

## Step 1 - What is Menopause? MP3-1 Audio Transcript

Here we go... There's a lot of information in this section where our primary aim is to get to know the Menopause Monster and to think about your own experiences so far, reflecting on this and repeating the exercise where you feel you need to, to get to grips with it all.

# Module 2: Step1 - What is Menopause?

- What is the menopause Timetable?
- How many symptoms?? (pdf)
- Emotions at work
- Menopause Traffic Lights (pdf)
- Long Term Health



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I've purposefully included transcripts of the MP3 files throughout because I thought it would be a good idea for you to download and listen to it anywhere that suits you, so you're not restricted. The transcripts can provide an online or off-line, more physical method of digesting the information where you can highlight areas where you think it needs important emphasis and skim read, etc.

Together we shall go through the menopause timetable, who it affects and when. We'll touch on some symptoms (you should have already received a PDF entitled Symptoms of Menopause to help you with this).

We're also going to talk about emotions at work and how this affects relationships at home - in both cases, crying at the drop of a hat, etc. XXXI will then introduce you to the Menopause Traffic Lights (this is another PDF you will have received with this module) and is something I created and that has become a really useful tool and a definite MUST for your Menopause Tool Box and finally we will talk about long-term health - what happens when the wheels fall off!

# Menopause in the Workplace



Menopause in the Workplace - A Perfect Storm! What does that mean? Well, to me, it came about as a result of a conversation I was having with a BBC journalist (name dropping, I know, I can't help it), I was describing menopause in the workplace and she said "sounds like a perfect storm to me". I said, "what a brilliant title". I then looked the phrase up to make sure it meant what I thought it did (the phrase always reminds me of the lovely George Clooney in the eponymous film) and I learned that the term is a disambiguation and the description is perfect: A Confluence of events that drastically aggravates a situation. So now, do you get it? I hope so. If not, I'm sure the following information will go some way to convince you and help you deliver and provide support in your own workplace.

What does all this mean and 'will I survive'? Well, if I have anything to do with it, you and your colleagues and staff will survive! And you have a good image here that shows that women undergo a variety of biological changes and that it is all down to hormones. You know about puberty? You may have teenagers at home. I know I did - lots of door slamming and humdingers of arguments, so regular there seemed to be a permanent atmosphere but what is that really telling us?

Well, the teenagers are at the beginning of 'the change' and women represent the end of 'the change' however, once you realise this simple equation, you should be able to communicate on a better level with the teenagers because you are sharing hormonal anarchy! Notes can be compared (or not!)

So, did you know... 'the change' actually starts around the age of 35 - that's scary - I can feel you cringing already... The period before the actual 'menopause' is called peri-menopause and even though all these hormonal changes start happening around the age of 35 - and this is

generally speaking - not many women will notice changes happening, other than an increased amount of PMS.

The stronger, more acute symptoms seem to kick in around the age of 45+ and really hit a high note between the ages 48 - 52, which I lovingly call the 'tsunami'. This is when women get that feeling of overwhelm and they feel unable to cope with their daily workload and they experience a general lack concentration (more of that later) but more importantly, they probably have NO IDEA that they are peri-menopausal. In fact, like me, they don't know whether they're coming or going or they've already been! It's an indecisive time and the worst part is they have no idea what the cause is. 'What's wrong with me?' and 'This isn't me!' are common phrases.

As I've said before, menopause is PMS on Speed! Instead of PMS causing monthly challenges, it starts to happen randomly, there's no rhyme nor reason; it's unpredictable, will visit without warning. Sometimes women feel they have a period coming on, you know that feeling... and nothing happens. 'Am I pregnant?'!! Generally not... but that's not the answer - they are struggling to understand what is going on because that monthly certainty no longer exists.

## What does it mean?

- Biological changes - hormonal
- Starts around age 35
  - Peri-menopause
  - More acute changes at age of 45
  - The Tsunami!
- Menopause is PMS on Speed!!
- No more monthly certainty!
- Menopause is the end of Reproduction
- Symptoms can last from 45-55+



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**We'll talk about more specific symptoms a bit later but let me finish this section by just confirming what menopause is:**

Menopause is the end of reproduction, no more eggs, no more periods (hooray!) AND this word is a misnomer because menopause is a period in time, a period in time that lasts twelve months without menstruating. Some women go for a number of months without menstruating and this is when they realise they are probably going through menopause (you see what I mean? - There are so many myths and lack of knowledge - they've been on this journey for

years but just didn't realise it and neither did anyone else). BUT if a random period is experienced, the clock goes back to zero and we start again. Twelve months without a period leads to post-menopause and a whole new and wonderful chapter in a woman's life. Honestly!

Remember, we are all living longer; women used to die around the age of menopause and I can remember, in my lifetime, when women were still being locked up in mental asylums for being 'mad' - were they mad? Or, was it menopause? No research really exists to comment on this but from books I've read on the history of women, I drew my own conclusions. But now women can expect to live another thirty years... No wonder it becomes a time of reflection and newfound wisdom. How powerful is this new knowledge - it can lead to women achieving really great things especially as it becomes more recognised that women have significant and difference needs (to men).

**Symptoms can last 10 - 15 years** but don't let that put you off! You're probably thinking... why employ women if they're going to be so much trouble??? But why not? Armed with knowledge and understanding of menopause and what it means, debilitating symptoms can be controlled. These women are very valuable assets to your organisation and you've already spent a fortune training them - why waste that? We've got over the issues that child-birth presented, surely menopause is just an extension of that understanding.

Women tell me, 'we don't want special treatment, all we want to be allowed to do is to get on with our jobs' and I'm all for that, too but let's get the knowledge in there to help reduce the absenteeism and drop in productivity which will be experienced. Let's help reduce the guilt they are feeling because they know they are below par. Now, there's a symptom I should probably have mentioned earlier - feeling below par, feeling one degree under. I felt like this for years - it became my new 'norm' and then suddenly 'normal' appears again and women declare - 'so this is what it's like to feel 'normal' again!'

Please take some time to reflect on this information and how you can use it in the workplace - as we move forward I'll be presenting more ideas for how to do this.

And now, it's time to have an in-depth look at symptoms!