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Menopause matters

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The menopause shift

Amanda Bailey looks at thriving through change, care and connection.

As women, we go through many transitions in life, and menopause is one that often comes with a mix of emotions. It's a time when our bodies change, and while some of these changes can be challenging, menopause also presents an opportunity to focus on self-care, reflection, and personal growth.

Every woman's experience of menopause is unique. From the symptoms we encounter to the ways we manage them, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. This time of transition is deeply personal, and it's vital that women feel empowered, supported, and informed as they navigate this phase of life.

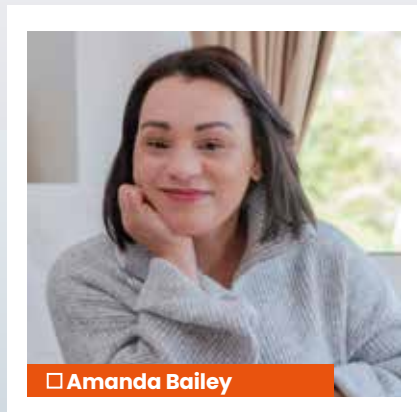
As a registered counsellor and advocate for women's health and well-being, I want to take this opportunity to discuss how we can approach menopause in a way that supports both physical and emotional health, and how we can help each other through the journey.

The emotional side of menopause

One of the aspects of menopause that doesn't always get the attention it deserves is the emotional impact. Hormonal changes can lead to a variety of emotional shifts, from mood swings and anxiety to irritability and even depression. For many women, this emotional rollercoaster can feel isolating, especially

if they're juggling work, family responsibilities, and personal relationships.

I often speak with women who feel overwhelmed by these changes. It's crucial to remind ourselves that these feelings are normal and part of the process. Menopause is not just a physical change, it's an emotional one too. Allowing ourselves the space to acknowledge those feelings, rather than suppressing them, is the first step towards self-compassion.



The importance of self-care

Menopause offers an important reminder that we need to take care of ourselves, perhaps more than ever before. This can mean different things for different women. For some, it's about making time for rest and relaxation, while for others, it's about maintaining an active lifestyle to stay physically strong.

Self-care doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. It's about small, consistent actions that prioritise your well-being. Here are a few simple practices that can help during menopause:

1 Mindful Movement: Gentle exercises like yoga, walking, or swimming can help manage symptoms such as joint pain, fatigue, and mood changes. Movement also releases endorphins, which can be a natural mood booster

2 Nourishing Your Body: As our bodies change, so do our nutritional needs. Eating a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals can support overall health. Staying hydrated and reducing caffeine or alcohol can also help with some symptoms like hot flashes or sleep disturbances.

3 Emotional Check-ins: Regularly taking time to reflect on how you're feeling emotionally can be a game-changer. Whether it's through journaling, talking to a trusted friend, or working with a therapist, giving voice to your emotions helps release the weight of carrying them alone.

4 Rest: Sleep is often disrupted during menopause but making sleep a priority can go a long way in helping us feel more energised and emotionally balanced. Establishing a calming bedtime routine and avoiding screens before bed can improve sleep quality.

Breaking the silence and sharing stories

One of the biggest hurdles in navigating menopause is the silence that can surround it. Too many women still seem to feel that they must endure this transition quietly, without complaint. But menopause is a normal part of life, and the more we talk about it, the more we can learn from each other.

Sharing stories, whether through support groups, online forums, or casual conversations, can be incredibly empowering. It reminds us that we're not alone in this journey, and it helps break down the stigma that menopause is something to be ashamed of or hidden away.

In fact, one of the most rewarding aspects of my work as a counsellor is seeing women support each other, sharing their experiences, and offering advice. When women come together to talk about their challenges

and triumphs during menopause, they create a sense of solidarity that is truly inspiring.

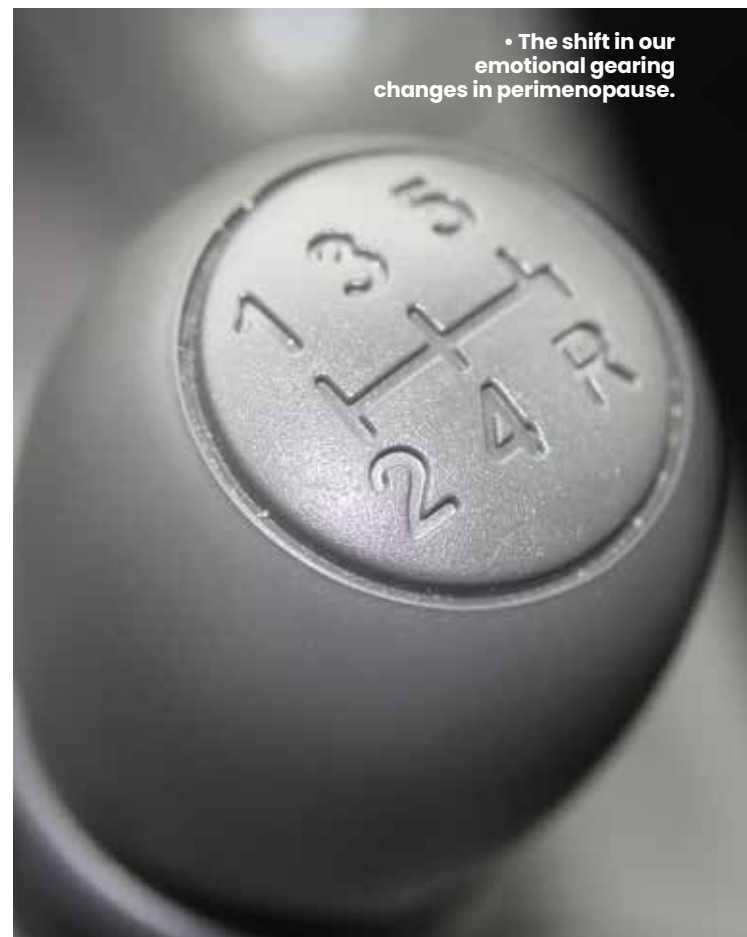
Seeking support: it's okay to ask for help

It's important to remember that it's okay to seek support during menopause, whether that's from a medical professional, a counsellor, or a trusted friend. Menopause can feel overwhelming at times, and having a support system in place can make all the difference.

For some women, talking to a healthcare provider about managing physical symptoms—whether through lifestyle changes or medical treatments such as HRT—can provide much-needed relief. While HRT can be a helpful option for many women it may not be the right choice for everyone. Some women are unable to take HRT due to other medical reasons. In those cases, finding other ways to navigate symptoms is just as important and effective.

For others, connecting with a counsellor to address the emotional and psychological aspects of menopause can be incredibly helpful.

In my work, I emphasise the importance of finding what works best for you. There's no one 'right' way to handle menopause and reaching out for support is a sign of strength, not weakness. →



• The shift in our emotional gearing changes in perimenopause.

□ The Menopause Shift



A time for new beginnings

While menopause is often associated with endings—of fertility, of youth—it's also a time for new things. Many women find that this phase of life brings a new sense of freedom and clarity. With the end of menstruation comes the opportunity to focus more on yourself and what you want from life moving forward.

For some, this might mean a career change, a new hobby, or dedicating more time to personal relationships. For others, it might mean slowing down and enjoying a more relaxed pace of life. Whatever this new chapter holds, it's a chance to embrace the changes and redefine what well-being looks like for you.

Menopause and mental health: a vital conversation

While the physical symptoms of menopause often take centre stage, mental health is an equally important part of the conversation. Feelings of anxiety, mood swings, and even depression can be part of the menopause experience, and these emotions are valid and worthy of attention.

Mental health is closely tied to our overall well-being, and as women, it's essential that we take our emotional health just as seriously as our physical health. Menopause is not just about surviving the physical symptoms; it's about thriving mentally and emotionally through this new stage of life.

If you're feeling emotionally overwhelmed, anxious, or simply not like yourself, seeking help is not only

okay—it's essential. Counselling can provide a safe space to explore these feelings and gain tools to manage them effectively.

Moving forward together

Menopause is not a solitary journey, and the more we support each other through it, the better off we'll all be. By sharing our experiences, embracing self-care, and seeking the support we need, we can navigate this phase of life with grace and resilience.

Let's continue the conversation, recognising that it's an ongoing journey, not just limited to certain times of the year. Whether you're just beginning to experience symptoms or are well into post-menopause, know that there's a community of women who understand and are here to help.

As you move forward, focus on what really matters: your health, your well-being, and the power of connection. Together, women can make the menopause journey one of growth, empowerment, and renewed strength. **MM**

Amanda is a registered counsellor a member of the British association for counselling and psychotherapy and advocate for Women's Health and well-being if you would like a thoughtful conversation regarding your own personal journey or even to explore how counselling can help you, you can visit her website at www.therapywithamandajane.co.uk or Email: hello@therapywithamandajane.co.uk



• Supporting one another as we move through our transition and if we don't feel ourselves seeking help can be essential.