

# Meg's Meno Matters



**This issue menopause advocate and entrepreneur, Meg Mathews explains her experience in relation to menopause and ...**

## Men

**A**s many will know my menopause story meant that at one stage I didn't leave my house for three months, as I suffered numerous menopausal symptoms, which at the time I thought may have been payback for what I call my 'colourful 1990s.'

However, when I finally got sorted with my HRT treatment I asked my GP to print out all the information available on menopause symptoms. At the time I had two male business partners, my own partner and daughter Anaïs and being the open person that I am I sat them all down and started to explain: "I've been diagnosed..." but at the word 'diagnosed' they freaked, thinking the worst!

When finally the sentence, "I've been diagnosed as menopausal," was uttered there was a rolling of eyes from the men but I was able to explain to them that all the insomnia, anxiety, foggy brain, feel overwhelmed, not being able to drive Anaïs to school, not wanting sex with my partner now all made sense to me and I wanted them to understand it too.

This was some six, almost seven years ago now but interestingly, my two then business partners, in their thirties, said they could remember their mums going through it, one saying how she underwent a change and found an open window blissful. I've found that it tends to be sons that seem to recall more about their mum experiencing things like hot flushes than daughters do.

Back at that time I remember being able to then explain to my then partner why I'd lost my sex drive – that this was down to my then lack of estrogen and testosterone. Given that my night sweats happened around 4am I would often wake at 3am in anticipation, which would mean I was awake until 6am and then by the time I'd enough energy to drag myself out of bed half the day would be gone and by 11am I would feel utterly exhausted!

Even when special occasion evenings out were on offer I would prefer to stay in my PJs and sleep. Hard for any man to understand but in essence I was no fun and not a joy to be with. By the time I'd been through my menopause clinic it was too late for my partner at the time and we separated.

It is a delicate situation for women and their partners. As CEOs of the household women often bite their tongues and are just used to "getting on with it" rather than talking about what we're going through...and that's even when we understand what's happening to us at the time. But we should be able to share things with others but I sense we are still a long way from that point.

My trip in a London cab from Knightsbridge to Primrose Hill is a great illustration of that. The cabbie was a man in his late sixties. As I got in he said: "Meg Mathews, Noel Gallagher's ex in my cab – what are you up to these days then?"

My response was to explain I was on a mission to be an ambassador about the menopause... "Whoah," he cried, "way too much information, way too much. I don't want to hear about that sort of thing."

"Why not?" was my response. "There are 13 million women going through it at the moment, it impacts everyone." Turned out he had three daughters, two in their forties and one in their late thirties. "So," I continued, "your wife will have been through it and if your daughters are not already they will be in the not too distant future." I went on to explain the sort of symptoms that can be experienced and by the end of the drive he said: "Well, I hadn't a clue that my wife could have been through any of that or my kids could be faced with it. When I get home I'm going make my wife some tea and give her a big hug. I'll also tell my daughters that I now know and understand more about what might be happening or could happen to them."

My point is that just that one man had four women close to him but no knowledge about menopause as part of their lives. That's incredible when you think about it as menopause is going to happen to every single woman in this country.

I do realise that lots of women can talk about their experiences but there are other cultures in our country who can't speak to their partners. There are some men who can only acknowledge it by taking the mickey or talking about "being over the hill, all dried up or just going through 'the change.' It's hurtful of course. So, what can we do about it?

Well, I'd say give them all a copy of my book of course... or leave it lying around for them to pick up. It comes with attitude yes but is meant to be a change from the old-fashioned approach. Some men, like the cabbie, might remember me from Brit pop or know my daughter, Anais. We want talking about it to be normalised.

Despite everything there is still not enough correct information out there. We need a meno storyline to be in one of the key soaps. So come on Eastenders, Coronation Street, Emmerdale. You could see Bet Lynch having a flush behind the bar and talking about it couldn't you? We want the subject matter broached in something the whole family can buy into and watch.

I know we still need it as sitting in my friend's garden, along with others, including some young men in their twenties she complained of aching joints and feeling her age – which was around 40 at the time. I told her that

she was likely to be perimenopausal and what it was likely to mean for her.

I knew the guys were listening but they were not embarrassed, not uninterested but my friend said: "I didn't think it would happen to me!" as though it was something she had a choice in!

Well, I used to think that before my menopause journey. After all I gave birth in just an hour and fifteen minutes and got up and had a shower, I had never had a heavy period. It was not going to happen to me either...well how wrong was I! Or rather – how little I knew about this stage of life before it happened to me.

So, let's keep on battling for a time when menopausal women are not concerned that their man might run off with a younger model because he doesn't understand what they're going through. Something I hear a lot sadly.

Let's keep talking about it, understand what help there is out there and help others realise it's not only normal but important for everyone to know about.

Until the next time...

Love Meg  
XX

• **"We need a meno storyline to be in one of the key TV soaps so the whole family can get engaged and see what can happen for women."** says Meg.

