# You’re Still You: Getting Through a Menopause Identity Crisis

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## Menopause and Your Identity

Any transition you face can be stressful. As a woman, there is perhaps no bigger transition than that of menopause. Menopause marks a huge physical and emotional shift in your life: you may find that you are not thinking, looking or feeling like yourself; depression and anxiety symptoms can present or worsen during this time; energy levels can swing without warning; relationships can become less desirable. With this change, many women feel like a part of them is lost and their identity becomes unclear. Let's take a deep dive into a menopause identity crisis.

### Stay You

- **Acknowledge the loss.** Some think that there must be death for loss. This is simply not true. Your body is undergoing a significant transformation and your psychological health is changing. Trying to convince yourself that “everything is fine” increases the strain on your identity. Once you admit that something is happening you can proceed with solutions.
- **Practice sleep hygiene.** Night sweats and hot flashes can disrupt sleep. With poor sleep, anyone can become more irritable, confused and anxious. Work towards solutions to improve sleep. Always consult your doctor but consider supplements and herbal remedies. Experiment with ice or cool cloth to increase your comfort.
- **Investigate other stress.** Menopause has become a large part of your life but it is not the only part. Identify and work to resolve other stresses in your life. Menopause typically occurs when children are grown and leaving the home. Your parents might also be experiencing failing health and losing their independence. Work, relationships, views on childbearing and sexuality are in a state of flux during menopause. These all influence your well-being.

- **Focus on the benefits.** The list of negatives associated with menopause is a long one but listing positives can change your perceptions and strengthen your identity. Menstruating is a chore. No more periods means no more PMS. There is freedom found in menopause. Many women find sex to be more enjoyable without the chance of pregnancy.
- **Find new directions.** Flexibility is needed to maintain an evolving identity. Clinging to “how things used to be” creates a rigid and static self-concept. You are not the person you were 10 or 15 years ago. That is expected. Discover new parts of yourself: take the class that you have been too busy to enroll in until now; go to more movies; take hikes in the forest or walk around the block.
- **Use your supports.** Any time there is a new stressor, review your support. Who or what would be able to improve your current state? Seek them out and be open about what you are going through. Ask for suggestions. If your current supports are unable to assist, seek out new caring people or situations. In-person and online support groups are a good option. Psychotherapists can assist in several ways and have the training to aid in life transitions.

### Conclusion

With the move into menopause, like other transitions, your identity is bound to change. Maintaining the “old you” through a menopause identity crisis is not as important as it is to be comfortable in your skin. Change is life. Hopefully, this end is a new start.