



Feeling down about menopause? Here's how to boost your self-esteem

Women going through the perimenopause transition and menopause often experience lower self-esteem caused by symptoms that make it hard for them to feel comfortable. But don't worry – there are ways to deal with low self-esteem during menopause and feel better about yourself again.

Does menopause affect self-esteem?

The symptoms of menopause can be challenging to deal with, but one that often goes overlooked is low self-esteem. In fact, recent studies show over 50% of women experiencing these shifts during middle age reported declines in both work and personal life. Studies also show that 1 in 10 women leave work, and 14% reduce their hours due to their symptoms.

The hormonal changes that occur during menopause can significantly impact our emotions. Research also shows how hot flushes and fatigue negatively impact self-esteem, which is only worsened by reducing oestrogen and progesterone in the body.

The changes often experienced during this chapter of life are both physical and mental:

- Body shape changes, including increasing waistline and reducing muscle tone
- Different pattern of hair growth with thinning hair and new growth in other areas
- Skin becomes drier with more fine lines and the occasional break-out of spots
- Unpredictable hot flushes adding additional colour to cheeks and sweat patches
- Brain fog making you question your memory
- Insomnia leading to lower energy and less desire to be active
- Anxiety and depression making you question your self-worth and relationships
- Aching joints and weakened bladder preventing exercise

Can your personality change during menopause?

Personality doesn't change for every woman going through menopause. Studies show mood changes are more likely if there were previous issues with anger, irritability or depression beforehand and during stressful periods. Some women experience a significant shift in their personality, while others don't seem to change at all.

How to boost your confidence during menopause

Menopausal symptoms can make life difficult, but there are ways to manage them. You must take time for yourself and get enough sleep, so your body has the chance it needs during this vulnerable stage. Improve your resilience to stress by regularly taking time out for yourself, eating well, and exercising.

- You may need to review your medication if you're experiencing mental health issues. These could reappear during menopause, and it's essential to find out what is happening before making changes or introducing new drugs.
- Anxiety and negativity should not have control over your life. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is free on the NHS, giving you tools for regaining control over your emotions.
- Prioritise sleep quantity and quality. Try to set consistent bedtime across the seven days and minimise weekend lie-ins.
- Start the day with a 10-minute brisk walk outside to reset your circadian rhythm and boost your energy.
- The caffeine and alcohol in your system make it harder for you to think clearly. Try switching coffee or beer with an alternative like Rooibos tea. This will help calm the jitters while also providing antioxidants.
- One of the best ways to manage stress is by asking yourself how big your "stress container" will be for that day. In other words, the amount you're willing to take on. In other words, the amount you're willing and to take on. Meditation, yoga and breathing exercises can help you manage your stress.
- Why not take the time to focus on yourself? You're busy juggling work, family life and all your other obligations. Pick up a book, enjoy a massage, tend to the garden, whatever calms your mind.

- Mood, weight and bone health all benefit from activity. A less intense form like pilates or yoga may be better for your mind. For some people, high-intensity exercises can actually overstimulate the mind and body, causing problems sleeping. Shorter, more frequent activities are more helpful during menopause.
- Eating more plant-based foods is the best way to stay focused and energised throughout the day. This includes not just vegetables but also fruit, nuts, and seeds, which are all rich in essential nutrients.
- Phytoestrogens are a group of foods that provide small amounts of oestrogen. These include soy milk, yoghurt or tofu with certain pulses such as edamame beans and lentils. All delicious ways to get your daily dose.
- Many people experience a lack of the nutrients they need during menopause which can also affect mood and self-esteem. Top up on essential nutrients such as Omega 3 from oily fish and algal oil; Vitamin D from sunshine and egg yolk; Calcium from dairy, nuts, seeds, and leafy greens; B Vitamins from yeast extract, whole grains, and spinach; and Magnesium by soaking in Epsom salts.
- Understanding the effect highly processed foods can have on your body is essential. The rise in sugar levels makes you feel great at first. However, the tiredness, mood swings and weight gain lead many people into a vicious cycle of "binging".
- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a way for women to manage the physical and emotional symptoms that often come with menopause. It can help with low self-esteem, mood swings and other conditions during this period. The risks from taking HRT are much lower, but you should always speak to your doctor before deciding whether this option is right for you.

The physical and mental changes that come with menopause can be exhausting. Understanding what they are and how to manage them will help give you back control of your life and help boost your self-esteem.