

Navigating menopause together



Relatively few women talk openly about menopause with their partners, family, friends or coworkers. Many women report never talking about menopause with their doctor or healthcare provider either – expecting that a clinician should be the one to bring it up.

Some women totally deny the impact menopause has on their quality of life. Others view menopause as a weakness, a shameful secret to be kept from others. In the workplace, women feel embarrassed in front of coworkers when they lose their “train of thought” during a menopause moment. Partners may misinterpret menopause symptoms, such as headaches or vaginal dryness, as rejection or lack of interest in sex. Children can also have difficulty understanding changes such as mood swings and forgetfulness in their mother or other women who are experiencing menopause.¹



World Menopause Day is October 18³

World Menopause Day is held every year on the 18th of October. The purpose of the day is to raise awareness, break the stigma and share support available for improving health and well-being for those experiencing menopause. Go to www.imsociety.org for more information.

Tips for partners, family and friends to help women cope with menopause²

Women should not have to feel alone or isolated as they try to cope with menopause. Here are a few tips that have proven helpful to others. While several tips are specific to couples in significant, intimate relationships, many could be adapted for any important relationship.

- **Learn as much as possible about what women are going through during menopause and beyond.** Learn the vocabulary of menopause so you can communicate openly and effectively.
- **Be patient.** Menopause doesn't happen overnight. Know that the process of menopause may take a long time.
- **Be open.** Do your best to keep communication channels open and be ready to listen, talk and provide comfort as much as possible.
- **Try to express your feelings without being judgmental or blaming.** Use “I...” statements (“I feel...”) rather than “You...” statements (“You make me feel...”).

- **Ask what is needed or wanted.**

Don't assume that you know the best way to be supportive. You can't “read their mind.” What has been helpful in the past might not work now. In fact, it could be hurtful rather than helpful. Women should assume responsibility for specifically asking for the type of support they need and want.

- **Appreciate that they don't have all the answers.**

Women can be as confused about menopause as you are. Encourage them to get advice from doctors and healthcare providers who have specialized training to treat women during menopause.

- **Remember that menopause is about more than hormones.**

Women may be dealing with other major life events that occur around the time of menopause, such as increased responsibilities at work, the “empty nest” syndrome or being a caregiver for aging parents. Not everything that happens in midlife is about menopause.

See the other side for more tips >

- **Support a woman’s desire to make changes.** Some women use this time of life to explore their creativity, develop a new interest or make a career change. It’s never too late to try new experiences. Are there changes that you can make together?
- **Make them feel loved and attractive.** Be aware that many women say they feel unattractive and unlovable at this life stage. Try to help them feel reassured that they are valued and appreciated for who they are. Provide sincere, specific, positive affirmations to support their sense of self-worth.
- **For intimate partners: Embrace changing sexually.** Even though women may be dealing with sexual issues due to menopause, couples can still have sex – even great sex. Use this time as an opportunity to experiment and be open to adapting your sex lives to changing bodies and needs.

 **Activity: What will you do to recognize World Menopause Day?**

A few ideas are given below. Be creative and come up with more ideas to implement at your workplace and in your community.

Individuals – If you are comfortable doing so, share your personal story about how menopause affected you or your family and friends and encourage others to do the same. Make an effort to educate women in their 20s and 30s about menopause.

Managers – Use the stories provided by employees to create a rich narrative about menopause that is representative of a diverse group of people, not just midlife women. Organize small groups of employees to identify and discuss challenges and knowledge gaps. Create a plan for addressing issues and needs.

My ideas to recognize World Menopause Day:

Raise awareness			
Break the stigma			
Provide support			

Signature (optional)

References:

1. GBH Under the Radar. Le, T. Over 1 million Americans start menopause every year. Why don't we talk about it? April 26, 2024. www.wgbh.org
2. Jack, Claire. 10 ways to help a partner during menopause, March 11, 2022. www.psychologytoday.com
3. International Menopause Society. World Menopause Day, accessed on July 10, 2024. www.imsociety.org/education/

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