

## **{Article} How Menopause Changes Your Relationships (and What to Do About it)**

No part of your life remains untouched by menopause, including your relationships with partners, children, parents, friends and work colleagues. All are going to undergo a shift, however subtle, as you move into a greater sense of authority with clearer parameters about yourself. It's called The Change for a reason.

In our years of sitting with those undergoing the menopause initiation, we've seen that the shift is most stark in intimate relationships with a significant other. Of course, over the course of a lifetime a relationship needs to change and evolve in order to remain meaningful and intimate but, as you may well have noticed (!), menopause can be a particularly strong evolutionary moment in that journey.

Whoever you're intimately relating with—man, woman, person—the way you encounter the challenges and possibilities of menopause will hold some differences. However, we feel there are some suggestions that we think universally apply to all intimate relationships going through menopause and they are:

### **ONE: Your relationship may also travel through the 'Five Phase of Menopause'.**

Your relationship may also undergo a version of the five phases we describe in our book *Wise Power*—through Betrayal, Repair, Revelation, Vision and Emergence. This often looks like a need to pull away, a feeling of loss or a period of uncertainty followed by awakenings about your needs and desires. (Which may or may not be with that same person). And although this will possibly be painful and challenging, it's not necessarily bad.

### **TWO: The premenstrual phase of your cycle can give you some clues.**

How you navigate or have navigated the premenstrual phase of the cycle together during the years leading up to menopause will give both you and your partner some indicators for what you may meet at menopause.

If you're still menstruating, pay attention premenstrually to the 'cage-rattling' moments in your relationship. Learning to meet those premenstrual provocations as meaningful and finding ways to

address what arises will create in you the means to meet menopause disturbances with greater presence, care and insight.

**THREE: Take time to withdraw, but stay in communication.**

Wanting out of your relationship is one of the themes that commonly come up in the premenstruum and during menopause. Whether your relationship is sturdy or not, an initial impulse may be a desire to pull away from your partner. And in the moment that may certainly feel like ‘the end’.

Remember, in the initial stage of menopause, much of what you’ve been doing or how you’ve been doing it may not feel right. It’s not necessarily that this relationship isn’t right for you; it’s that you need time and space to reassess and rediscover yourself. So, detach or withdraw you must. But do let your partner in on what’s happening, otherwise they’ll simply feel rejected when in fact what you’re doing is taking space for yourself.

**FOUR: Menopause will change them too.**

Whether they like it or not! And since you happen to be the initiator of the change you may not be overly loved for it. You must both be willing to hold the tension and trust the unknown, waiting for it (your deep self) to speak. Some partners may simply not be up for this. There’s no implied criticism here—you’re navigating the strange mystery of your life and sometimes it reroutes you in ways you hadn’t imagined or wanted.

**FIVE: Meet the disturbance as the next necessary step for your relationship.**

We want to highlight a beautiful conversation we had with Movement Medicine co-founders, Susannah and Ya’acov Darling Khan about how their relationship evolved. Ya’Acov saw Susannah’s menopause as the next necessary development in their lives and he, as well as their relationship itself, was up for it. He was strong enough and responsible enough to step up to what was needed for Susannah to experience her new, slower, menopause tempo. And it turned out to support his own growth too. You can hear Susannah’s conversation with Alexandra [here >>](#)

**SIX: Bring kindness and a sense of humour.**

Vulnerability is the name of the game at menopause. It is the necessary fertile condition for your evolution. You're standing in a new, deep, sacred negotiation with yourself. And therefore you can't afford to have people close to you blundering around, unconscious of their own needs and wants and insensitive to yours as well.

You and your partner need to be awake and aware—and who can do that all the time? Some kindness and a sense of humour will be needed if you're to turn it into an opportunity for growth together.

**SEVEN: Partners need instructions.**

They need to know your parameters, your needs—as much as you're able to articulate them—to have some frame of reference and understanding.

Now, you may or may not be able to give this to them. Although you'll likely have an instinct for what you need and want, you may not yet have the words to go with it, making it hard for your partner. To be fair to them, they aren't inside your experience but rather encounter the effect of it and they may feel wrong-footed, reactive, lost, angry, uncertain and locked out. It can be very confusing. In a sense they're undergoing a betrayal too. Such is life.