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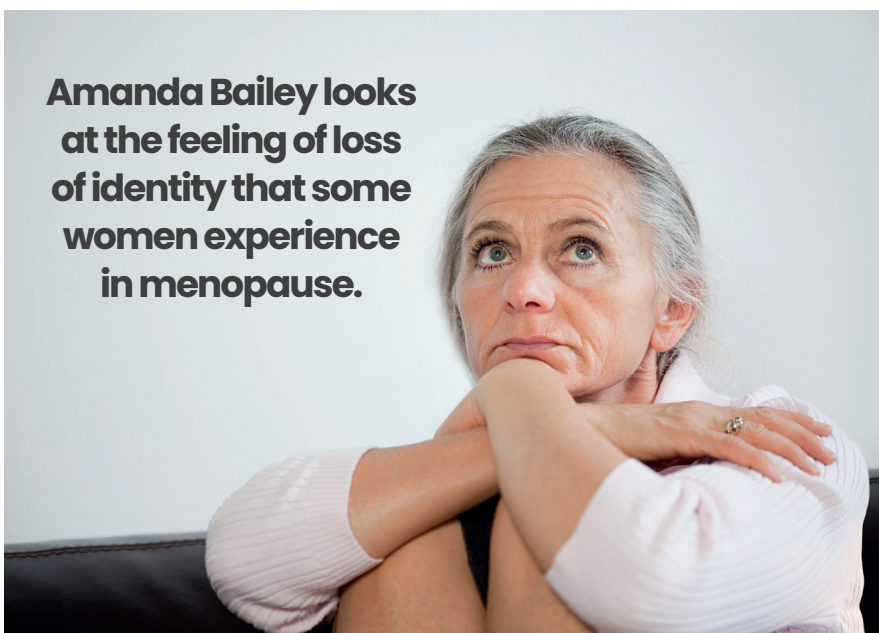


When you no longer feel like yourself



□ Amanda Bailey

Amanda Bailey looks at the feeling of loss of identity that some women experience in menopause.



As a counsellor working with women, one of the things I hear most often during menopause is this: *"I just don't feel like me anymore."*

It's usually said quietly, sometimes with tears, sometimes with a slightly confused laugh.

Loss of identity during menopause is far more common than we tend to talk about. We hear about hot flushes, sleep problems and brain fog – but this deeper shift, the feeling of not quite recognising yourself, can be one of the hardest parts.

Because this isn't just about symptoms. It's about you – your sense of who you are.

A story that may feel familiar

Let me tell you about 'Sarah.' She isn't one specific person, but a reflection of many women I've supported over time.

Sarah is in her early fifties. She's always been capable and steady – the one others rely on. She's managed work, family life, relationships and everything inbetween. She's the one who gets things done.

But recently, things have started to feel different. She walks into a room and forgets why she's there. She loses her words mid-sentence.

Simple decisions feel harder than they used to.

At work, she doubts herself more. She overthinks things she once handled easily. Meetings leave her feeling anxious in a way they never did before. At home, she feels off. Less patient. More emotional. Then guilty for feeling that way.

And underneath it all is a quiet but constant thought: "What's happening to me?"

It's not "just hormones"

Yes, menopause brings hormonal changes, and these can affect mood, sleep, memory and energy.

But what often gets missed is how all of this can impact your sense of self.

At this stage of life, many women are also dealing with other changes. Children may be growing up or leaving home. Relationships can shift. Some are caring for ageing parents. Others are questioning their work

or wondering what comes next. There may also be changes in the body that affect confidence.

So, when Sarah says: “I don’t feel like me,” she’s not just talking about hormones.

She’s talking about feeling like she’s lost her footing — like the version of her she knew so well isn’t quite there in the same way.

“Who am I now?”

This is a question that comes up often:
“If I’m not who I used to be... then who am I?”

For many women, identity has been closely tied to roles — being the reliable one, the carer, the strong one, the one who holds everything together.

But menopause can shake that sense of certainty.

When confidence dips, when emotions feel closer to the surface, when your energy changes — it can feel like you’re no longer standing on solid ground.

One woman said to me: “I used to know how to be me. Now I’m not so sure.”

How it can feel

This loss of identity doesn’t usually happen all at once. It tends to creep in slowly.

You might notice a dip in confidence or more self-doubt than usual. You may feel less visible, or less sure of your place. Things you once enjoyed might not bring the same sense of satisfaction. You may find yourself questioning what you want or where you’re heading.

There can also be a sense of missing the person you used to be. And alongside that, there can be pressure

to just keep going. After all, you’ve coped with so much in life already.

So, when things feel harder, it’s easy to turn that frustration inward and think, “Why can’t I just get on with it?”

Making space for what’s happening

One of the most important things I say to women is this: There is nothing wrong with you. What you’re feeling makes sense. There is a sense of loss here — loss of certainty, loss of feeling like yourself. And it’s okay to acknowledge that.

But alongside that, something else may be happening too — more quietly. When things don’t feel the same anymore, it can open up space to begin asking different questions:

What do I need now?
 What feels important at this stage of my life?
 What do I want more of — and perhaps less of?

These aren’t always easy questions, but they can be important ones.

Back to Sarah

As we worked together, Sarah began to ease some of the pressure she had been putting on herself.

Instead of trying to get back to how she used to be, she slowly started to accept that things were changing.

We focused on understanding what menopause was doing to her body and mind. We worked on being kinder to herself, and noticing how she spoke to herself, especially in moments of doubt. We explored small ways she could begin to feel more steady again.





• You are not failing and you can regain your smile.

Over time, things began to shift. She became clearer about what she needed. Less willing to push herself beyond her limits. More aware of what felt right for her. And her question slowly changed from:

“What’s wrong with me?” to “What do I need right now?”

You’re not alone in this

One of the most powerful things for many women is realising they’re not the only one feeling this way. There can be huge relief in saying it out loud and being heard without judgement. Whether that’s through a trusted friend, a partner, a support group or counselling — connection can make a real difference.

Because feeling understood helps to soften that sense of isolation.

A different kind of change

Losing your sense of identity during menopause can feel unsettling. It can knock your confidence and leave you feeling unsure of yourself. But it doesn’t mean you’re losing who you are completely.

It may be that you’re moving through a change — one that asks you to slow down, to listen to yourself more, and to begin to understand what you need now.

Not who you used to be. But who you are becoming. And that doesn’t have to be rushed or figured out all at once.

What can help when you don’t feel like yourself

If this is something you’re going through, here are a few gentle starting points:

It may be that you’re moving through a change - one that asks you to slow down, to listen to yourself more, and begin to understand what you need to know.”

- Talking about it can help. Whether it’s with a friend, a partner or a counsellor, putting it into words can bring a sense of relief.
- Try to be kinder to yourself. This isn’t something you’ve caused, and it isn’t a failure. Your body and mind are going through a transition.
- Lower the pressure where you can. You don’t have to have everything worked out. It’s okay to take things one step at a time.
- Start to notice what you need. Your needs may be changing — and that’s okay. It might be more rest, more space, or more support.
- And if things feel overwhelming, reaching out for professional support can make a real difference.

Final thoughts

If you’ve found yourself thinking, “I don’t feel like me anymore,” please know this: You’re not alone. And you’re not failing.

This is a stage of life that can affect both body and mind, often in ways we don’t fully expect. With the right support, understanding, and a bit of self-kindness, it is possible to find your way through.

Maybe not back to the exact person you were before — but towards a version of you that feels just as real. **MM**

Amanda is a registered counsellor, an advocate for women’s health and wellbeing, and a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). She offers gentle, flexible online counselling for women navigating midlife and menopause, creating a supportive space where women can feel heard, understood, and less alone. If this article has resonated with you, you’re very welcome to get in touch to find out more. www.therapywithamandajane.co.uk Email: hello@therapywithamandajane.co.uk