

2-My Story – How Menopause nearly Destroyed my Life... MP3 Transcript

Introduction & Welcome module

My Story - How menopause nearly destroyed my life and how I survived

- Ignorant of strange symptoms
- Didn't know who to speak to
- Husband said "I just want my wife back!"
- Resigned from executive job
- Diagnosed with Depression
- Divorce/madness!
- No more Lunar Cycles - random attacks!
- **I now have the keys to Making Menopause Manageable and I want to share them with you**



The most important thing to realise here is that I HAD NO IDEA the symptoms I was experiencing related to menopause!

- Strange symptoms including: waking up in the mornings feeling as if I had a hangover. Process of elimination showed that it was not alcohol causing these feelings. Thank heaven for that - pour me a glass of wine!
- I would get heart palpitations and think I was having a heart attack
- I would experience panic attacks - This usually affected me in shops. I'd have to stop what I was doing and leave wherever I was. I would have a feeling of panic where I would just have to GET OUT OF THERE!!!
- Short-term memory loss - Dementia? Alzheimer's? Thankfully none of those - it was all down to HORMONES!
- Sex was way off the menu - my libido (my what??) was non-existent and I felt as if I didn't care, either. Many women feel they can manage without intimate relations; I was one of those and once I'd rediscovered my libido, Woohoo! More of that later!
- Depression! I was eventually diagnosed with depression - Nobody mentioned that what I was experiencing could be hormonal depression and I didn't find this out for myself until years later.
 - Bi-polar - yes, I self-diagnosed myself with bi-polar disorder. Of course, I realised this wasn't the full-blown mental health version; I realised that it is a significant illness that requires careful management but I couldn't help but relate my symptoms to that illness. I wasn't wrong either and, again, years later, I discovered this temporary version of bi-polar is very common among women going through menopause.

If only I knew then what I know now! Especially the fact that the word 'menopause' is a misnomer - because the average age of menopause is 52 and menopause means the last menses or period. There are no more eggs, no more ovulation, no more periods.

- Overwhelm: something else I found a common trait among many women - overwhelm - the feeling that everything is 'getting on top of you'. You feel you can't make a decision. I couldn't make a decision to save my life. What's going on? I kept asking myself.
- Resigned from my job for work/life balance - I was marketing director of a successful country house hotel and I experienced some terrible days when I couldn't explain what on earth was going on with my mind with my decision making - it was rubbish!
- In the end, after reading a magazine, I resigned for work/life balance -how many times have you heard women say that? It's such a can of worms. Again, women are not recognising their hormones are changing - they're too young - so they look for reasons to change things and, guess what, there's a magazine article just appeared on the news-stand, all about work-life balance, so it must be true. No!
- This is WHY I'm so keen to educate women and people like you about menopause in the workplace; women are resigning without realising potential causes of their feelings of disengagement, isolation, not fitting in. It's not work/life balance, it's HORMONES!

And, what about the really personal and emotional side of things - relationships! If I had a £1 for every story I hear from women and from men about marriage breakups... It happened to me, too

- I couldn't stand the sight or sound of my husband - we argued constantly and decided that the only thing to do was divorce
- We were constantly arguing, rowing. I couldn't have a conversation with him without bursting into tears or shouting - and I couldn't understand that, either
- I'd burst into tears at the drop of a hat
- I'd be ANGRY with everyone
- At work, I'd feel people were ganging up on me
 - What I didn't realise then was that hormones were changing my perception on life
- I felt disengaged with life, with my job, with my family - totally lost the plot and I didn't know how to fight my way back because I didn't know what was wrong.
- He kept saying 'I want my wife back' and I kept saying 'I want my life back'
 - I've written a guide for men "Menopause is like a Hurricane, dangerous and deadly"! The title came from a guy I interviewed, I thought it was brilliant, so I used it! I'll provide a link to access this later on in the programme and, of course, women can read it, too.
- I went through ten years of hell - not knowing what was going on. It was years before I realised that menopause was the cause. Years!
- I considered suicide. I'll just leave that one with you for a moment... I was in a very, very dark place and I thought *"is this as good as it gets? I'm useless. I can't see where I fit into this life any more. I'm rubbish at everything. I'm unemployable."* I didn't know it was transitional, I thought this was a permanent state and this was how I would spend the rest of my life. How wrong could I have been!

On my good days, I studied, as I have already said and as well as the book work, I made it my business to attend medical conferences and I came to learn all about menopause and that all these crazy symptoms are caused by hormones and menopause.

For 40-odd years hormones are holding our lives together. Hormones make our body parts work properly, generating cell and organ renewal, so, is it any wonder, when the egg store runs out, the wheels start falling off!

- What we, as women, don't realise as our hormones change and our monthly cycles change as a result; heavier and prolonged periods or even lighter and non-existent periods and irregularities in cycles, generally, is that we can no longer rely on the calendar and lunar cycles - no diary or App is able to give women control of what is now going on. You have to take the rough with the smooth, the good days with the bad, BUT knowing that all this is going to happen is HUGE in the overall understanding of menopause.
- It all comes back to *what, when and why*.

I didn't get divorced - I was facing the abyss, in my view - purely a material decision... I have three beautiful daughters, with one still at home and I knew my husband couldn't afford to divorce me, nor me, him. We loved each other once, so surely we could find some common ground again? It was a long, slow process but we did find common ground.

- Actually, I wrote him a letter. We couldn't talk to each other sensibly, without starting a shouting and blaming match, so I wrote him a letter, setting out all my feelings and that I didn't want a divorce and could we please have a chat without shouting at each other. I apologised for crying but I didn't know why I it happened.
- I hadn't realised that HORMONES had changed my perception of life both at home and at work. Hormones were distorting my view - life felt as if it had changed forever and I didn't know what I could do about it.

Once I realised I was going through menopause, I was peri-menopausal, I started doing my own research. I was always at the library; reading medical books, psychology books, books on the history of women. I was a sponge. I had to get a handle on this thing called 'menopause'. I discovered I was not alone in my experiences, my symptoms and that came as a huge relief.

I vowed that I could not let other women suffer as I had. What's the point? And, most of all, menopause may be as old as time but nobody was telling women about the symptoms, the feelings, the experiences. Academics were talking to academics... Well, here I am, ready to teach you about menopause and how you can provide support and information for women to access in the workplace and have better experiences going through menopause. Isn't it about time?

I'd like you to take a moment or two to consider this story. It's very common. Just by hearing my story, you will be in a better position to recognise changes in colleagues and that *that* conversation. For some women, all they need is a conversation - they get it - they understand and they know they can do something about it now.

Women have significant and different needs to men and your new knowledge will empower you and empower the women you support to overcome debilitating symptoms and they will

take on a new view of life, including their working life and realise they can achieve great things. This will gradually filter throughout your organisation. The grape vine will do its job!

Let's hope this is the beginning of the end of women suffering in silence through menopause.