

Some Positive Reflections on the Menopause

XenoVida behavioural coach Amanda White shares some thoughts on reframing our perspectives of the menopause.



In the past, very little was communicated about the menopause, with many women feeling that it was something to hide, or at least to suffer in silence.

More recently there has been greater focus on bringing the menopause (which after all affects all women sooner or later) into the open. This has had the positive effect of increasing communication, improving understanding and erasing taboos. Most comment has, however, tended towards the negative. There are, of course, unpleasant aspects to consider, from hot flushes, palpitations, mood swings, low libido, insomnia to brain fog and loss of concentration – the list seems long and disheartening.

This article is not to belittle the suffering that many women go through, nor to discourage discussion about how to handle the problems we can face during this important period of our lives. Its intention is to encourage us not to fear this time of change, but to reframe it from a new perspective. Times of significant change can be exciting and productive as well as daunting. Perhaps it's a bit like going through adolescence but with a lot more experience and resources! More than half of women sail through relatively easily and for those of us who don't, support is available and there are choices to be made. The important



thing is to consider the options available and evaluate which may suit us best, while also seeing the bigger picture and looking beyond this change to the next phase of our lives.

Firstly, this is a good time to focus on our general health – stopping smoking if necessary, maintaining a healthy weight, taking exercise and eating well. For many women this is an opportunity to focus on ourselves, having spent a significant part of our adult life focusing on others. We may still be supporting adult children or elderly parents – this is a time to remember that we can take better care of them if we are healthy and happy in ourselves. Then there is research to be done about which remedies might work best for our individual symptoms. We may turn to medicine and Hormone Replacement Therapy, or we may choose herbal remedies like evening primrose oil, black cohosh or ginseng. Stress reducing practices like mindfulness, meditation and yoga, or therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy have proved successful ways for many of us to ease our way through this time of change. Emotional support is also particularly valuable – especially support from other women going through similar experiences. Social ties, living in the moment, laughter and giving and receiving support have all been found to be valuable ways of boosting our immune system, enhancing learning and memory and coping with stress.

And let's not forget that there are certain freedoms that come with the menopause. No longer having to worry about our monthly cycles, especially if we have suffered from premenstrual tension or pain, can provide real freedom. No longer being concerned about contraception or unwanted pregnancy can lead to a more relaxed and fulfilling sex life. Our value to our families, friends, employers and wider society does not diminish with our reproductive ability. Maybe we want to develop new interests, hobbies, interact with different people, travel to new destinations and find new experiences to stimulate our bodies and minds. This can be a useful time to evaluate our present situation and design our future.

Now we have some valuable life experience behind us, this can be a time for personal growth and greater freedom. If we are finding this period of change challenging, we can remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel and, by giving ourselves the consideration we would automatically provide to a friend or family member, we can make the right choices for us, reframing this as a time of change and renewal, time to really think about what we want to achieve, to take control and make it happen.



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