

Ep #110: Celebrating Menopause: Sexual Intimacy



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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You are listening to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast*, episode 110.

Welcome to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast*, the only show that combines a fun personality, medical knowledge, sexual counseling and life coaching together. To create unique sex coaching that helps busy women awaken their libidos, address intimacy issues and learn how to express their sexuality for the rest of their days. Here is your host, certified life coach and sexual counselor, Dr. Sonia Wright.

Hey, hello, Diamonds, how are you doing? As usual it's just you and me and an early morning conversation. Yes, as usual I'm recording this in the wee hours of the morning before my kids wake up and before my partner is up too. It's just you and me and I love this time of day. It's really my favorite time of day. It's so quiet and so peaceful. And I'm just alone with my thoughts and you of course.

Last week we celebrated National Coming Out Day. And this week we're celebrating World Menopause Day on October 18th, just the day before this podcast is released. And they may seem a world apart but they really are not, at least not to me. They're both about being seen, and about being heard, and about not keeping secrets and a 100% about empowerment. In my Own Your sexuality Now intimate group, it's really all about empowerment. Yes, we talk about sex but we're really talking about empowerment.

The majority of the women in that group are perimenopausal and postmenopausal. And something to be aware about in terms of menopause is that menopause, exactly just a moment in time, it's that moment in time after 12 months without a menstrual period. But there's this whole long menopausal transition time. And that transition time generally occurs somewhere between the age of 45 and 55 when our hormones are dropping, and we're experiencing hot flushes.

We may be, not everybody, but we may be experiencing hot flushes, and mood swings, and body composition changes, and sleep disturbances, and

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memory changes. All of which impacts your life in general and definitely impact sexual intimacy. And what I've seen in my Own Your Sexuality Now group with these women is that with this transition there's almost a hunger for self-autonomy, for empowerment. I hear it again and again. "Why didn't somebody tell me about this? Why didn't somebody tell me about this menopausal time?"

It's like this physical challenge leads to an overall life protest and revolution. It's like they're realizing, I don't have to live by society's rules anymore. I can make my own choices. And I can choose to find pleasure in sexual intimacy. And I can also choose to find pleasure in my life in general. And really it's an amazing time of transition and metamorphosis. And I really consider it a great honor to be part of the journey with these women and with you, with all my Diamonds.

And actually, I would love to have you all be part of OYSN at some point. That's what I call Own Your Sexuality Now, I call it OYSN. And from this point on I'm actually only offering it once a year at the beginning of the year in January. And actually, we're going to be enrolling in the new 2023 January cohort starting at the end of November. And class starts January 11th, so remember that. And I'll talk more about OYSN later after the podcast. But right now, let's get back to menopause.

And I really want to celebrate menopause with you. It's the greatest gift, it's the greatest secret. Why are we keeping it a secret? And also, why are we acting like it's a death sentence? I really think menopause is to be celebrated. And I'm not going to lie, there are challenges but also with these challenges is the gift of menopause. It's the beginning of a whole new you. And today I'll talk about menopause and sexual intimacy and next week let's talk about menopause and overall life empowerment.

Yes, two podcasts on menopause. We could actually do many podcasts on menopause. But we're going to do two podcasts on menopause because October is World Menopause Month, so amazing. So, for me I think of menopause as a time that marks the gateway to the second half of your life. And it's important to know the first half of your life may have been

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scripted. You may have been that good girl and listened to what everybody told us was going to make our happy ever after.

So, you grew up. You dated the right people. You went to college. You got the job. You found the perfect partner. You got married. You got that house, maybe you had some children and you're raising those children. You moved on with your career and then bam, you look around and you wonder where your happy ever after is. You're thinking, I did what I was told, my body's changing, my relationships are changing. My kids are growing up and moving out maybe just temporarily because those suckers come back, let me tell you.

Maybe your parents are moving in too. Now what? Suddenly life is not so scripted. They don't have the list of what you're supposed to do from this point on. Somehow after menopause it's like a blank space and then you just pop off or something. Well, no thank you, I think I'm going to take this into my own hands and figure out what I want my life to be like. And that's what a lot of women are saying. Maybe your life is not exactly the way you want it to be and your sex life might be on life support in the ICU and now what?

Maybe initially you thought the time around menopause would be great, less responsibilities, more time for travel, more intimacy and connection. But it may not have panned out that way. Instead, you might be finding that your communication with your partner is not exactly the way you want it to be. Maybe sex is more painful now due to hormonal changes and nobody told you about this. Maybe it's more painful because of hormonal changes, or pelvic floor muscle issues, or vulva vaginal atrophy.

Atrophy, nobody talked about atrophy. They said maybe my vagina will get a little dry but they didn't use the word 'atrophy'. Nobody has mentioned genitourinary symptoms of menopause. Look it up, it's real. Maybe your libido is tanking, maybe your orgasms are weaker. Orgasms are weaker, why is nobody saying anything about this? If your partner is a vulva owner, they may be experiencing the same things.

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And if your partner is a penis owner, maybe they're experiencing erectile dysfunction and they don't want to deal with it. So, they've kind of wrapped up, closed up shop and nobody's talking about sex anymore. Maybe your partner's libido overall has taken a nosedive and you're sitting there wondering what's happening. Or perhaps issues that have not been addressed for years are coming to the surface because you don't have kids around or anything else to deal with.

And now you are just kind of looking at your partner and you're like, "We need to talk." And maybe you're at that point where the last thing you want to do is actually have sex. In fact, sex may be looking like a duty, it may be on your to-do list right after the trash. And you know I don't like that to-do sex. You know I'm just not down with that. So, let's talk about it. Let's do something about it. Or maybe you're not having to-do list sex, maybe you're not having any sex at all. Maybe sex is not happening. Maybe you are in a sexless marriage or at risk for having a sexless relationship.

And we define that as sexual intimacy less than 10 times a year. I'm here to tell you that all is not lost. For me, menopause is the gateway to your amazing future. This is the most important time in your life, let's just celebrate it. This is, if you're in that perimenopausal stage and you're wondering, what the fuck is happening. Let me just be here on the other side to welcome you and to tell you it can be phenomenal over here. At 56 I loved the postmenopausal years. That's all I've got to say.

It can be fantastic but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's easy. This is the most important time in your life. This is the make or break time for sexual intimacy. What you decide now will impact your sexual intimacy for the next 40 something years. If you're in your 40s, or 50s, let's face it, you're going to be alive into your 90s the odds are. So that means we are talking about 40 more years of sexual intimacy at least. What happens during this time it will determine if sex peters out and dies off, or if you have that amazing sexual intimacy into your 90s.

And I'm going to be asking you some questions now to help you create that amazing long sex life that you want. First, you're going to want to be

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intentional about your goals. The time for being like, “Yeah, sex, whatever, it just happens.” That time is if it’s continued up until this point, I say congratulations. But we really need to get real because the majority of us have been in this place where we know the sexual intimacy is not exactly the way we want it to be. But at the same time, we don't know what to do.

I asked you a question. I’m going to ask you a series of questions, but this is the first question, what are your sexual intimacy goals? It's important to know what you goals are and where you’re going. So, do you want to have sex three times a week? Do you want a more intimate connection with your partner or with yourself? Do you want to get comfortable with the idea of sex as being a good thing? Do you want to focus on your pleasure, pleasure for one, please, pleasure for one. And yeah, we can talk more about self-pleasure.

Do you want to focus on your pleasure with your partner or partners? Maybe what you want is just to want to want to have sex again. Or maybe you’re not having sex and you’re fine. If you’re fine, I am not making it a problem. But if you want something different, hey, I’m here to help. There’s no wrong answer but we do need to have an answer. What do you want? This is the important thing. Ask yourself that question, come up with an answer, get a goal.

Once you have a goal it’s time to commit to do the work. It’s important to talk about the truth of creating a meaningful fulfilling sex life. You have to be willing to do the work especially when we’re talking around the time of menopause and beyond. There is a myth going on out there and you know I don't like myths. There is a myth going on out there that sex should come easy, that intimacy should be an easy thing, spontaneous, that just happens, two eyes lock across the room or more and suddenly it’s on.

Well, that’s usually not is what is happening at this point in time. That myth also says that orgasms should flow easily and that a woman's pleasure should come from penetrative sex. All these myths are contributing to the demise, the demise, the death of sexual intimacy especially in the

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postmenopausal years. Our society basically says if you have to work at sex you are doing it wrong and you might as well give it up.

The truth of the matter is that if you haven't had to work at sexual intimacy you're probably pretty lucky or you're just settling, just settling for things to fade out. And that's not what we're about here. You need to be willing to work to create the sexual intimacy of your dreams. So, let's commit, let's commit to doing the work. And so, I'm going to ask you, how committed are you? How committed are you to doing this work? How committed are you to maintaining or improving the sexual intimacy in your life?

And if you're in a relationship how committed are you to that relationship and to it getting better? It's time to be honest with yourself. Are you willing to do the work? I think if you're listening to this podcast that you are willing to do the work but only you can answer that question. And I'm not going to lie, it may be some really hard work. You may have to work with your gynecologist, or a sexual medicine doctor to get things sorted out physically. You may have to be willing to have conversations. You may have to be willing to have emotional discomfort.

This work is not for the weak at heart but it is behind a 100% worth it. And you're going to have to be very intentional. No matter what course you choose there's going to be challenges. Are you committed? That's the second question that I have for you. Are you committed to doing this work? The third question I have for you, is what is your why? What is your why? So, the first question was about your goals, what is your sexual intimacy goal? The second question was are you committed to doing the work? Are you willing to do the work?

And the third question is what is your why? Because you need to have a reason behind this. Don't just do it because Dr. Sonia says to do it. Don't just do it because somewhere out there somebody said that sex was fabulous and wonderful. You have to do it because you have a personal reason for doing this work. What is your personal compelling reason for doing this work? Maybe you want to have an amazing relationship with

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yourself or with your partner. Maybe you've decided that you deserved to enjoy that mind blowing sex that people are talking about.

Maybe you find you're at a place in your life where you get the chance to explore it all. Maybe you want to redefine sexual intimacy on your terms. Whatever it is, there's got to be a compelling reason to do this work. And if it is about redefining sexual intimacy on your terms, then let's talk about that.

The fourth thing I want to talk about is redefining sexual intimacy, the sex that you had in your 20s and 30s is not going to look like the sex that you're going to have in your 40s, 50s, and 60s, and beyond, it just isn't. Your body is constantly changing, your life is different. You have different life stressors. You're going to need a new definition of sexual intimacy. Very often in our society sexual intimacy is defined in heterosexual terms, basically penis and vagina sex. It's also called penetrative sex.

And our society wants us to believe that this is the best sex and that is the only kind of sex, but it's not. This is such a limited view of sexual intimacy. It's one that I would like you all to give up because when you give that narrow definition of sexual intimacy up, you free yourself to enjoy intimacy for the rest of your life. So, I focus on Dr. Sonia's triad of sexual intimacy, connection, is there connection? Does this act bring you more connection? Is there satisfaction? Is there pleasure?

If you have those three things, the CSP of life, connection, satisfaction and pleasure then you'll be okay. In OYSN we redefine sexual intimacy and you can too. Just make sure it has that connection, satisfaction and pleasure in it, you'll be okay. So, if you get to redefine sexual intimacy for yourself, what might that look like for you? We're talking about the sexual smorgasbord here. It could be holding hands. It could be make out sessions. It could be mutual masturbation. I just want you to know that penetration is optional.

And please remember the center of a woman's pleasure is her clitoris, not her vagina. Let's make this menopause time and beyond, all about the

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clitoris. Can we pledge, can everybody listening to this podcast pledge right now that we are going to focus on the clitoris from this day forward? My vagina's okay but my clitoris is heaven. And raise your right hand, repeat after me, "I am going to dedicate the rest of my life to learning, and enjoying, and having more of a relationship with my clitoris." Let's all say that together.

Alright, and with that we get into the fifth thing, in order to improve sexual intimacy, we must be willing to talk. If we have partners we must be willing to talk to our partner. If we're solo partnered we must be willing to talk to ourselves. And sometimes it's about having a difficult conversation. This work involves communicating with ourselves or with a partner in order to get the sexual intimacy that you deserve. Often that involves having those difficult conversations.

And I'm going to be the first one to acknowledge that people have a hard time talking about sex and that's okay. There's no problem with that. I don't have a hard time talking about sex. So let me lend you that, whatever you need let me give you permission, ultimately you have to give yourself permission. But if you want me to write you a permission slip, it is okay to talk about sex. And here are a couple of things to keep in mind when you're talking about sex. Think about your sexual intimacy goal. You just defined your sexual intimacy goal at the beginning of this podcast.

If you have a partner, ask your partner as well, what they would like for their sexual intimacy goal. Think about how you would like to show up for that conversation. Realize that it's going to be more than one conversation. This is not a one and done. This is about communicating for the rest of your life. It gets easier. You might even want to consider having a sexual intimacy journal, if you have a message or something you want to say to your partner and it's hard to say the words, write it down in the journal.

Or have a sexual intimacy meetup periodically to talk about it, like the first Friday in the month, we're going to pay the bills and we're also going to be talking about sexual intimacy. Allow your partner and yourself to show up and react any way they want to. Don't spring things on your partner, ask

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them a time that would be a good time for them to talk. Allow them, if they want to get upset, allow them to get upset and recognize you're going for the long run, you're not going for a short run. So, you don't have to respond if they get upset. But allow them to have whatever feeling that they have.

Know that it could be awkward in the beginning and that's okay. Let it be uncomfortable but make sure you create that safe place in order to have that conversation. Do set up some ground rules of respect, and mutual listening, and providing an environment that feels safe enough for people to talk and be vulnerable. And work together as a team, those are my things, my suggestions in terms of having that difficult conversation.

Okay, Diamonds we've covered a lot here, remember menopause is only the beginning and we get to celebrate it. It really is meant to be celebrated. There are going to be challenges there, physically your body is changing. So, I'm not dusting those challenges under the rug or anything like that. I'm acknowledging them but also saying this gets to be a time of celebration. Your wise sexual self is coming, literally coming. Sometimes I amuse myself. But really, let's review it, have a goal. Be committed. Figure out your why. Be willing to have the conversations. Redefine that sexual intimacy.

Okay, Diamonds that's all for this week but join me next week where we're going to be talking about life freedom and menopause, so good. Thank you for being with me, take care. Dr. Sonia out.

This is a public service announcement. OYSN is starting in January of 2023, Diamonds. And for you that may not be familiar. OYSN stands for Own Your Sexuality Now. It is my signature program for women and I'm only offering OYSN once a year. I love this group and I want you to be in this group with me. Enrollment opens for a short time at the end of November and into the beginning of December. So, let's start the new year with a new empowered sexual you.

And as always, I like to ask questions so here is a question for you Diamonds. How is your sex life? No, really, on a scale of one to ten, how is

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your sex life? You know I'm all about the intimacy in midlife. If you rated the intimacy in your life as less than an eight then we need to talk. I'm personally inviting you to check out my Own Your Sexuality Now intimate edition. The last group that went through this, they were on fire. Women of all ages from 35 to 65 were learning about their bodies, expressing their sexuality, empowering their lives and doing it on their terms.

Couples who had not had sex in years found a new level of sexual fun and established new intimacy. Other women learned about their bodies and tapped into their pleasure zone. Another one learned about setting boundaries and focusing on her pleasure for the first time in her life. Another Diamond got the independence she needed to change her whole life. Amazing.

OYSN is not just about sex, it's about empowerment, and it's about pleasure. And the new class is starting in January of 2023. So come join an intimate group of women for 12 weeks and literally change your life. Let's create that amazing sexual intimacy that you deserve. If you are in your 30s, or 40s, or 50s, or even older, this is your time and this is the place for you. You potentially have 30 to 50 more years of sexual intimacy ahead of you. What do you want that intimacy to look like?

Let's get real and let's talk about what's going on with your body, your libido, your life, let's see what we can do to kickstart that intimacy. This program is for you whether or not you have a partner, this is about you and sexual intimacy with yourself first and then with anybody else that you choose. So, if you're a woman who wants to enjoy all aspects of her life then this is the program for you, it finally gets to be your time.

So, click on the link in the show notes or on my website soniawrightmd.com and grab a copy of my Busy Woman's Guide to Enhanced Intimacy. And get on the waitlist for Own Your Sexuality Now, the intimate edition. I can't wait to see you. Talk to you soon, Diamonds. Dr. Sonia out.