

Avoiding menopausal meltdowns *during the lockdown*

Kerry Dolan offers some calm in these troubling times and some exercises that might help.

However - plot twist - another common feeling around mid-life is - let's face it - an intense irritability around our partners and/or kids. Though we can feel pretty bad about this, it's a natural side effect of subsiding hormones.

In my personal experience, and that of many of my clients, the menopause has often manifested as a strong urge to run away from the world. A sudden feeling of overwhelm, much like the feeling you get on a thrill ride when it starts to speed up and it dawns on you that there's no way to get off. The main difference is that no one can tell us just how long this ride will last and just how we'll feel when we do get off.

Many of you are now in the position of having stepped off the rollercoaster of life for a bit and perhaps, like me, the ground is still feeling unsteady beneath your feet.



The hormones that are the hallmark of our reproductive years are designed to domesticate us. Nature literally dopes us up so that we will more cheerfully take on the role of carer and nurturer. Whether that has manifested for you in your care for your partner, your kids, your family or your career, the lowered dose of people-pleasing hormones can often reveal to us some situations that are no longer tolerable. You probably got a glimpse of this each month, just before your period, when your hormones dropped off, but you may have blamed yourself for being hormonal (quite the opposite).



• **Stepping off life's rollercoaster can still feel a little shaky underfoot.**

You finally have a chance to retreat from your busy life a little and get on top of this whole menopause business only to find yourself locked in with some of your biggest triggers – perhaps not the retreat you were looking for. Nevertheless, this could be the perfect time for you to look at those triggers and make some adjustments in your life to ensure your needs are being met both now and in the future.

So how can you use this time to re-set, re-evaluate and get the rest you crave?

Evaluate your needs and those of your family:

Everyone's household looks different and therefore your needs will be different. I live with my husband – who already works from home – and three kids of 7, 9 and 11. On day one, we all completed a version of an exercise that I often use with my clients: the NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) Wheel of Life.

Begin by drawing a large circle on paper and then divide it into segments to represent areas of your life. We used: spirituality/ wellbeing, Health/ Fitness, Friends/ Community, Romance, Finances, Career/ School, Relaxation/ Fun, Personal Development, Family and Home Environment (which has suddenly taken the spotlight!) though you can adapt them in any way that feels right for you and your family.

In each segment we listed ways to meet these needs during lockdown, getting creative with ideas for virtual days out, meet-ups with friends on Zoom, pie in the sky projects that



• **Kerry suggests giving the Wheel of Life of life a go.**

we finally have time to explore, things we always wanted to learn about, journeys we'd like to plan for after this is over and bizarre science experiments – this from my seven year old who is currently mummifying an apple.

Create a structure for your freedom

Like many of you, I still have work to fit into my days. I'm still writing and many of my clients have been happy to move to Zoom. Equally, the kids still have schoolwork and my husband is still working. By looking at our circles, we have been able to create a basic framework which ensures that everyone is getting more or less what they need.

In our case this has meant that I am attempting to book clients during what would be my normal working hours, which gives my husband an idea of when he'll need to keep the kids quiet.

We have scheduled an hour of quiet time every day where the kids go to their rooms to draw, read or nap and my husband and I also take time to indulge in some proper isolation. Alarms are still set (though a little later than normal) and we all get up and do some exercise – this is constantly developing as each of us explore the many lockdown options available some live-streaming of our favourite classes, PT sessions with daddy in the garden and letting our hair down with 'Just Dance' routines.

The trick is finding the balance between having enough structure to keep things ticking over whilst making sure that everyone has the freedom to relax and explore new things. It will also need to be revised and adapted as your situation evolves. →





Delegate

By the end of day one I found myself exasperated by the mounting piles on the stairs – you know, the ones full of stray objects imbued with the vain hope that their owners will take them and restore them to their proper home. My normal positive attitude threatened to cave at this early hurdle as I contemplated the sudden hike in my domestic burden. Then I remembered that I had a small pool of available, if not enthusiastic, laborers. I warn you, if you have a similar resource available, they generally lack enterprise and require direction but, given specific enough instructions and, if necessary, the lure of WiFi connection, you can harness your own mini workforce.

If it is your partner or another adult who is not pulling their weight, you may need to employ a different tactic, but it needs addressing none-the-less.

Allow your emotions to signpost you

Our feelings are our allies in life, alerting us to whether or not our needs are being met. Sensations such as hunger, cold and thirst form

a language which conveys our basic needs whilst feelings like loneliness, boredom and anger herald deficiencies higher up in Maslow's hierarchy. Feelings like comfort, joy and pride encourage us to do more of the same and less pleasant feelings are a call to action.

“Allow yourself to do what you need to do in any given moment, learn to accept the whole rainbow of your feelings.”



I invite you to give more space to your feelings in the coming weeks and months, paying close attention to the guidance they offer. There will likely be times when you feel inspired to action – as I have been to write this this morning – and others where you feel listless and indifferent. Allow yourself to be and do what you need in any given moment, learn to accept the whole rainbow of your needs and feelings. In moments where it really is not possible or practical to give your emotions free rein, be sure to revisit them as soon as possible.”

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