The Impact of Menopause on Self-Esteem

by ERIC PATTERSON

Understanding the Link Between Menopause and Self-Esteem

Menopause and the process of transitioning through menopause is a tremendous journey of biological change that is triggered by varying levels of hormones with estrogen being at the center. The changes are irregular, inconsistent, and unexpected by you and those around you. Even your doctor cannot predict when your next period will come, and if it will be your last.

All of these changes, uncertainties, and variables have a direct impact on your self-esteem. Your self-esteem is how you feel about yourself, how you think other people feel about you, and how you perceive your skills and abilities. The biological shifts associated with menopause create shifts in your self-esteem by affecting how you feel physically and emotionally. Unfortunately, the movement trends towards the negative.

Biological Basis

When you are in perimenopause, the time leading up to the end of your menstrual cycle, your periods will be inconsistent, which is caused by the irregular amounts of estrogen your body produces and releases. These irregularities spark physical and emotional changes during this stage. When estrogen is high, you can have stretches of drastic mood changes, anxiety and irritability. When estrogen is low, hot flashes, vaginal dryness and diminished concentration will be common.

This shifting impacts your self-esteem because the uncertainty forces you to look at yourself differently. If your moods are different and your body is different, does that mean that you are different? These differences also impact the way you look at others and how they look at you.

In a postmenopause world, the time following your final period, estrogen and progesterone drop to low levels. This stage is met with mixed emotions of your menstruation ending. In some respects, you might be happy to finally end the process. In other ways, you may miss aspects of the process and what it meant to you.

Physically, the changes are noticeable. Postmenopause is related to a tendency to gain weight. This, paired with the increased risk of osteoporosis and heart disease, can make you look and feel differently. Again, these changes target your self-esteem as the seemingly work against you.

Taking Action

The process from perimenopause to menopause averages around seven years. This is too long to hope that your self-esteem improves on its own. Once postmenopause life begins, the changes to your self-esteem will be permanent unless you can actively take measures to improve your state. The good news is that your self-esteem can be improved at any time, no matter what the contributors are. With the biological changes being the instigator, you will have to work especially hard to undo what has been done.

Consider these steps as ways to improve your self-esteem before, during, and after menopause:

Get Educated

Whether you realized it or not, you have been doing an important step towards improving your self-esteem during the beginning of this article, you have been gaining education on the subject. Without the proper knowledge, the changes in your self-worth could go unexplained. When the reason is not clear, people jump to other conclusions as they spend time and resources inefficiently. People blame their job, their kids, their spouse, and other explanations for their changes. Knowing that menopause is the culprit allows you to move forward in a clear direction.

Next page: for more steps to improving your self-esteem.

Taking Action

Move Towards Acceptance

You don't have to like menopause, but you do have to accept it. Acceptance means that you build an accurate understanding about the irreversible nature of menopause. You accept the truth of the situation that you cannot change or control the progression through menopause; you can only respond and manage the effects. If acceptance seems challenging, consider the alternative. Remaining in denial means that you will be fighting against something that you cannot possibly change. Denying reality does not change it. Fighting a losing battle only lowers self-esteem.

Fight Fire With Fire

When your biology is changing, you need to look at ways that you can modify your biology to soften the blow of menopause. Adding exercise, changing your diet, and adjusting your sleep patterns have all been shown to modify your body's biology.

Exercise can flood your brain with helpful, depression-busting chemicals like serotonin, norepinephrine, and endorphins. Exercise also heats up your body and encourages perspiration, which are both related to improved biology.

A better diet and sleep routine will have similar results. Sleep is so necessary for recovering your body and your mind after a day of stress. Diet provides energy to make it through the day. If you do not feed your body, it cannot help with your self-esteem goals. An improved diet can help limit the risk of weight gain in postmenopause.

Change Your Self-Talk

Do you talk to yourself? Don't worry. Everyone does. This constant conversation you have with yourself is call self-talk. Self-talk is highly influential to your mood, anxiety, and self-esteem. Think about the way you speak to your best friend. What is stopping you from speaking to yourself in the same way?

What you say to yourself greatly impacts how you feel about yourself. If you say that your life is changing and you hate it. You are going to feel worse. If you speak kindly and realistically to yourself by saying, "I don't like menopause, but accepting it will help me. I'm going to work really hard to feel good about myself no matter what it throws at me" inspires confidence and resolve to work with menopause without letting it take over.

Surround Yourself With Love

Menopause has a way of forcing you to push people away. Resist this urge and fight this trend at all costs. If you isolate and cut out positive influences in your life, your self-esteem will shrink. To give your esteem a burst of life, spend more time around the people, things, and places that you love and those that love you. Doing this will

remind you of how other people see you, and their positive reactions will instill in you a renewed belief that you are a worthwhile, self-assured, and independent person.

Conclusion

Menopause is a powerful force in the life of any woman. Rather that allowing the biological changes to override your self-esteem, take control over your physical and emotional health to boost your self-esteem.

By gaining education, finding acceptance and improving your lifestyle while you change your self-talk and surround yourself with love, you will counteract the impact of menopause. With work, it can be a change for the better.