Menopause and Family

by ERIC PATTERSON

Working Through Menopause With Your Family

Some symptoms of menopause cannot be changed. Hot flashes, night sweats, frequent urination and painful sex are an unfortunate effect of changing estrogen levels. Additionally, the psychological impact can be as severe as the physical when changing moods, irritability and increased anxiety begin. You may feel like a completely different person.

During this transition, you need additional support. Maintaining and improving relationships with family and close friends is paramount for coping with the changes of menopause. If supports begin to diminish, you will have fewer positives to balance the negatives. Too many negatives means you will perceive your physical symptoms as well as any depression and anxiety as worse.

The Menopause Conversation

At the onset of menopause, it is necessary for you to use your time and energy wisely. A great use of your resources is to communicate your needs, feelings and concerns to your supports. The conversation may seem difficult but if done well, can provide much-needed benefit. Firstly, you'll need to:

- **Get educated –** When you had to do a presentation in school, the first step was gathering research. The same is true in this instance. Talk to people who have already been through or are going through menopause. Understand their symptoms and experience. Discuss symptoms with your doctor and find reliable written information. This will provide you some level of expertise on the subject.
- **Know yourself –** Though there are themes and common groups of symptoms for people during menopause, your individual experience will differ. Pay attention to yourself. Gain a familiarity with when your symptoms strike and what your triggers include. Knowing what helps to reduce the symptoms is valuable as well. Experiment with different remedies to find success.

Gathering the needed information is the first step. The next is actually communicating with your family. Here are some tips to make the conversation as successful as possible.

- **Know your audience –** The way you talk with your teenage daughter about menopause will be different to how you talk with your college-aged son, your husband or your mother. Consider their understanding and experience with menopause and provide the material in easily understandable ways. Because of the varying levels, having a big family meeting on the subject may not be effective.

- **Get assertive –** Being assertive means that you put your feelings on the same level as the people you are communicating with. Be clear and honest about your symptoms and experiences. Let them know when symptoms began and how long they may be present. Know that menopause is part of life and it is not a failing on your part.
- **List wants and needs –** Now that your family knows what you are going through, tell them what they can

do about it. Be specific and concrete. Do you want more alone time or more time with family? Would it help if someone had a cold compress ready for you at 9pm each night? Tell them. Don’t forget that your family loves and values you. They want to help, but they need some direction.

Conclusion

If you think that it would be better to avoid the conversation about your menopause, reconsider. As a member of the family, your symptoms affect and frustrate others as they do you. They will be ready, willing and able to help. Remember, if mom isn’t happy, no one is.