

Better Together: Finding Support Through Midlife

10/12/2026



Think about a time in your life when you experienced a difficult change. Maybe it was health-related, a job transition, a move, or simply entering a new phase of life. Whatever it was, you can probably identify some things that helped you get through it, and often those “things” were actually people and relationships.

The same can be true during menopause. Research has found that women who report no relationship difficulties experience less severe menopausal symptoms than women who report relationship difficulties (Kling et al., 2019). Research from the Harvard Study of Adult Development also suggests that having at least one strong relationship with someone you can rely on during times of need is important for overall well-being (Mineo, 2023). Together, these findings highlight how important supportive relationships can be during times of change, including the transition through menopause.

Menopause can bring physical and emotional changes that affect many areas of life. Having people who listen, offer encouragement, help lighten the load, and simply remind us that we are not alone can make those changes easier to navigate. That support can come from a partner, family member, friend, someone going through a similar experience, or a professional.

Listen, Validate, and Check In

Sometimes the most helpful thing another person can offer is a listening ear. You do not have to fully understand what someone is experiencing to listen and show empathy.

Active listening means putting away distractions, being present, and allowing someone to share without

immediately jumping in with advice or solutions. There are certainly times when problem-solving is helpful, but sometimes a person simply needs to feel heard and understood (Lynne, 2024; We Thrive Together, n.d.). A response as simple as, “I’m sorry. That sounds really hard,” can provide meaningful validation.

Regular check-ins can also help. These conversations do not need to be formal. They might happen over dinner, during a walk, on a date night, through a phone call, or even in a quick text. Simply asking, “How are you doing?” or “Is there anything you need from me?” can open the door for connection and support.

Lighten the Load

Menopause does not happen in isolation from the rest of life. Many people experiencing menopause are also balancing work, family responsibilities, caregiving, household tasks, and other demands. Add symptoms such as fatigue or difficulty sleeping, and even everyday responsibilities may sometimes feel overwhelming.

This is where practical support can make a difference. A partner might take over a household responsibility, while a friend or family member might bring a meal, run an errand, or help with another task (We Thrive Together, n.d.).

Rather than assuming what someone needs, ask what would be helpful, or make a specific offer. “I’m going to the grocery store. Can I pick something up for you?” may be easier to accept than a general, “Let me know if you need anything.”

Support can also mean encouraging self-care without making it feel like another item on the to-do list. Better yet, do something together. Take a walk, enjoy a meal, attend a class, or plan something fun. This provides an opportunity to recharge while also strengthening your connection.

Learn and Talk About Menopause Together

Menopause can be difficult to understand, even for the person experiencing it. Learning about menopause together can help partners, friends, and family members better understand some of the physical and emotional changes that may occur.

Without that understanding, it can be easy to make assumptions. A partner, for example, might interpret changes in mood, energy, or interest as something

personal when they may be related to changes occurring during menopause.

No one needs to have all the answers. Learning from reliable sources, asking questions, and talking openly about changing needs can help reduce misunderstandings and build empathy.

Find People Who Understand

Support from people who care about us is valuable, but there can also be something reassuring about connecting with someone who can say, “I’ve experienced that too.”

Menopause can sometimes feel isolating, particularly when people do not feel comfortable talking about their symptoms or experiences. Connecting with others who are going through similar transitions can provide validation, comfort, and a sense of belonging (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2024).

These connections might come through friends, community programs, classes, support groups, or other social networks. Sharing experiences can provide new ideas for coping with challenges while also offering encouragement and a reminder that you are not alone.

Sometimes additional support may also be helpful. If menopause symptoms are significantly affecting daily life, consider talking with a healthcare professional. A therapist or other mental health professional may also be helpful when emotional or relationship challenges become difficult to manage. Professional help does not replace support from the people in our lives, it simply adds another valuable resource to our support network. When appropriate, partners may also consider attending therapy together to strengthen communication, understanding, and support.

Better Together

Menopause is a personal experience, but it does not have to be navigated alone. Partners, friends, family members, peers, and professionals can each provide different types of support along the way.

And support usually does not require a grand gesture. Listening without judgment, checking in, learning together, helping with an everyday task, or simply spending time together can make a meaningful difference.

If you are going through menopause, consider who is part of your support system, and don't be afraid to let them

know what you need. If someone you care about is going through menopause, remember that you do not need to have all the answers. Sometimes simply showing up, listening, and reminding someone that they are not alone is enough.

References

- Canadian Mental Health Association. (2024). *Strength in connection: How peer support can change lives*. <https://cmha.ca/news/strength-in-connection-how-peer-support-can-change-lives/>
- Kling, J. M., Kelly, M., Rullo, J., Kapoor, E., Kuhle, C. L., Vegunta, S., Mara, K. C., & Faubion, S. S. (2019). Association between menopausal symptoms and relationship distress. *Maturitas*, 130, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2019.09.006>
- Lynne. (2024, June 5). *Love and hormones: How to keep your relationship strong during menopause*. Menopause Network. <https://menopausenetwork.org/keep-your-relationship-strong-during-menopause/>
- Mineo, L. (2023, February 10). *Relationships make us happy—and healthy*. The Harvard Gazette. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/02/work-out-daily-ok-but-how-socially-fit-are-you/>
- We Thrive Together. (n.d.). *A shoulder to lean on: Supporting friends through tough times*. <https://wethrivetogether.org/2024/05/14/a-shoulder-to-lean-on-supporting-friends-through-tough-times/>

Authors

Sunee Shaw, Student Intern, and **Naomi Brower**, Extension Professor