

Empower - Menopause and Cancer Survivorship Pathway

Losses Arising from Menopause

Tips and Advice

Body Image/Self-Esteem

1. Compliment yourself on one or two features you like about yourself. Write these traits down. When you are pre-occupied with thinking about traits you dislike about your body, look at the traits you wrote down.
2. Engage in activities that make you feel good. Activities could include socializing with those close to you or engaging in a spiritual activity.
3. Exercise is a great coping tool for self-esteem challenges. The goal does not have to be to lose weight, exercise generally increases happiness and confidence. s

[Get Positive About Body Image | The North American Menopause Society, NAMS](#)

Fertility

1. It is recommended to discuss fertility with your doctor before surgery/treatments. They can discuss resources and supports with you.
2. Talk with a close friend or relative or someone you are comfortable with about how you are feeling.
3. Ask your care team about available counselling options and/or support groups.
4. Engage in physical activity to relieve stress, tension, and anxiety.
5. Try deep breathing exercises.
 - a. Recommended breathing exercise:
 - i. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
 - ii. Bring awareness to your breath.
 - iii. Put one hand on your chest and one on your abdomen.
 - iv. Slowly exhale.
 - v. Inhale slowly and feel your abdomen rise.
 - vi. Exhale and feel your abdomen fall. Make sure your exhale is longer than your inhale.
 - vii. Pause for a few moments and repeat the process. Try to do this exercise for 5 minutes every day.
6. Visualization Technique (this technique can be used when one is feeling overwhelming emotions surrounding infertility)
 - a. Think of a time when you were emotionally in control during a potentially stressful situation. For instance, maybe a time you were taking a test but did not feel nervous because you had spent a lot of time preparing. Or perhaps you were participating in a road race and were confident in your ability to complete it because you had done adequate training.
 - b. Think about how you felt when the event happened. Specifically try to remember the feeling of knowing you were going to be fine.

- c. Think about this memory for a few minutes. Specifically focus on the feeling of being in control of your emotions.
- d. Try to practice this technique every day.
- e. Once you get comfortable with the technique, you will find that it gets easier and easier to recall the feeling of being in emotional control during a potentially stressful moment. When you get to the point that recalling the feeling is very easily, try squeezing your index finger every time you recall the feeling. Doing this will help you associate the finger squeeze with feelings of control.
- f. In the future, when something happens that triggers your emotions surrounding loss (perhaps someone announces a pregnancy at work), squeeze your index finger. The squeeze can bring about a feeling of control over your emotions in the tough moment.

[Coping Strategies | Fertility Network \(fertilitynetworkuk.org\)](http://fertilitynetworkuk.org)

Tasks for Easing a Loss

- Acknowledging the loss
- Opening up to the pain
- Revising assumptions about the world
- Reconstructing the relationship with that which has been lost
- Reinventing oneself.
- Journaling
 - Scientifically proven to benefit psychologically with transitions, with emotional processing, and healing
 - Can be free-form, stream of consciousness.
 - Or directed, with prompts for yourself, e.g.
 - What is hardest right now
 - What I am saying goodbye to
 - What I can't let go of
 - What I am looking forward to
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Reconnecting with Others

- Try to share some of your experiences when you feel able to
- Seek out other women going through similar experiences
- Reflect the cultural lens of menopause and how it makes a difference
 - Women in western cultures report more symptoms
- In Japan, the word for menopause is “konenki” which is made up of three parts reflecting energy, reflection, and renewal.
 - About transition and a new purpose

Reconnecting with the body

- Assumptions and behaviours relating to the body are disrupted
 - This can feel like a betrayal
- Can sometimes feel like a disembodiment
 - A loss of connection with your body – “cut off”
 - A loss of your former sexual or feminine self

- Reconnecting with the body through gentle exercise
 - Yoga, dance, walking, stretching, breathing
 - Meditation and imagery
 - Finding the compassionate self – putting your arm around yourself