



Hi there!

It's so great you're learning how best to support yourself through this season of life! While change can be daunting, know there is support out there should you need it and that there are areas that do lie within your control. Assessing these areas of your life may help improve your experience of perimenopause, menopause and beyond. Below I have listed what I believe to be the 5 key areas for your consideration: Nutrition, Stress, Sleep, Movement and Self-care.

1. Nutrition

Eating whole foods, prepared and cooked at home is big medicine! Improving the health of your gut microbiome is a simple and effective way of supporting your mental and hormonal health.

For most people eating three satisfying meals a day really works- including protein, vegetables and healthy fats at every meal.

- Eat the rainbow- aim to eat 30 different plant-based foods per week- create a diet that is rich in fruit, vegetables, nuts, seed, pulses and grains.
- Crucial cruciferous- important to include daily. They help reduce inflammation, regulate blood sugar levels and reduce estrogen excess. If you have a thyroid condition, be sure to eat them cooked.
- Two types of vegetables **starchy + non-starchy**- non-starchy are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals. These include leafy greens and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, kale, cucumber, celery, carrots, green beans.
- Starchy vegetables are a great source of carbohydrates- these have a higher G.I which means you should have a smaller amount of them than most are used to. That said they are hands down a better source of carbs than those that come from grains such as bread and pasta. Starch helps soothe the nervous system and support sleep. Great sources are -kumara/sweet potato, white potato, squash, pumpkin, parsnip, plantain, non- GMO corn and beets.
- Healthy fats- are a key source of energy, they help you feel full, regulate blood sugar levels, and hormones. Our brains require fat to stay healthy! Great sources include avocado, olives, eggs, nuts + seeds, fatty cold-water fish such as salmon, fatty grass-fed

meat, extra virgin olive oil, flaxseed, walnut, coconut, avocado oils, ghee. Every meal should include 1 serving i.e., 1-2 T oil, half an avocado, a shot glass of nuts or seeds.

- Protein- 30g at every meal i.e., 1 chicken breast, 2-3 eggs, fillet of fish, half a block of tofu. Protein helps protect your muscles and the steps required to build and protect them.
- Alcohol- limit or stop drinking altogether. Alcohol is calory dense- contributing to weight gain, impacts hormone regulation, overburdens liver, impacts blood sugar levels, may trigger hot flushes and is known to disrupt sleep in many people. *If this is how you unwind to release stress it could be time to consider how else, you can help yourself.*
- Caffeine- It may be time to get real about how much you're drinking and whether it's really serving you. If your sleep is being impacted during the season it may be time to consider making some changes i.e., not consuming coffee after midday.

2. **Stress**- *Reducing stress is crucial for our general health and hormones. Anxiety is exacerbated by lack of sleep, alcohol, caffeine and blood sugar dysregulation.*

Introducing the autonomic nervous system

- Ventral vagal- safe and social, aka rest and digest (parasympathetic state)
- Sympathetic- activated- fight or flight state.
- Dorsal vagal- freeze response, collapsed, immobilized.

Throughout our day we move through different nervous system states (this is natural and normal), however in our busy modern life we can get stuck in a sympathetic or dorsal vagal state i.e., when our body perceives a threat and wants us to fight, flee or hide. This is useful IF we are in actual danger, but often we are not, and are instead being activated by the constant demands of daily life. Being in a constant activated state can leave us feeling stressed, overwhelmed, exhausted and burnt out.

What we want to do is complete a stress cycle and move back to ventral vagal.

Try this: Pause, acknowledge the feeling, breathe in for a count of 4, hold for 4, breathe out for a count of 6-8 (repeat for 1 minute or until you feel calmer) then let your body know you're safe and it can stand down.

**Deep diaphragmatic breathing helps bring the body into a para-sympathetic state.*

More tips to help shift out of sympathetic or dorsal vagal state: move your body! Get outdoors and go for a brisk walk, jog, Zumba, HIIT class, dance around, rebounder, qigong or try the 20 second hug.

**Always seek help if you are concerned.

Other tools- Learn to set boundaries, create a support network, spend time outside, pat a furry friend, connect with others, get into nature, explore creativity, explore pleasure, look at your load, learn to allow emotions, re-evaluate working conditions and hours.

3. Sleep – B.E.D (behavior, environment, diet)

- Behavior- are you getting enough movement during the day? Create sleep rituals, have consistent sleep times, consider your habits before bed -dim the lights, get off screens and phones at least an hour before bed as the blue light emitted by devices disrupts melatonin, the sleep hormone.
- Environment- consider your bedroom, mattress, pillows, pjs, lights. Mess=stress. Can you create a slumber palace? Leave your phone outside of the bedroom!
- Diet- eat right to sleep tight- consider taking magnesium before bed. Magnesium is a powerful stress reliever.

**Below I have listed some natural ways to incorporate some nutrients that are key players in the production of calming neurotransmitters to help you get a restorative sleep:*

- Tryptophan- found in eggs, full fat dairy, salmon, chicken, turkey, pumpkin seeds and oats.
- Vitamin B6- found in chickpeas, animal protein, kumara, bananas and white grains.
- Magnesium- found in dark leafy green, dark chocolate, beans, almond, avocado and figs.
- Omega 3 fatty acids- found in salmon, tuna, sardines, white fish, prawns and eggs.

4. Daily movement

Questions to ask yourself.

- What sort of movement brings you **joy**? Perhaps it is time to try something new! Or something you haven't done for a while...?
- **What is easy?** When it's easy it's waaay more likely you'll do it!
- What would your "daily minimum" amount of movement be?
- Try **scheduling** your daily movement and then protect it like you would a work meeting or date!
- Finding time... *can you do something you already do but do it differently?* Could you walk or bike to school with your kids? Could you move during your lunch break? Could you get up half an hour earlier?
- Our bone strength deteriorates as our hormones decline, so we need to focus on mobility and strength.
- Aim to move 3-5 x per week.

Picture yourself in 5 years' time, then 10 then 20. What are the things that future you will thank you for doing? What would you like to be possible for you?

5. **Self-care-** *fundamentally means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve your physical and mental health.*

I love that, I find it to be deeply honoring on an individual level. So, I invite you to take a moment to consider what this means to you. Write down your list and put it somewhere visible so you can remember what makes you feel *alive, calm, joyful, restored* etc. when you need it.

- 1) This makes me feel good: _____
- 2) This makes me calm: _____
- 3) This makes me feel joyful: _____
- 4) This helps me to feel regulated: _____
- 5) I could use help with: _____
- 6) Something I would like to do is: _____
- 7) Something that is important to me is: _____
- 8) My happy place is: _____

Additional thoughts:

Going through Perimenopause or menopause can be a challenging time, I get it! It is also a critical health window and an essential time to make positive changes to your diet or lifestyle. If you'd like support making sustainable changes, I'd love to hear from you!

With thanks

Tammy x

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