Menopause and Anxiety

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How the Body Confuses Menopause and Anxiety

Menopause brings with it a multitude of physical changes as the end of menstruation is met with both relief and sadness. Menopause provides new benefits and takes away others. Unfortunately, one new thing that menopause often brings is anxiety.

Recent surveys and studies find that women in the early stages of menopause are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and panic. There is some logic to this if you look at physical symptoms of anxiety, which include tingling, feeling hot, dizziness, trembling, flushed face and hot/cold sweats. If you compare these to symptoms usually attributed to menopause, you will see they are nearly identical.

At times, your body may misperceive these physical responses to hormonal changes as anxiety. Essentially, the feelings of being hot and dizzy trick you into panic. Since you don't want to add any more unwanted symptoms to your list, it is key to prepare yourself and prevent anxiety from being a larger part of your life. Here's how:

Tackling Anxiety

- **Differentiate** - Thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviors and physical sensations can trigger anxiety and panic. As mentioned, menopause and anxiety have similar symptoms, which your body can misinterpret. Learning to accurately identify symptoms of menopause and differentiating them from anxiety is helpful. What does anxiety feel like? What does panic feel like? What does menopause feel like? Consider the differences and make lists to clarify them.
- **Self-monitor** - Pay more attention to your body and your mind. What are you thinking? What does your body feel like? Noticing changes and new sensations while they are small gives you more power to react and reduce your symptoms. If left to build, your thoughts can become more negative and anxious.
- **Discomfort** - Anxiety works by making you think that something terrible is going to happen. After a panic attack, people report thinking that they were having a heart attack, a stroke or that they were going to stop breathing. Anxiety is scary but anxiety is only anxiety. Remind yourself that menopause is creating these new sensations and experiences. Certainly they are uncomfortable, but they are not dangerous.
- **Treat the symptoms** - If you can treat the symptoms of menopause early, your mind will not have time to misperceive them. If sweats are problematic, find measures to keep cool and always have solutions available. The longer you experience the symptoms, the harder anxiety will try to convince you of danger.

- **Relax** - Menopause is stressful enough without the added pressures of anxiety. Everyone can benefit from finding new sources of relaxation. Yoga, deep breathing, guided imagery and autogenics yield high benefits when done consistently. You can also engage in more pleasurable activities like visiting with friends or going out for dinner and a movie.
- **Find support** - Discussing your feelings and experiences with trusted people in your life will improve your experience. Seek out advice from people with expertise on the subject. What do they recommend? What did they do for themselves when they were in your situation?

Conclusion

Don’t let your body misinterpret menopause for anxiety. Though the symptoms are similar, taking time to increase your knowledge, awareness and prevention will leave you better prepared. A more prepared you and is less anxious you.