pre-menstrual syndrome, but on a larger scale!
- Ask herself important life questions
This can and does coincide with what many call mid-life crisis.
A question she may be asking herself is: Do I want to spend the next half of my life doing what I have been doing in the first half of my life?
Women are living longer, so this is indeed the next half of your life!
The answer may be NO
This can include relationship, career, hobbies or leisure time or to explore a side of herself never before considered.
- Want to make life changes
The perimenopausal or menopausal woman may be looking to make significant life changes.
Some women have shared with me how menopause was a PAUSE from MEN. Ironically this was a time in their lives when they questioned their couple relationship and decided to make a change, even divorcing.
Others have told me how they decided to go back to school or start a business.
- Turn from caretaking of others (children, partner, aging relatives)...to self care
Face it, women are caretakers.

As part of this internal housekeeping, we may now want to go inside and take care of the self.

- Experience many mixed feelings (i.e., guilt) and ironic circumstances, ex. rebellion

Perimenopause and menopause can also be a time filled with ironies and contradictions.

You may feel that you are rebelling at a time when your teenage children are going through their rebellious years.

Or you may want to leave your home at a time when you are experiencing or about to experience the empty nest.

Or just experiencing the empty nest at this point, leads to all kinds of strong feelings around loss.

This is also complicated today by the fact that women are having children at an older age, sometimes going into menopause while dealing with very young, and unreasonable children.

And she may be doing all this while coping with the many physical changes in her body!

The psychic journey is different and looks different in each woman. There are no rules here!

Strategies for Coping...

How to cope...

- See the glass as half full! (Show half glass of water)
- Take care of the self!
Put yourself first. It is time for YOU.
You will be better for those around you if you put yourself first.
Learn to say `no`.
- Nap when you are tired.
- Speak to your health care provider about ways to minimize the stress (ex.: antidepressants).
- Know the importance of diet and exercise.
- Keep a journal.

Resource:

The Wisdom of Menopause: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing During the Change (2001), Dr. Christiane Northrup, M.D.