

Menopause coaching

Coaching for women who wish to overcome the challenges of the menopause.

We have repeatedly seen senior, successful women face an interruption to their career when the menopause hits.

Senior women in most corporate settings have won a number of battles over the course of their career. They have broken through any gender imbalance in their chosen sector. Many have navigated the very real challenges of taking time out of their career to have children. They have juggled the multiple foci of home, children, career and wellbeing. Despite all, they have succeeded and by the time they are in their forties and fifties, they are established in their career, respected and making a unique and vital contribution.

Then the menopause hits. Sometimes seemingly overnight, they go from having a very solid self-image of someone who is capable and making a strong contribution, to someone wracked by both physical and mental challenges.

The menopause and perimenopause (the period of time around the menopause where physical changes happen to the woman) cause some challenging symptoms;

- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Brain fog
- Hot flushes
- Irregular/heavy periods (www.nhs.uk)

The hot flushes and changes to periods cause a number of problems, from sleeplessness to pain, all of which lead to heightened levels of exhaustion. The anxiety, mood swings and brain fog are perhaps even harder to tackle, because the ability to think clearly and rationally can feel like it is falling away. This can leave behind confusion, alarm and, in many, a terrible loss of confidence about their ability to continue to perform professionally and make a worthwhile contribution.

The hardest challenge thrown down by the menopause/perimenopause is not physical, but it is the mental changes that cause women to catastrophically lose confidence.

A lot of women don't know what to expect when the menopause arrives. Firstly, it is still a taboo subject amongst women ourselves, something that we do not talk about amongst ourselves. There are many theories as to why this may be the case, but it is part and parcel of the reproductive cycle, and most of us go through life grinning and bearing that in silence too! Secondly, it is not something that is often spoken about in the media. The result is that incredibly savvy women can arrive at "the change" with hardly an idea of what they will expect, or when. We have spoken to a number of women who were completely blindsided by their menopause and thought through a number of possible other causes before they even considered that the menopause could be the culprit.

There is something that most women do not know. People who have suffered with extreme bouts of mental ill health earlier on in life often think that the menopause is a swift and strong return of their depression and/or anxiety. For many women the menopause is experienced like an episode of severe mental ill health that comes out of the blue. It is no wonder that it can cause a swift and strong loss of confidence in their capabilities and ability to continue to make a positive contribution.



The answer to menopausal symptoms doesn't lie with us, but the answer to the attendant loss of confidence can be coaching.

Once we know that we're facing menopausal symptoms, there is a range of interventions that can and do help. We are no experts in this area, but we do know that a lot of help is available.

However, professionally we can still feel professional scarred by the arrival of those symptoms. These are examples of issues we have seen people face. This list is by no means exhaustive or exclusive, but merely gives a flavour of the challenges faced:

- Embarrassment at uncharacteristic outbursts of anger or frustration.
- Feelings of regret over a perceived sense of having “let people down”.
- Grave discomfort with having to mention the menopause in a professional setting.
- Anxiety over the symptoms returning, again unheralded.
- A sense that the best days are over because they are no longer young.
- A sense of being weaker now that a weakness has been shown to others.
- A perceived loss of authority because something that happens to “everyone” took them by surprise.
- A loss of dignity at becoming “hormonal” or hysterical in a professional setting.



Sorting through these issues on your own is not easy. There's often no one to talk to about them even amongst female colleagues – a sense of propriety stops women from raising them even with other women in the professional setting, because the menopause can hit at any point between the ages of 40 – 55. We do not want to guess and get it wrong. Then clients often think they are striving to get their career back on track, so taking the time required to examine residual feelings is yet another challenge. Negative feelings can continue to grow, even as professional confidence returns.

As coaches we enable you to take time out of your professional life to examine what you've faced in a tidy, efficient way. Our aim is to allow our clients to air their concerns in a safe space. Using a similar process that we use to enable people to overcome imposter syndrome, we have a method for menopause coaching that enables women to regain comfort and confidence after a knock. If they then choose to step back from their current role, they do this with the full confidence that they have made a choice; it hasn't been made for them.