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Spiritual Aspects of Menopause

Angela Whitney, RN explores the growth processes of the change of life.

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The decade before actual menopause and the decade after it is when tremendous changes occur—a time frequently called peri-menopause. After that perhaps twenty-year time period, a woman emerges fully into her new life of deeper uniqueness, generativity, nurturance, and creativity. This is the spiritual fruit of an apparent biologically-driven transition.

How do we understand what is going on in menopause, or peri-menopause anyway? We know that the “times they are a-changin’.” Let’s consider where we have been in our understanding collectively. Culturally, perhaps we have not had a clear understanding or appreciation of feminine gifts, ways of being, and ways of knowing. Also, in the last several decades, we have seen menopause treated as an illness, an unpleasant event with unacceptable consequences, something to be protected from. Through this cultural and medical perception, a new way of understanding menopause is emerging—a new context for menopause. This is not surprising and very exciting. This new context of menopause is more whole, reflecting our heightening awareness of ourselves as having physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual experiences that are valuable to tend to.

It is thought that the peaking neurotransmitter levels at women’s time of ovulation (FSH and LH) actually become constantly high in the menopausal woman. That would mean that the time of clarity of insight (though some would describe it otherwise!) in the premenstrual woman may become available to the menopausal woman during all of her monthly days, instead of just a few. Our biology has consequences for our spiritual selves. Our biology may actually be pushing us to leave a major aspect of our femininity, and grooming us to fully participate in the next. Some say (Northrup, Borysenko, for instance) that menopause re-wires women for intuition. This happens in different ways.

As our vision increases, so do the demands on us. We are challenged. We see what we have not seen, and feel what has been left unfelt. We must come to terms with our new ways of seeing and experiencing ourselves and our world. We may be called to understand our feminine roots more deeply; and we may become aware of how we are not expressing our feminine gifts. A fire burns in us...clarifying, purifying, and creating our new selves. We experience the loss of our old bodies and selves, and we feel disoriented as the new is just birthing and not fully developed. We find ourselves working to make sense of the past, how we got here, what we have been doing. In our menopause process, we may remember our ideals, our spiritual passions, and re-orient ourselves to nurturing them. Our faculties of intuition and knowing are enhanced. We trust ourselves more deeply. We learn how to nurture ourselves in this transitioning in a myriad of ways.

We may become blocked in aspects of this transition as it is not easy, and there has not been a lot of support. This is

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The Spiritual Aspects of Menopause
continued from page 12.
understandable. Some get locked into unpleasant physical symptoms, grief of things lost. Some are disoriented in how to find new life, how to feel a sense of purpose or worthiness. But even these blocks can be blessings. Wary are found to move beyond these things. A voice is heard that comes quietly from within, that strengthens as it is listened to. These women relish their new sense of themselves and purpose. They stand released from their procreative responsibilities given by nature and cultural roles, free to birth and nurture a new wave of life and creativity as it emerges uniquely—from them.

How does a woman emerge in her new zest and wholeness through this process? She finds spiritual food for herself—this is different for each woman. She works with her body, and her mind, and her spirit simultaneously—understanding her spirit through her body and mind, and her mind through her body and spirit. And what a menu of things there are to consider!

Tending to our bodies, we rest, stretch, relax, do yoga, and feed ourselves nurturing foods. We are aware of our bodies and we communicate. In tending to our mind, we reflect, take inventory, care for ourselves, educate ourselves; we communicate and explore; we meditate, breathe, become aware of our emotions, own them, and do yoga. In working with our spiritual selves, we develop trust and trust of ourselves and others. We develop community; we pray and meditate, listen to inner guidance, do yoga, and trust the process.

By tending to her inner and outer worlds one step at a time, as she is led in this bio-spiritual transition, she embraces Life anew. The world benefits as each woman finds her new self and peace, and takes the fullness of her place in creating our ever-emerging world.

Angela Whitney RN, FNP has guided many women in their path to discovering even deeper meaning to life in their peri-menopausal and menopausal years, and offers clinical consultation for women in mid-life transition at Mountain Body-Mind Associates in downtown Asheville. She also leads personal retreats at Light of the Mountains Retreat Center in the mountains northwest of Asheville. You can reach her at 828-252-1826.

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