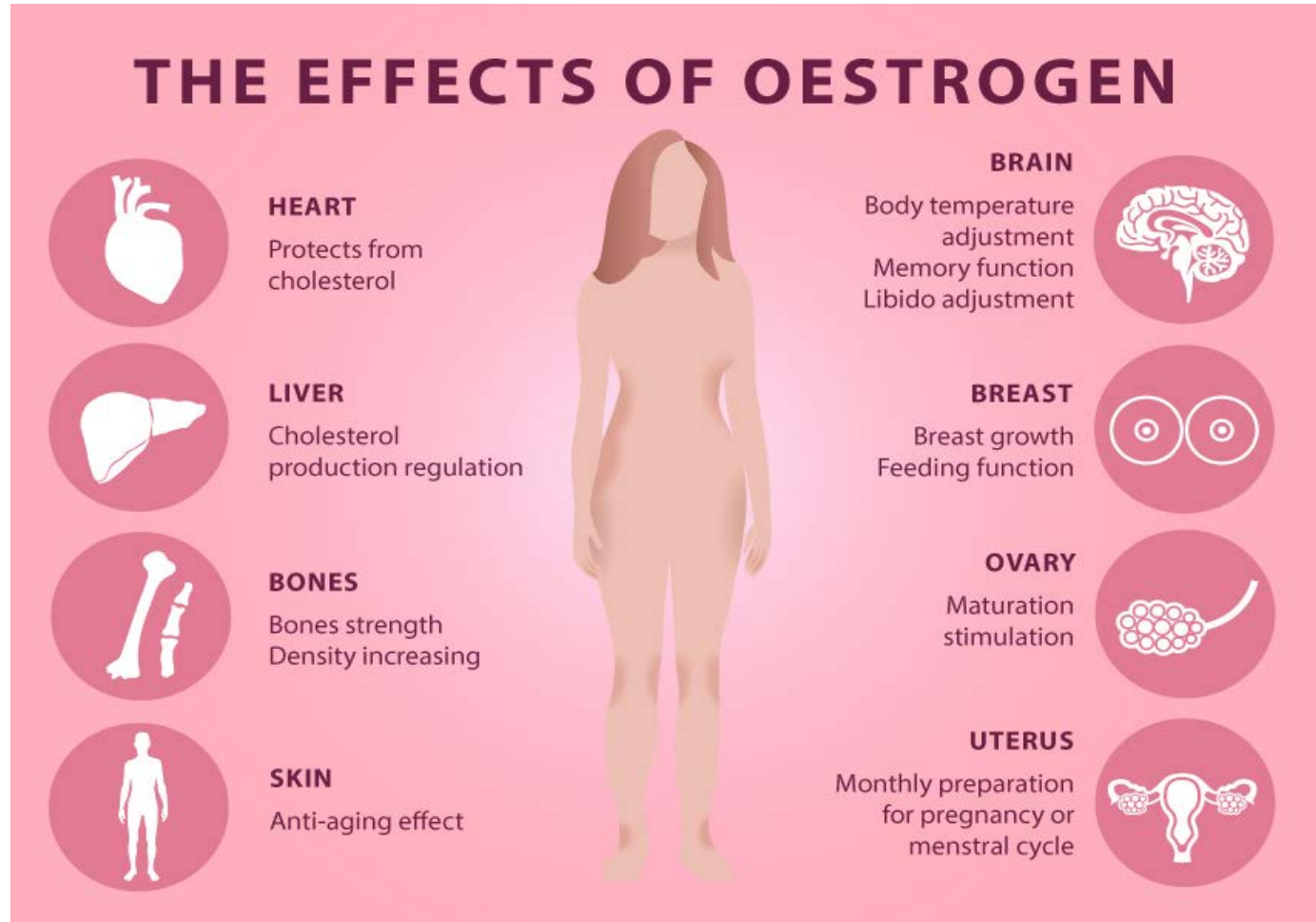


The Challenges of midlife and older women: The
menopausal transition and nutrition

ANNETTE THOMAS, PHD, RN

The Menopausal Transition

Estrogen



Symptoms

Hot flashes

Irritability

Mood swings

Fatigue

Memory troubles

Vaginal dryness

Sleep disturbances

Skin texture changes

Menstrual Calendar

L	Light	N	Normal	H	Heavy	C	Cramps	P	PMS
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Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3			
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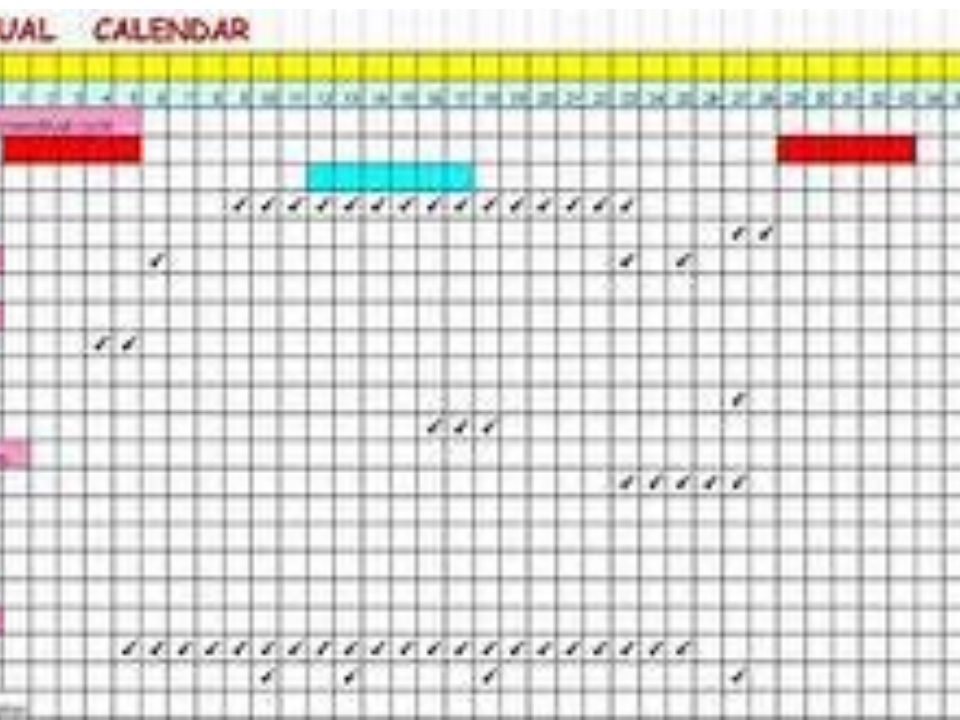
Menopausal Transition Stages

Early transition - when your period changes by 2-3 days

Late Transition – when you begin to skip periods

Menopause – defined retrospectively as a year after your last period

Post-menopausal



(Mitchell et al., 2005)



The Seattle Midlife Women's Health Study

A longitudinal study from 1992-2013

Number of participants = 508 women

Entered when they were 35 – 55 years

They left the study when they were 5 years post-menopausal

They filled out menstrual calendars, gave blood and urine samples, and filled out an annual questionnaire

The Challenges of Midlife Women

“Since you have been in our study (since 1990 or 1991), what has been the most challenging part of life for you?”

81 women responded

Looking back over the last 15 years

Age 54 years, on average

Mostly white, employed, married, and 54% were parents

Categories

- Family Relationships
- Work
- Self
- Material Resources
- Multiple Co-occurring Stressors



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Family Exemplars

“Losses & transitions –death of both parents, divorce from long term partner, beginning a new life with new partner and his child”

“Losing my Dad to brain cancer”

“Parenting two teenagers”

Work Exemplars

“Balancing the amount of stress created from my job”

“Finding and sustaining suitable employment with health care benefits. Having intermittent medical coverage caused me to postpone a surgery (hyperparathyroid) for 3 years”

Self Exemplars

“My heart surgery.”



“accepting the fact that I will never achieve what I set out to do in life.”

“Becoming more comfortable with myself. Accepting myself & having better self-esteem. [Raising my children. Very proud.]”





Material Resource Exemplars

“Parenting, financing college.”

“Financial stability. Constant threat of strikes or job lay off for my husband and eventually job loss.”



Multiple Co-occurring Stressors

“Dealing with stress- job stress, health stress, social stress, family stress, etc. for a time, it seemed to snowball with no end in sight.”

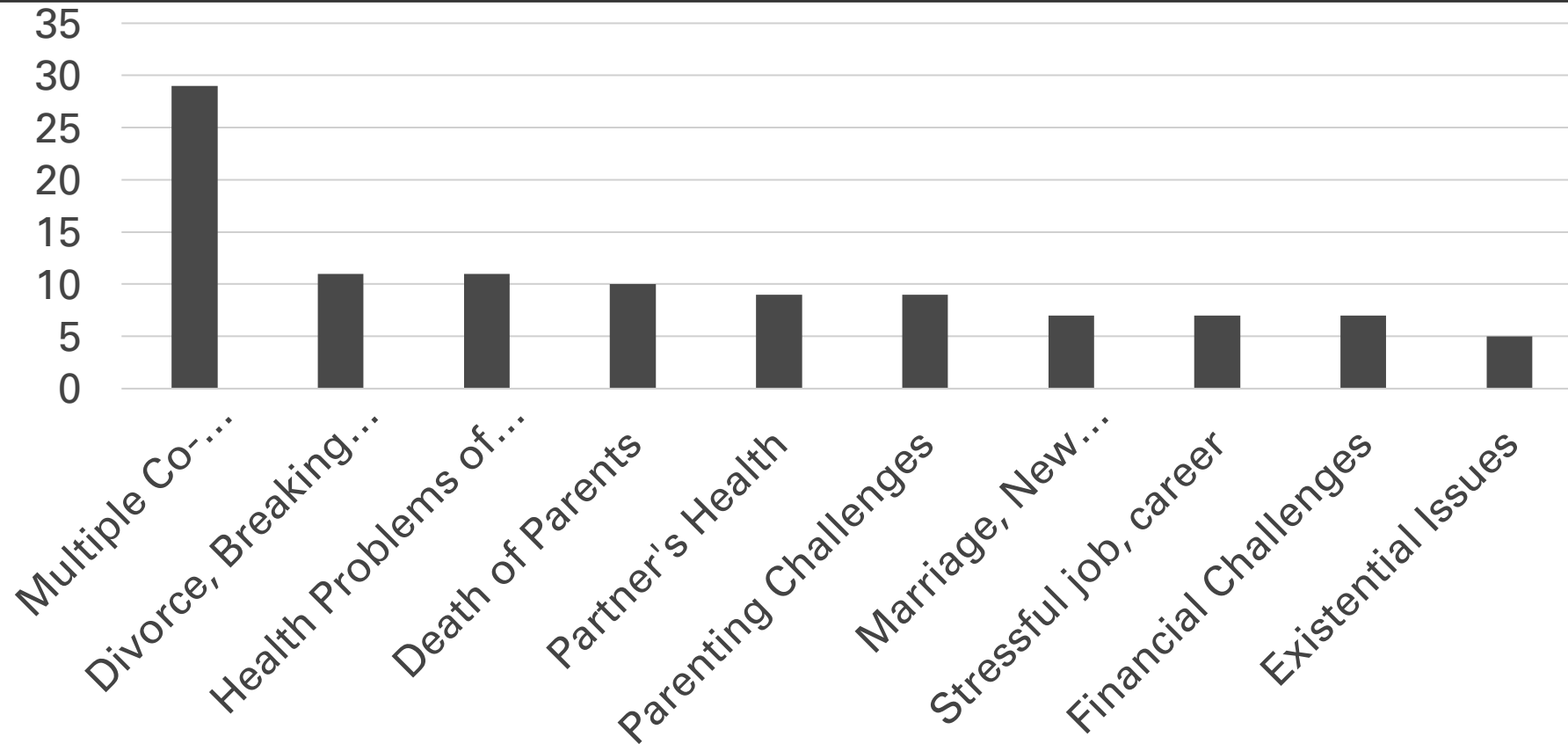


My current job, my daughter from age 15-18, my mother's death, my husband's unemployment.”

“Balancing all aspects of my life- as a mother, as a wife, as a teacher & as a woman and as the major head of the household (cooking, cleaning, etc.)”

The Challenges of Midlife Women

Most Frequently Reported Challenges for
Midlife Women in the SMWHS (N=81)



The Challenges of Midlife Women: Discussion

- Increased **role burden**, hx of sexual abuse, and depressed mood were associated with perceived stress. (Woods & Mitchell, 2009)
- Women may have multiple co-occurring stressors because they are **socialized to be the caretakers**, which may increase their role burden when they have to care for children, elderly parents, partners, in addition to running a household and working. (Woods-Giscombe, Lobel, et al., 2015)

“Network Stress” is stress that occurs to family, friends, and loved ones

Women reported more “Network Stress” than “Self-stress”

(Woods-Giscombe, Lobel, et al., 2015)

Ask yourself...

Can I identify with any of the challenges during midlife?

Do any of these challenges carry on into being an older woman?

What challenges do I have now that midlife women do not have?



Nutrition

THE FOOD YOU EAT CAN BE EITHER THE STRONGEST, MOST POWERFUL FORM OF MEDICINE, OR THE SLOWEST FORM OF POISON



We struggle with eating healthily, obesity, and access to good nutrition for everyone. But we have a great opportunity to get on the right side of this battle by beginning to think differently about the way that we eat and the way that we approach food.

— *Marcus Samuelsson* —

AZ QUOTES

Diet and exercise...

IT'S THE ONLY WAY.

FAT LOSS
80% *NUTRITION*
20% *WORKING OUT*

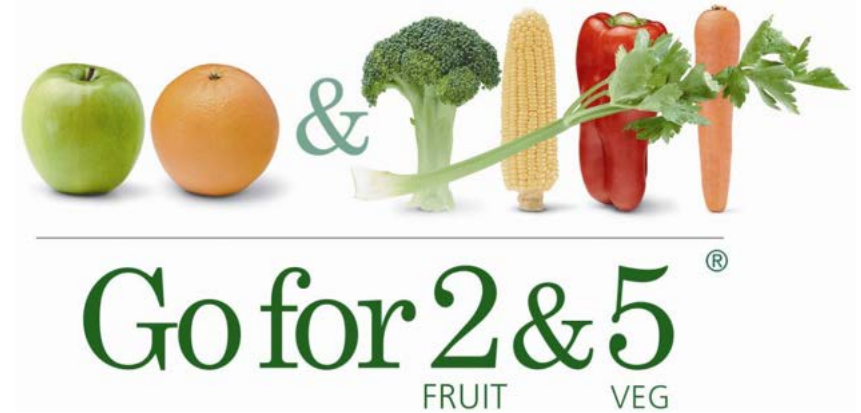
*If you're not
cleaning up your
diet, you're not
going to be
leaning out*

WorkOut
with **DI**



Decrease processed foods...

- Macaroni and cheese
- Sausage and lunch/deli meat
- Breakfast cereals
- Fake cheese
- Skip the boxed stuff
- (Ashley Bailey, MS, RDN, LDN on SAS Life)



LIMIT or AVOID
Highly Processed Foods

ENJOY OCCASIONALLY
Minimally Processed Foods

ENJOY OFTEN
Real, Whole Foods

Processed Meats:
many deli meats, jerky, hot dogs,
sausages, bacon

Clean versions of processed meats

Meats and Seafood, Eggs, Nuts and
Seeds

Ready to Heat Foods:
canned meals, TV dinners, boxed mac
& cheese, frozen chicken nuggets or
fish sticks, canned biscuits, etc

Canned beans, tomatoes, soups, etc

Beans, Lentils

Ready to Eat Refined Grain Products:
sugary cereals, white bread, white rice,
cookies, cake, pies, chips,
pretzels, candies, etc

Breads, pastas, cereals, tortillas made
with 100% whole grain flours

Whole Intact Grains (quinoa, amaranth,
brown rice, etc)

Sweetened Beverages:
soda, energy drinks, juice drinks,
coffee drinks

Canned salmon, tuna, sardines

Clean versions of milk, cheese and
yogurt

Cooking Additions:

Minimally processed sweeteners in

Why is processed food so bad for you?

“Processed” is to alter by chemical or mechanical means in order to preserve it

High amounts of sodium

Unhealthy levels of added sugar and fat

These additions can lead to **high blood pressure** (sodium), **heart disease** (cholesterol), and **obesity** (fat and empty calories)



Mediterranean Diet

Reduces the risk of heart disease, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, certain cancers, depression

In older adults, a decreased risk of frailty and better mental and physical function

Olive oil as the principal source of fat

Emphasized the consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, beans, olive oil, herbs, and spices

Eating fish and seafood is encouraged

Moderate amounts of dairy, poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt



Mediterranean Diet

- Red meat consumed infrequently and in small amounts
- Fresh fruit for dessert
- Wine consumed in low to moderate amounts, usually with meals





Plant-based diet

- May lower your blood pressure
- May lower your cholesterol (meat has cholesterol – plants do not)
- May keep your heart healthy (meat has saturated fat, which can contribute to heart problems)
- May help prevent Type 2 Diabetes (more fatty tissue makes the cells resistant to insulin)
- May help you lose weight



Blue Zones...

REGIONS OF THE WORLD WHERE A HIGHER THAN USUAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVE MUCH LONGER THAN AVERAGE.

People living in blue zones have...



Less cancer

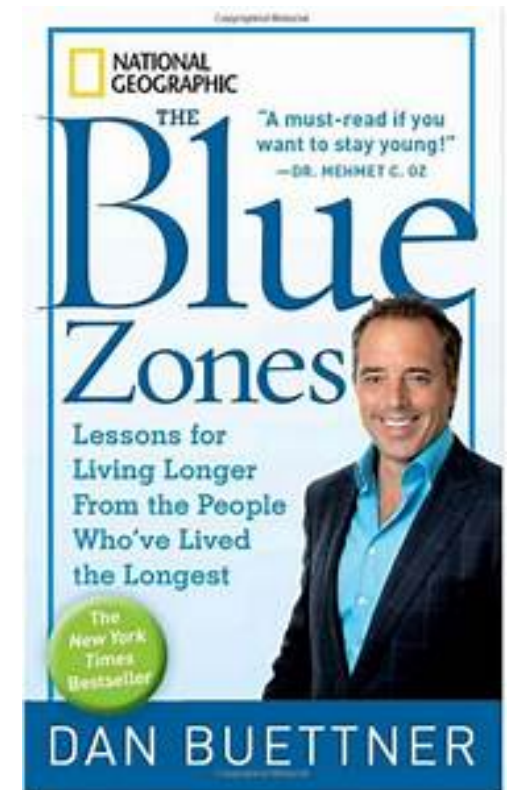
Less cardiovascular disease

Less Depression

Less Dementia

The 9 Healthy Habits

- 1. Move naturally.** Don't do marathons or pump iron; work around the house, garden, walk, cycle, walk when talking on the phone.
- 2. Know your purpose.** Have a reason for waking up in the morning.
- 3. Kick back.** Find ways to shed stress, whether it's praying, napping or going to happy hour.
- 4. Eat less.** Stop eating when you are 80% full.
- 5. Eat less meat.** Beans are a cornerstone of most centenarians' diets.



The 9 Healthy Habits cont'd...

- 6. Drink in moderation.** Only the Seventh-day Adventists in California didn't have one to two glasses a day.
- 7. Have faith.** Denomination doesn't seem to matter, but attending faith-based services (4 times a month) does.
- 8. Power of love.** Put families first, including committing to a partner and keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby.
- 9. Stay social.** Build a social network that supports healthy behaviors.



Thank you!

