

Resilient 40+ Thriving in Menopause with 5 Essential Tools

~ Melanie Briony

STRONG LIKE A
WOMAN



Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
TOOL ONE - <i>Self Awareness</i>	2
Resource - <i>SWOT Analysis</i>	4
Resource - <i>Action Planner</i>	5
TOOL TWO - <i>Sleep - Rest - Recover</i>	6
TOOL THREE - <i>Nervous System Care</i>	9
TOOL FOUR - <i>Fuelling Not Dieting</i>	14
TOOL FIVE - <i>Exercise For Menopause</i>	23
Resource - <i>Example Exercise Plan</i>	27
CONCLUSION - <i>Menopause WTF!</i>	28
ABOUT ME! - <i>Melanie Briony</i>	29

INTRODUCTION

40+: It's Your Time To Shine!

Are you a woman over 40 feeling a bit overwhelmed by the abundance of health and fitness information targeting peri- and post-menopausal women?

It's a common sentiment among many women who join my [Resilient Woman Coaching Program](#). The focus on menopause in the health and wellness industry has increased, which is both positive and negative. On one hand, it's beneficial as it brings more attention to women's health concerns during menopause. However, it also leads to a flood of misinformation, myths, and aggressive marketing tactics, leaving women unsure about the best choices for their well-being.

My goal with this e-book, and all the content I share, is to provide women with well-researched, empowering information that is straightforward, understandable, and easy to implement. No fad diets, no extreme exercise regimens, no gimmicky supplements.

If you are seeking practical and simple strategies to thrive during menopause, you've come to the right place. I believe in simplifying health and fitness so that you can implement changes into your life with ease. No more impractical diets and heavy restriction, it's time for a positive change.

By following the steps outlined in this e-book, I guarantee you will experience improvements in your physical and mental well-being. You'll have more energy, recover more effectively, and gradually begin to shed any excess weight you may be carrying.

If you'd like to know more about me, you can find my professional profile [HERE](#).

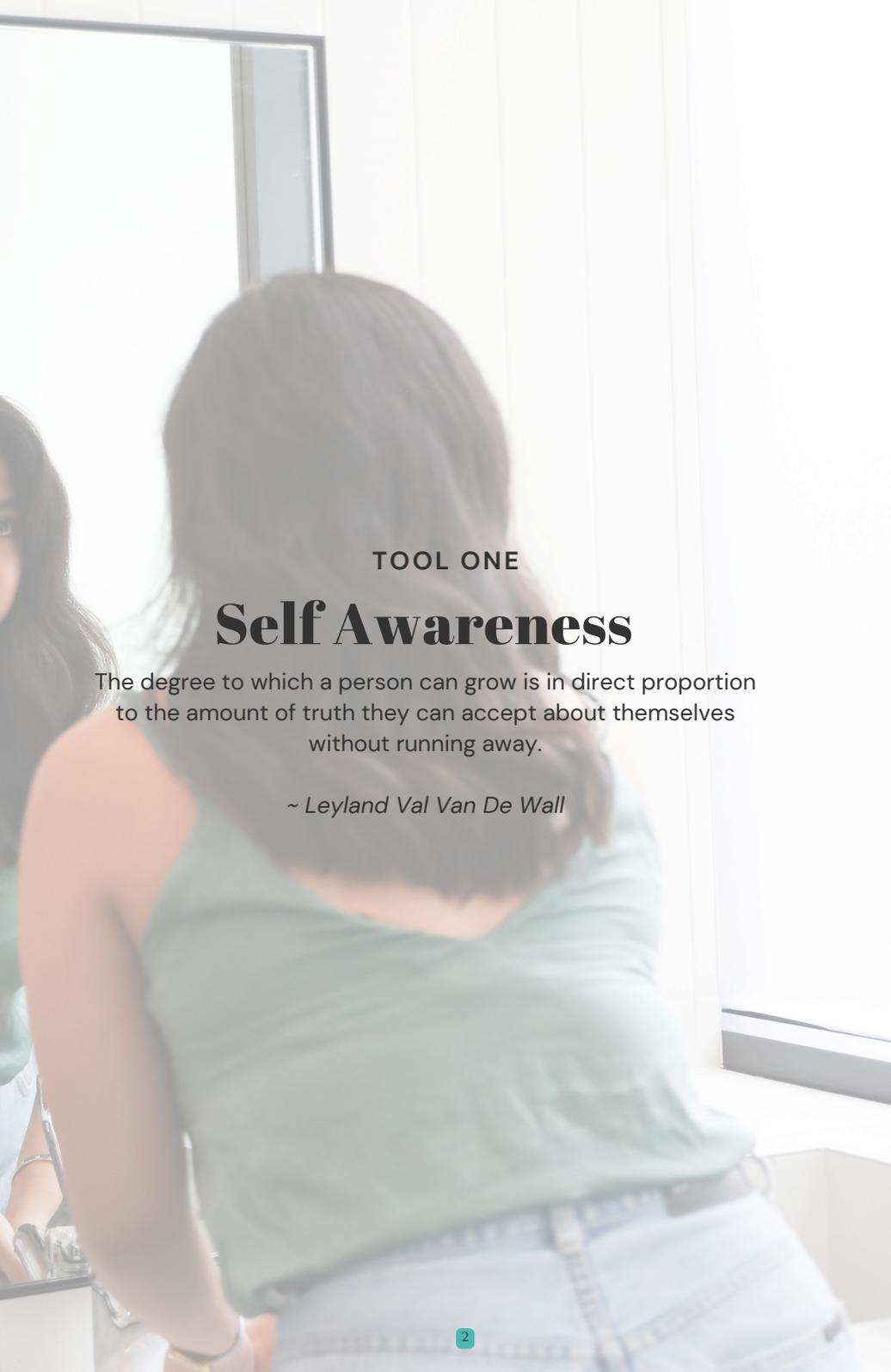
If you haven't explored it yet, my [BLOG](#) contains a wealth of valuable information.

Want to find me on social media? Click the links below. Your opinion and voice are important to me, and I welcome your engagement.

The information in this ebook is not intended to replace the advice of your medical practitioner, nor is it meant to dismiss your symptoms. Menopause poses unique challenges to each woman, and you may find it beneficial to seek support from multiple health and wellness providers. Remember, you don't have to go through this alone; there is help and support available.

Let's get started!





TOOL ONE

Self Awareness

The degree to which a person can grow is in direct proportion to the amount of truth they can accept about themselves without running away.

~ Leyland Val Van De Wall

ONE

What Do I Want?

You might be wondering what 'self-awareness' has to do with menopause and your health and fitness, but I'm here to tell you it's the most potent tool we have when we want to take charge and change aspects of our lives that are no longer working. When was the last time you asked yourself what you truly want? When was the last time you really listened to the answer?

Menopause is your time to reclaim all of you. Whether you're approaching or already navigating through this transformative phase, it's essential to recognise its power. Many women struggle with their mental health during menopause because of hormonal changes and the fact that we just aren't prepared for the transition or what lies ahead. Society often suggests that our time is over, that we've passed our 'use-by date,' and that we're no longer attractive, important, or useful. But if we fall into this trap, we fulfil the prophecy, and nothing changes for future generations. However, if we choose to truly understand ourselves, our desires, and our values, we can navigate menopause with strength and courage, entering one of the most potent and fulfilling times of our lives with vigour and vitality.

This is our time to dig deep, ask for help, learn new skills, get to know ourselves better, embrace new adventures, and find a whole new level of joy in life. Gather your tribe, find healthcare practitioners that you trust, learn as much as you can about menopause, and embrace taking care of yourself physically and mentally. Menopause is not the end; it's a new beginning.



Ask Yourself These Questions

- What is important to me?
- What do I need to feel good?
- What do I want?
- Who am I when I'm not somebody's mother, partner, sister, daughter?
- When was the last time I did something just for me?
- What's stopping me from going after what I want?
- What barriers am I putting in the way of my own success?
- Why is this change important to me?

You can use these questions as journal prompts, remembering that no-one but you needs to see what you write.

Knowing what you want is key to a fulfilling life. It's about understanding your desires and having the courage to pursue them. With clarity comes direction and purpose, guiding decisions that align with your authentic self and lead to greater satisfaction. There is no better time than now!

SWOT Analysis



SWOT Analysis

One tool I often use with my clients is a SWOT analysis. A SWOT Analysis can help uncover your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and any threats to reaching your goals. Before diving into the rest of this e-book, I highly recommend tackling the questions on the previous page, followed by completing your SWOT analysis. This way, you'll be better prepared to absorb the information and apply it to your daily life.

How to Complete a SWOT Analysis

Strengths: List personal strengths and resources supporting your health and fitness goals, such as motivation, knowledge, support from friends or family, or previous successes.

Weaknesses: Acknowledge challenges and limitations hindering your progress, like lack of time, unhealthy habits, or self-doubt.

Opportunities: Recognise potential areas for growth and improvement, such as joining a fitness class, meal prepping, or seeking advice from a nutritionist.

Threats: Anticipate obstacles and risks to your health and fitness journey, such as stress, temptation from unhealthy foods, or injury.

Use these insights to set realistic and achievable goals, leverage your strengths, address your weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate threats. Regularly review and update your analysis as needed. Are you ready to make some positive changes?

What Needs To Change?

You may be on track in some areas of your life and need more work in others. Use this sheet to write out a plan so that you can begin making step-by-step changes to your diet and lifestyle.

MY WHY/GOALS

AREA ONE

AREA TWO

Actions List

What steps can I take that will help me the most?

TOOL TWO

Sleep-Rest-Recover

Sleep can almost feel like a swear word at menopause, but without deep and restorative sleep, many areas of our lives are impacted negatively. Quality sleep is key to building resilience, managing weight, and reducing the severity of menopause symptoms.

TWO

Sleep Yourself Well

If you aren't sleeping, you aren't fully recovering. Without sufficient rest, everything else you do is compromised to the level that your body can manage the stress you place on it. Prioritising quality sleep is essential for allowing the body to repair and regenerate, supporting optimal physical and mental well-being.

I know this isn't going to go down well, because so many women struggle with sleep at menopause, but sleep really is fundamental to the success of every other health and wellness pursuit you undertake. Whether it be dietary changes, exercise, breathwork etc. If you aren't prioritising sleep, much of the effort you are putting into everything else is being diminished.

The one fundamental thing you can do to improve your sleep is simply prioritise it. Sleep isn't something we can get by with less of. Think of sleep as your energy and brain capacity replenishment tool. Without sleep you simply cannot think and function in an optimal way. If you are menopausal, you may be struggling with low energy and brain fog. Sleep deprivation is known to exacerbate these and many symptoms of menopause so now is the time to prioritise sleep.

Sleep Benefits & Types

REM sleep – is vital for memory consolidation, emotional regulation, brain restoration, and dreaming, all of which are essential for cognitive function and emotional well-being.



Deep sleep – restores the body, enhances memory, balances hormones, and detoxifies the brain, crucial for overall health and well-being.

Light sleep – refreshes the body and mind, aids in transitioning between wakefulness and deeper sleep, and plays a part in memory enhancement.

Sleep & Weight Gain

You can find a wealth of information by Googling "Sleep & Weight Gain," such as studies revealing that individuals who sleep less than 6.5 hours per night face a significantly higher risk of obesity. You can read the article [HERE](#).

Hunger Hormones

Sleep deprivation disrupts our hunger and satiety hormones, ghrelin and leptin, leading to heightened hunger, reduced feelings of fullness, and cravings for sweet foods. Many women I work with express concerns about intense sweet cravings, so addressing sleep is often the first step we take in making adjustments.

Consider these 10 ideas to promote deeper and more restorative sleep:

- Dim lights from 7 pm onwards. Opt for soft-coloured light bulbs.
- Minimise evening screen time; use a 'blue-light' filter or glasses if necessary.
- Refrain from using devices in bed at night.
- Maintain a consistent sleep routine with regular sleep and wake-up times.
- Designate your bedroom solely for sleeping and not work to strengthen its association with rest and recovery.
- Keep your bedroom temperature cool. 19°C is considered optimal.
- Aim to be in bed with lights out by 10pm (work hours dependent).
- Strive for 7-9 hours of sleep nightly.
- Avoid eating close to bedtime, unless necessary for health reasons.
- Maximise bedroom darkness with thick curtains to block out street lights.
- Include evening relaxation techniques such as meditation, or breathwork to calm your nervous system.



Sleep & Menopause Symptoms

Prioritising quality sleep can alleviate some symptoms of menopause including hot flushes and night sweats, mood swings, and brain fog. Before reaching for supplements or Menopause Hormone Therapy (MHT), work hard to establish a regular and restorative sleep routine.

NOTE: MHT and supplements have their place when administered by a highly qualified menopause trained healthcare professional.

TOOL THREE

Nervous System Care

Building resilience at menopause means understanding your nervous system. Menopause and stress are a recipe for exacerbated symptoms, weight gain, insulin resistance, depression, and anxiety. Self-care is paramount if you wish to thrive through menopause.

THREE

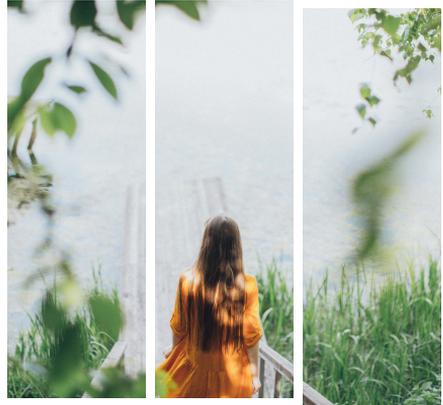
Calm Your Mind

Everyone's talking about carbohydrates and blood glucose imbalance, but have you heard how prolonged stress can impact blood sugar, contributing to inflammation, insulin resistance, sugar cravings, poor sleep, and weight gain around and deep within the abdomen?

Welcome to menopause, the gift that keeps on giving. During the menopause transition and post-menopause, women become even more sensitive to the effects of stress. This heightened sensitivity can have catastrophic effects on their health and waistline if left unchecked. By understanding your nervous system and how to work with it rather than against it, you will be able to sleep more deeply, more easily manage your weight, reduce the severity of menopause symptoms, and more effectively recover from exercise. It's important to understand that this is not a magic bullet. It takes consistent effort and work, but it will always be worth it in the end.

Stress and Your Body

I want to briefly introduce you to the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). The ANS is the automatic part of your nervous system responsible for your heart beating, your digestive system working, your blood pressure, your breathing, and more. It oversees all processes in your body that occur automatically without your conscious awareness. The ANS works quietly in the background, deciding which body functions to prioritise depending on what's happening around you or how your body senses its surroundings.



Let's bring this to life: Imagine you're sitting at your desk, tapping away on the keyboard. Everything seems normal. Your nervous system senses safety, and your heart beats gently, reflecting your calm state. Suddenly, you hear the ping of an email arriving. Opening it, you find an angry message from your manager, demanding to see you in their office for missing a deadline. In an instant, you've gone from calm with a relaxed heartbeat to having a racing heart and mind. You didn't consciously decide how to react in either scenario. Your ANS managed it all.

Your ANS is there helping you to survive and thrive in the world. If you actually needed to run away from a predator, this response would be entirely appropriate, providing you with the glucose and energy you need to fight or flee. Modern day life can be a constant source of perceived threat whether we know it or not. It's these perceived threats that can set us up for stress-related diseases.

Stress & Weight Gain

It's true that high levels of stress increase blood glucose levels as cortisol triggers the release of glucose (sugar) from your liver for fast energy during times of stress.

When we start our day running on fumes, our body can't differentiate a poor night's sleep, skipping breakfast, or a high-stress meeting from fleeing a predator. Both situations trigger a stress response in the same way. The key difference lies in how the body uses or stores energy from the released glucose. When running from a predator, the body uses the glucose for energy. However, when facing everyday stressors like a work deadline, the released glucose is stored as body fat. This is one way that stress can contribute to weight gain.

Stress & Sleep

Stress affects not only our sleep quality and duration but also our food choices as a result of poor sleep, often leading us to opt for high-calorie and high-sugar foods to provide energy for fleeing perceived threats. Continual consumption of such foods can elevate blood glucose levels over time, potentially resulting in insulin resistance, diabetes, and weight gain.

Responding to Stress

Stress reduction techniques can improve sleep quality and duration, decrease our reaction to perceived threats, support our hormones, decrease the number and severity of menopause symptoms, and improve our mood and energy levels. I will provide you with a list of stress reduction tools, along with a deeper explanation of breathwork and its benefits. One important thing to remember: while it may seem like your body is against you during high-stress periods, the opposite is true.



Your autonomic nervous system (ANS) is simply doing what it needs to help you survive and thrive in this world. The best thing you can do is befriend your subconscious processes, get to know yourself better, and understand how to more effectively respond to the signals your body is sending you every day.

Stress Management Tools

- A Healthy Diet
- Meditation
- Breathwork
- Yoga Nidra
- Yin Yoga
- Exercise
- Social Support
- Time in nature
- Positive Self Talk
- Hobbies
- Self Awareness
- Journaling
- Adequate Sleep
- Limit Caffeine and Alcohol
- Guided Visualisation

Can you add your own to this list? What helps you to relax and let go of stress? What increases your stress levels? What changes can you make?

Breathwork

Everyone knows how to breathe, but many of us aren't breathing well. A sedentary lifestyle, daily stresses, and being bound to a desk can lead to tightness and restriction in our breathing muscles. This tightness and restriction can result in upper chest breathing, shallow breathing, tight neck and shoulder muscles, and unnecessary activation of the stress response. Learning to breathe better is one of the best things you can do for your mental health and wellness.

Breathe Deeply

You've probably heard about breathing deeply into your diaphragm, but do you understand why it's important? Your diaphragm is your main breathing muscle, enabling the most efficient breathing possible when used effectively. However, many of us rely on smaller accessory breathing muscles, like the tiny scalene muscles in your neck, leading to potential neck and shoulder pain. It's also worth noting that effectively utilising the diaphragm enhances core engagement, given its integral role in the core musculature. Therefore, deep breathing not only calms your mind but also reduces your risk of injury.

The Diaphragm & Vagus Nerve

Let me introduce you to the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) and the Vagus Nerve. The PNS, a branch of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS), regulates the body's rest and digestion response during relaxation. The Vagus Nerve, the main nerve of the PNS, passes through the diaphragm. Deep breathing stimulates the diaphragm, activating the Vagus Nerve and prompting the body's rest and digest response. Breathe deep to calm your mind.



Just Breathe

You now have a basic understanding of why breathwork is such a powerful tool for lowering stress. There is more to learn, but this is sufficient to help you recognise the scope of this simple tool.

Humans take about 22,000 breaths per day, so it's easy to see why changing your breathing can have such a profound impact on your physical and emotional wellness.

The Benefits

Some of the benefits of breathwork:

- Promotes relaxation
- Reduces stress
- Promotes self awareness
- Improves lung function
- Enhances oxygen delivery
- Boosts circulation
- Supports detoxification
- Strengthens immunity
- Enhances mental clarity
- Promotes better sleep
- May decrease blood pressure
- Aids posture and core strength

How To Breathe Better

Nose Breathing

Begin with breathing in and out through your nos at all times as much as possible. If you aren't used to nose breathing it may take a little adjustment. Be patient, it's worth the effort.

Benefits of nose breathing

Nose breathing, by filtering, humidifying, and warming the air, enhances respiratory health, lung function, and overall well-being, while also promoting relaxation and better dental health.

Breathe Light-Slow-Deep

Stressed breathing, which originates high in the chest and is shallow and fast, tends to intensify feelings of stress and anxiety. Conversely, adopting a breathing pattern that is light, slow, and deep promotes relaxation and diminishes feelings of stress and anxiety. The key lies in the quality and depth of your breath.

Deep Breathing Practice

Deep breathing starts with the diaphragm. Find a comfortable position, either sitting tall but relaxed or lying down with a pillow under your knees. Take a moment to check in with yourself—how are you feeling? Is your mind racing or calm? Now, place one hand on your chest and the other over your belly button. Focus on breathing into the hand on your belly button. If you're lying down, you can place a book over your belly button to provide some pressure feedback. Keep breathing into the hand/book on your belly—feel it rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale. Spend 1-2 minutes in this position, or as long as feels comfortable for you. How do you feel now?



Box Breathing

A simple calming technique to practice is Box Breathing 4:4:4:4 - Begin with the diaphragm breathing technique then follow with a 4 second inhale-4 second pause-4 second exhale-4 second pause.

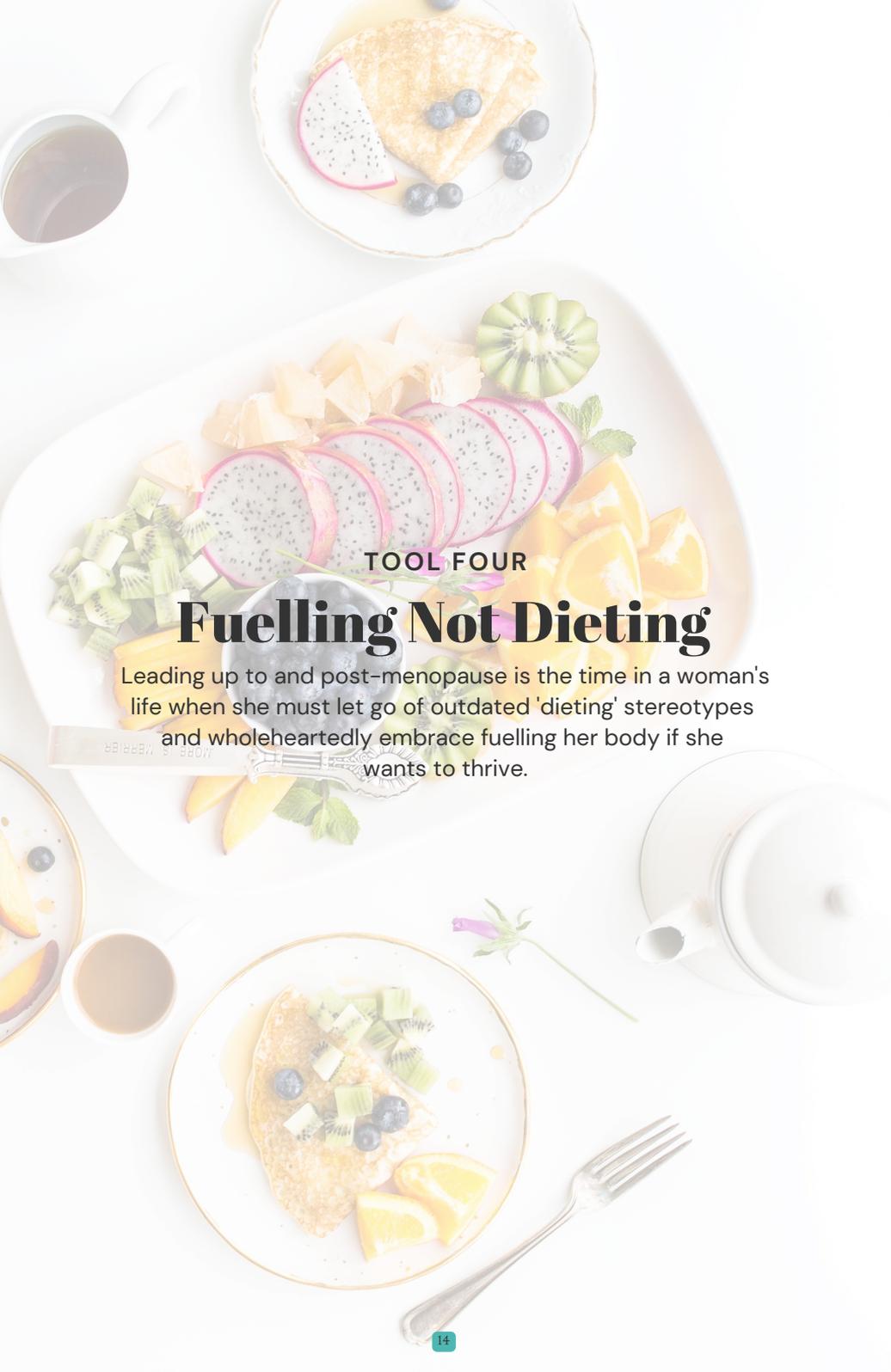
Breathing For Sleep

4:7:8:0 - Move from box breathing to a 4 second inhale-7 second hold-8 second exhale-0 second hold.

Breathwork Safety

Although breathwork is generally considered as safe, there are some more advanced techniques that require medical clearance. **Please consult with a trained breathwork practitioner before trying intense breathing or extended breath-hold techniques.** [Reach out for guidance.](#)

Guided breathwork recording available upon request.



TOOL FOUR

Fuelling Not Dieting

Leading up to and post-menopause is the time in a woman's life when she must let go of outdated 'dieting' stereotypes and wholeheartedly embrace fuelling her body if she wants to thrive.

FOUR

Nutrition - What, When, How Much?

Let's kick off this conversation with calorie restriction. You've likely heard the saying 'eat less and move more to lose weight.' While this holds true at its core, many women take calorie restriction to extremes, risking the loss of bone and muscle mass while increasing fat mass. Now, more than ever, it's time to bid farewell to restrictive and punishing diets. Below, I'll outline some straightforward nutrition strategies that you can implement right away.

Protein

As mentioned earlier, restrictive dieting can lead to the loss of muscle and bone mass—a scenario midlife women simply can't afford. I'll also delve into this in the exercise section of this e-book. Consuming sufficient protein in every meal and snack throughout the day helps your body preserve muscle and bone mass. Maintaining muscle mass supports your metabolism because muscle tissue burns more calories at rest than body fat. One of the reasons women can experience increased body fat and feelings of becoming 'squishy' as they age is diminishing muscle mass resulting from excessive dieting, low protein intake, and a lack of resistance training exercise. With declining estrogen levels at menopause accelerating muscle loss, it's imperative that women consume enough protein and engage in appropriate muscle-building exercises to reduce the risk of excessive weight gain, preserve muscle and bone, and safeguard their metabolic health.



How Much Protein

It's not just about how much protein you consume but also how you distribute it throughout the day. Aim for at least 30 grams of protein in main meals and 15 grams in snacks to ensure sufficient daily intake. This approach keeps you feeling full longer while also maintaining bone and muscle mass. **As a general guideline, aim for 1.6–2.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day.** For example, a 70-kilogram woman can aim for between 112 to 154 grams of protein daily. While consuming up to 3 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day is safe, this is typically more suitable for highly active women with higher total calorie intake. Ensuring 30% of your calories come from protein helps meet daily needs while allowing for sufficient calories from healthy fats, fibre, and carbohydrates.

Which Protein?

When you think of protein, does animal protein immediately come to mind? It's worth noting that all foods, whether plant or animal-based, contain some level of protein. For women over 40, it's essential to consume a diverse range of protein sources, with an emphasis on plant-based options whenever possible. Plant-based proteins offer the added benefit of fibre, which is crucial for maintaining optimal gut health during menopause. Additionally, many plant-based proteins contain phytoestrogens, which can help alleviate some symptoms of declining estrogen levels. A dietary approach reminiscent of the Mediterranean diet is ideal for promoting good health during menopause.

Here are some examples of protein foods categorised for your reference.

Dairy

Greek yoghurt
Cottage Cheese
Low fat Swiss style cheese
Low fat Ricotta cheese
Whey
Eggs

Animal

Fish
Prawns
Chicken
Pork
Beef
Kangaroo

Plant

Legumes
Peas
Beans
Tofu
Tempe
Hemp
Nuts & seeds
Spirulina
Whole grains

Feeling Full

Not only does protein support muscle and bone health, it also helps you feel full after a meal and for hours afterward. Fill your plate with an abundance of plants and plant-based proteins, and if it aligns with your personal preference, incorporate small amounts of animal proteins or dairy. If you're following a 100% plant-based diet, it's crucial to aim for at least 2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day to compensate for the lower bioavailability of plant protein sources compared to animal protein sources. Eat this way consistently, making protein the foundation of every meal and snack. Be mindful of reading labels, as many products labeled as 'high protein' may not actually contain more protein than other, more affordable options on the shelf.



Carbohydrates

Do you often feel confused about carbohydrates? It's understandable, given that carbohydrates have been vilified by trendy diets like keto, South Beach, Atkins, Paleo, and more. These diets often paint carbohydrates as 'bad,' urging us to avoid them or risk becoming sugar-craving monsters. But is this portrayal accurate?

Carbohydrates serve as the primary fuel source for your brain. Without an adequate intake of carbohydrates, your brain function could be compromised, leading to serious consequences like coma or even death. When dietary carbohydrates are insufficient, the body compensates by converting protein and fats into glucose to meet the brain's energy demands.

Allay Your Fears

The biggest fear surrounding carbohydrates often revolves around their impact on blood glucose levels and insulin. Peri- and post-menopausal women are prone to developing insulin resistance, which can exacerbate concerns about carbohydrate intake. However, it's essential to understand carbohydrates rather than fear them.

The right types of carbohydrates provide essential vitamins, minerals, and fibre—crucial nutrients for gut, brain, and overall health. Eliminating carbohydrates altogether is unnecessary. Instead, focusing on consuming the optimal types of carbohydrates in the right quantities and at the right times offers a much more sustainable approach to managing blood glucose levels and supporting overall well-being. If you have a history of insulin resistance, please speak with your doctor or dietitian for a full health assessment.



Which Carbohydrates?

Think fruits, vegetables, peas, beans, whole grains, and legumes. These are the types of carbohydrates that nourish your body, support the growth of good gut bacteria, keep you feeling satisfied, and lower your risk of preventable diseases. If a diet plan you've been following suggests that these foods are 'bad' for your health, I urge you to discard it entirely.

According to Nutrition Australia – “Just half of Australian adults – and two thirds of children – have an adequate daily intake of fruit. When it comes to vegetables, only seven per cent of adults and five per cent of children meet the recommended guideline for daily vegetable intake”.

Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend adults consume 5 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit per day. You can find the full guidelines [HERE](#). Fill your plate with green and brightly coloured vegetables in at least 2 meals per day.

Fibre

Since we're discussing carbohydrates, let's delve into the importance of fibre intake and how it benefits both your health and waistline.

Dietary fibre comes in two forms:

Insoluble Fibre: Insoluble fibre promotes regular bowel movements, prevents constipation, supports digestive health, aids in weight management, and lowers the risk of certain diseases like colorectal cancer and haemorrhoids. Good sources include whole grains, nuts, seeds, and the skin of fruits and vegetables.

Soluble fibre: Dissolves in water to form a gel-like substance in the digestive tract. It helps slow down digestion, stabilise blood sugar levels, and lower cholesterol levels. Good sources include oats, barley, legumes, fruits, and vegetables.

Both soluble and insoluble fibres can feed good gut bacteria, but soluble fibre is particularly beneficial in this regard. When soluble fibre ferments in the colon, it produces short-chain fatty acids, which serve as fuel for beneficial bacteria in the gut. This promotes a healthy gut microbiome and overall digestive health. Learn more [HERE](#).



Gut Health Menopause

Gut health is crucial during menopause because changes in hormone levels can impact the gut microbiome, leading to digestive issues like bloating, constipation, and diarrhoea. Additionally, a healthy gut microbiome is essential for metabolising estrogen and maintaining hormone balance, which can alleviate menopausal symptoms and reduce the risk of hormone-related conditions. Furthermore, a healthy gut decreases the likelihood of weight gain and promotes better nutrient absorption, contributing to overall well-being during menopause. Learn more [HERE](#).

Prebiotics & Probiotics

Prebiotics are a type of insoluble fibre that serves as fuel for beneficial gut bacteria, promoting a healthy gut microbiome. The most effective way to provide your gut with prebiotics is by consuming a predominantly plant-based, whole food diet. While prebiotics are available in supplement form, whole food sources are preferable as they also provide additional vitamins and minerals that supplements cannot offer.

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that support gut health and immune function by maintaining a healthy balance of microorganisms in the gut. They can be found in fermented foods such as *yogurt*, *kefir*, *sauerkraut*, *kimchi*, and *miso*. Incorporating these foods into your diet can help promote a healthy gut microbiome, which is particularly beneficial during menopause, as it supports digestive health and may alleviate symptoms associated with hormonal changes. As with prebiotics, probiotics can be found in supplement form. Although supplements have their place, whole food sources provide a broader range of nutrients.

Carbohydrate Timing

Rather than eliminating carbohydrates entirely, when you understand carbohydrate timing you can enjoy the foods that you love guilt and fear free.

Low Starch Vegetables

Eat an abundance of low-starch carbohydrates like kale, spinach, cucumber, cauliflower, capsicum etc, at every meal and in snacks. Low-starch carbohydrates offer several benefits, including improved blood sugar control, weight management, and enhanced gut health. They can help stabilise energy levels, reduce cravings, and support overall well-being. Additionally, low-starch carbohydrates are rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals, promoting digestive health and providing essential nutrients for the body.

High Starch Carbohydrates

High fibre bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, and cereals are rich in starch, a type of complex carbohydrate that can quickly raise blood sugar levels when consumed in large quantities. While they contain vitamins and fibre, they are higher in calories compared to low-starch carbohydrates, making them easier to overeat. High-starch carbohydrates are best eaten around exercise when the sugars are more readily used by the body for energy during physical activity.



Processed Carbohydrates

It's crucial to mention processed carbohydrates like white bread, sugary cereals, pastries, cookies, cakes, lollies, chips, and crackers. These types of carbohydrates should be minimised or eliminated from your diet.

Processed carbohydrates are low in fibre, vitamins, and minerals and high in unhealthy fats. They increase inflammation, raise the risk of insulin resistance, and trigger cravings.

While we should always be able to enjoy some of the foods we love, many processed carbohydrates can be replaced with healthier alternatives that taste just as good but provide your body with the nutrients and fibre you need to thrive.

Check out [this recipe](#) for a nutrient-dense, tasty snack that you can enjoy.

Choose whole foods first and keep processed, low-nutrient foods to an absolute minimum for better blood sugar balance, gut health and hormonal health.

Fats

Remember when fats were deemed the enemy, and everything in the supermarket was labeled as 'low-fat'? Thankfully, we now have a better understanding of how fats fit into a balanced diet.

Heart Disease at Menopause

Processed fats commonly found in packaged foods such as cookies, low-quality chocolate, pastries, and fried fast foods are best avoided. Ideally, these fats should constitute less than 1% of total daily calorie intake.

Consuming highly processed fatty foods has been linked to inflammation, a factor known to contribute to various diseases, including heart disease, insulin resistance, high blood pressure, and metabolic syndrome. As estrogen declines during the menopause transition, inflammation is likely to rise, increasing the risk of the aforementioned diseases. Therefore, dietary changes become even more important to reduce disease risk as women undergo physical changes at menopause.

Good Fats

In contrast to processed fats, 'good' or 'healthy' fats have a positive impact on health. Below are some of the benefits of healthy dietary fats.

- Help with the regulation of hunger
- Hormone production & regulation
- Improve brain function
- Support bone health
- Provide the body with energy
- Store some vitamins
- Assist in reducing inflammation and increasing immunity
- Reduce cardiovascular disease risk
- Decrease risk of depression & anxiety



Sources of Healthy Fats

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Cold-pressed oils
- Butter
- Coconut oil
- Animal fats from unprocessed sources
- Oily fish
- Avocados
- Eggs
- Full-fat dairy

Please note that plant-based sources of fat are higher in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, whereas animal-based fats are generally higher in saturated fats. A diet high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, with smaller amounts of saturated fats, has been shown to be most beneficial during menopause for reducing the risk of developing diseases such as heart disease, insulin resistance, high blood pressure, and metabolic syndrome.

Meal Planning

Meal structure is crucial if you want to feel full and satisfied after eating. A poorly planned meal can leave you deficient in essential nutrients, both macronutrients like protein, fat, carbohydrates, and fibre, and micronutrients like vitamins and minerals. As we age, prioritising high-quality nutrition becomes even more critical for feeling our best.

STRONG LIKE A WOMAN

MEAL PLANNING

PROTEIN



ANIMAL PROTEIN

Weigh animal protein sources *uncooked* and track as *uncooked*. Often higher in fat. Be sure to track correctly.



PLANT PROTEIN

Weigh plant protein sources *cooked* and track as *cooked*. Often lower in fat. Be sure to track correctly.

CARBOHYDRATES



LOW CARB VEGETABLES

Fill your plate mostly with low carb vegetables. These are lower in calories, high in fiber and nutrients



HIGH CARB VEGETABLES

Eat smaller portions of high carb vegetables, mainly after exercise when wanting to lose body fat.

FATS



ADDED FATS

It is really important to track added fats and oils as these calories add up quickly. Fats and oils contain 9 Calories per gram so be sure to track accurately or you will find yourself adding 100's of calories in a very small serving.

MACRO NUTRIENTS (macros)

PROTEIN + CARBOHYDRATES + FATS

Every meal should comprise of each of these macro-nutrients. In addition, you want to ensure you do not exceed your daily calorie intake. Focus on eating sufficient protein with mainly low carb vegetables and small amounts of healthy fats.

1. Add protein to your plate

2. Choose a high quality source of carbohydrates

3. Add some healthy fats

Protein: Diversify your protein intake! Combine plant and animal sources for a nutrient-rich meal. Mix vegetarian plant sources for a broad range of proteins.

Carbohydrates: Fill half of your plate with green and brightly coloured vegetables, add a little fruit and a small portions of higher-starch carbohydrates like whole grains and potatoes when needed most.

Fats: Healthy fats add flavour and nutrients. Add sparingly when consuming fatty sources of animal protein. Portion control to suit your goals.

YOUR PLATE

LOW STARCH VEGETABLES

Fill half your plate with a variety of 'Low Starch' fruits and vegetables. Focus on vegetables first.

LOW FAT PROTEIN

Fill 1/4 of your plate with high quality protein.



FATS

Add small amounts of fats and oils like high quality olive oil, olives, coconut oil, organic butter.

HIGH STARCH CARBOHYDRATES

Fill 1/4 of your plate with high quality, 'high starch' carbohydrates. Think whole grains first before refined grains.

**STRONG LIKE A
WOMAN**

©Melanie Briony 2024+



TOOL FIVE

Exercise For Menopause

Menopause is a time to dig deep, try new things and be bold.
It's time to Believe In Your Body & Grow Strong!

FIVE

Strong Like A Woman

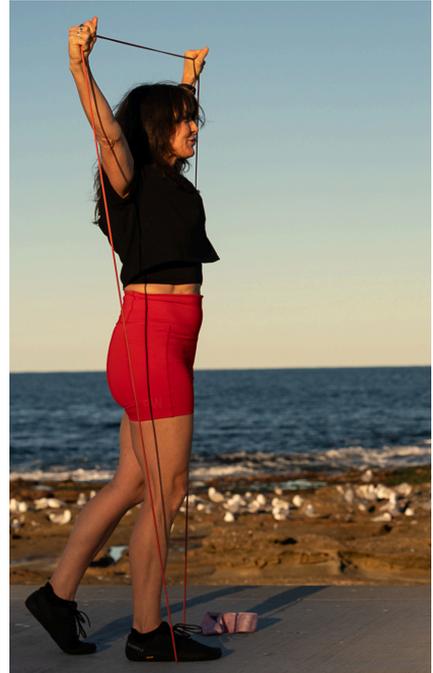
Muscle mass matters!

As I mentioned in the section about nutrition. As we age, we must eat and train in a way that preserves our muscle mass & bone mass. Why is this so important?

The decline in estrogen during menopause accelerates age-related losses in muscle mass (known as sarcopenia), bone density, and strength. While this might not seem significant at first glance, its impact on quality of life is profound. Notably, hip fractures significantly elevate the risk of mortality among older individuals, with one in four people succumbing within 12 months following such an injury ([source](#)). Hip fractures often result from falls at home. A major contributing factor to age-related falls is a decline in strength, coupled with the loss of muscle mass, and issues with balance.

Pro Ageing

Though we can't halt the ageing process, there's much we can do to slow it down, fortify our health, and maintain optimal physical and mental wellbeing. With humans living longer than ever, you may still be thriving 30+ years post-menopause. If you're reading this, consider the following: What kind of older age do you envision for yourself? Will you be in your own home or in a care facility? Will you maintain independence or heavily rely on others? While some factors are beyond our control, many are within our grasp. Let's focus on what we can influence, including building strength, agility, cardiovascular fitness and balance.



Getting Started

If you're feeling unfit right now, there's no need to suddenly increase your activity level overnight. Start slowly and build up over time. If you're concerned about injury, unsure where to begin, or have existing injuries, I highly recommend consulting a physiotherapist, [personal trainer](#), or exercise physiologist for advice and guidance. Joint pain and discomfort are common during menopause and can hinder many women from getting started. It's essential to seek the help you need to keep your body moving. This is not the right time to stop or give up.

Types of Exercise

- Strength Training
- Cardiovascular Training
- Interval Training
- Balance Training
- Walking
- Stretching



Strength Training

If you're 40 or older, strength training is non-negotiable. You don't need a gym membership either—bodyweight or resistance band exercises are a great starting point. Consider adding squats, step-ups or wall push-ups to your daily routine. Think about how you can safely incorporate some lifting into your current fitness regimen. Many people have exercise equipment tucked away in their shed or garage, especially post-COVID. Take a look at what you have and start there. There are numerous workouts available on YouTube, or you can [reach out to me](#) for workouts tailored to your fitness level and available equipment. The health guidelines for women over 40 recommend 2–3 x 30-minute strength training sessions per week, gradually increasing the load over time.

Strength training and Sprint Interval Training are two powerful tools for building lean muscle mass, supporting efficient metabolic health, decreasing abdominal fat, increasing agility, and enhancing bone density, ultimately promoting greater independence and vitality as women age. There's no time to waste – if you haven't already started, reaching out for support to begin now is essential for maintaining optimal health and well-being beyond 40.

Cardiovascular Training

This can be any kind of movement that increases your heart rate. Time to sweat!

Zumba, dancing, running, cycling, aerobics, tennis etc. Challenge yourself and increase the intensity and duration over time. Government health guidelines [recommend](#) 1.25 to 2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity per week – such as jogging, aerobics, fast cycling, soccer or netball and 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity – such as a brisk walk, golf, mowing the lawn or swimming.

Interval Training

Interval training, commonly known as HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training), has become increasingly popular thanks to programs like CrossFit, F45, and BFT. While HIIT provides numerous health benefits, women over 40 may need customised adjustments to maximise results and minimise potential drawbacks. Instead of aiming for long 45-minute HIIT sessions, consider **Sprint Interval Training (SIT)**. SIT involves brief, intense bursts of 30 seconds or less followed by a recovery period before repeating further sprints. Unlike traditional HIIT, SIT is shorter, more intense, and less taxing overall. This makes it ideal for women approaching menopause, enabling them to reap the benefits while avoiding the negative effects of prolonged HIIT on energy levels and hormones such as cortisol. SIT can be performed on a stationary bike, rowing machine, or other cardio equipment, making it suitable for beginners and advanced athletes alike. The advantages of high-intensity intervals of shorter duration include increased muscle mass, decreased body fat, and enhanced cardiovascular health. [Learn more here!](#) Speak with your personal trainer for personalised SIT Training recommendations.

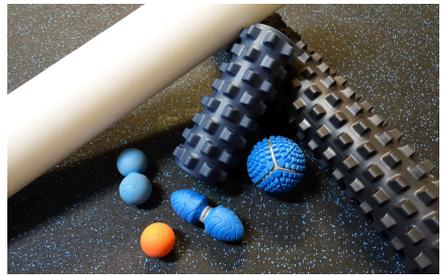
Balance Training

Falls prevention stands as our most effective defence against fractures. With 70% of women aged 80 years or older experiencing osteoporosis ([source](#)), falls prevention should be an ongoing consideration, extending beyond menopause. While all forms of exercise promote balance, specific balance-enhancing exercises are particularly crucial for sedentary individuals. The best advice? Stay active and engage in diverse movements on various surfaces. Challenge yourself by practicing getting up and down from the floor regularly. Consider joining classes like yoga, which emphasise balance, strength, and breath control through twisting movements. The type of movement matters less than the consistency and challenge it provides—keep moving, keep challenging your body, and it will respond.



Walking

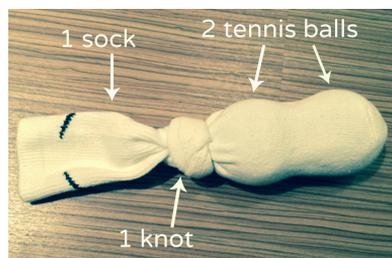
I love walking because it's accessible to most individuals, requires minimal equipment, and can be done in various environments. Walking in nature offers the added advantage of soothing our nervous system with the calming effects of the natural environment. Start walking daily and gradually increase over time. Walking offers numerous benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, circulation, bone health, mood enhancement, better sleep, and weight management. Begin with 4,000 steps/day, gradually working your way up to 10,000+ steps/day.



Stretching

Everything is changing, and you might find yourself feeling stiff and sore, whether you exercise or not. This is a common complaint during menopause: "When did I get so stiff?" Hormonal shifts during menopause affect not only our muscles and bones but also our joints. As estrogen levels decline, so does the suppleness of our connective tissues, including ligaments, tendons, and fascia. These changes can result in reduced flexibility and movement capacity. Like all forms of training, flexibility is something we must actively work on as we age.

Solutions include self-massage, therapeutic massage, foam rolling, physio and ball rolling. Warm up before movement, explore different and challenging movement patterns, incorporate mobility exercises before training sessions, and include yoga in your weekly exercise routine. A great tool that I like is putting two tennis balls in a sock and tying the end. You can roll many parts of your body with this simple and cost effective tool. Ask your physiotherapist or personal trainer for tips.



EXAMPLE

Weekly Exercise Planner

SUNDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 15 Minutes Stretching _____
- _____

MONDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 30-45 Minutes Strength Training _____
- 10 Minutes Mobility & Stretching _____

TUESDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 20 Minutes Interval Training _____
- 10 Minutes Mobility & Stretching _____

WEDNESDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 15 Minutes Stretching _____
- _____

THURSDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 30-45 Minutes Strength Training _____
- 10 Minutes Mobility & Stretching _____

FRIDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 15 Minutes Stretching _____
- _____

SATURDAY

Date: _____

- 10,000+ steps _____
- _____
- 20 Minutes Interval Training _____
- 10 Minutes Mobility & Stretching _____

PRIORITIES

- Protein every meal and snack _____
- Breathwork daily _____
- Meal planning _____
- Time out with people I love _____
- Journaling/self care practices _____

REMINDER

NEXT WEEK

Notes

Menopause WTF!

Signs & Symptoms

Once a woman has gone without a menstrual cycle for 12 consecutive months, she is deemed to be post-menopause. In Australia this most commonly occurs at around age 51. Perimenopause, often referred to as the 'menopause transition,' precedes this stage and is characterised by hormonal changes leading up to the cessation of menstruation. During perimenopause, women may experience a variety of symptoms related to hormonal fluctuations, including but not limited to:

- Mood changes
- Sleep disturbance
- Brain fog
- Low energy
- Hot flushes
- Joint pain
- Irregular periods
- Vaginal dryness
- Headaches
- Breast tenderness
- Weight gain
- Changes in fat distribution
- Decrease in libido
- Skin changes

While we can't stop ageing or completely eliminate menopausal symptoms, the steps in the e-book can help improve your physical and mental well-being, shape how your body ages, and enhance your quality of life. Menopause isn't a sentence to endure; it's a chance to prioritise yourself, invest in your health, and take proactive steps toward fulfilment. Your health is in your hands, and how you age is your choice. Who we become post-menopause reflects our decisions. What will you choose for yourself?

Who Can Help?

Women need ample support during menopause, as hormonal changes can significantly disrupt their lives. It's naive to believe that simply eating more vegetables and protein will eliminate menopausal symptoms. The recommendations in this e-book are designed to support but not replace the guidance of your menopause-trained doctor or natural medicine practitioner. If you cannot find an available menopause-trained doctor, you can reach out to organisations like [WellFemme](#) online. For reliable menopause information, visit the [Australasian Menopause Society](#). The more you know about menopause, the better equipped you'll be to advocate for yourself.

Buyer Beware

Menopause is a booming industry, generating millions of dollars annually. Be cautious of supplements marketed as solutions to your symptoms. Many of these supplements lack sufficient testing, resulting in inconsistent outcomes and potentially leaving you with an empty wallet. Consider prioritising diet and lifestyle changes as a more effective investment of your time and money. The tools in this e-book are the foundations of good health. If you apply these tools consistently you will see improvements in your energy, moods, cravings, sleep, body composition and more. See this as an investment in yourself that you will never regret.

About Melanie Briony

Learn more about me on the next page.

About Me!



I'm Melanie Briony, and I've been actively engaged in the fitness and wellness industry for over 14 years. You can find my qualifications [HERE](#).

Maintaining fitness and strength has always been important for me, but as I entered my late 40s, I encountered unexpected challenges like sleep difficulties, excessive soreness and poor recovery after exercise that left me searching for answers.

Navigating peri-menopause, trying to decipher what was just ageing and what was menopause-related, I realised I wasn't alone. Women in my age group were facing similar struggles including weight gain, low energy, you name it—after years of putting others first.

I realised it was time to learn as much as I could about peri-menopause changes and self care practices like breathwork. With my background as a fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle coach, I'm dedicated to helping women over 40 find supportive and practical health and wellness solutions to common issues. This is why I created the [Resilient Woman Coaching Program](#). This program is for women just like us. Women who know how important it is to stay fit, strong and resilient as they age but who also want up to date information that is relevant to this life stage.

If you'd like to organise a **FREE 15-minute call** with me please send me a [message](#). Alternatively you can book a 60-minute consultation with me [HERE](#).

