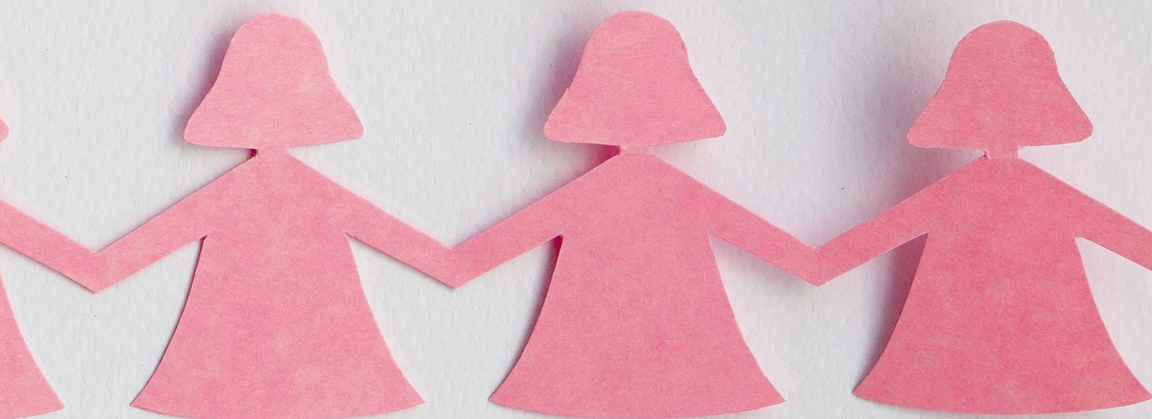


PREVIEW COPY

empart

real stories. real wisdom. real menopause.



holly osterman

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real wisdom.
real menopause.

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DISCLOSURE:

The contents of this book are inspired by experiences and insights shared within the Menopause ChitChat community, but names and specific details have been changed to protect the privacy of our members. The stories, responses and ideas contained within this book do not constitute medical advice. The author does not prescribe or recommend any specific treatments or solutions for physical, emotional, or medical challenges. Readers are encouraged to consult with a qualified physician or healthcare professional for any medical concerns. While the author aims to provide valuable insights and support, neither the author nor the publisher assumes responsibility for any actions taken based on the information in this book.

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To the courageous women of our community, this book is dedicated to you.

For your willingness to share your stories, your wisdom, and your hearts. For your vulnerability in opening up about the experiences that so many choose to keep hidden. For your strength in navigating a journey that is often misunderstood and stigmatized.

Your openness has created a space of understanding and connection, a beacon of light in the often confusing journey of menopause. Your stories have not only enriched this book, but they have also touched and transformed the lives of countless women.

Thank you for your courage, your honesty, and your invaluable contributions to our community.

This book is a testament to your resilience and a celebration of our shared journey.

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Author's Note

You're about to dive into a collection of stories that are close to my heart. They came about from our online community, Menopause ChitChat, now reborn as Empart. This is where thousands of incredible women have opened up about their journeys, sharing their highs, lows, and everything in between.

I've spent countless hours pouring over these conversations, smiling at your wins, feeling your frustrations, and learning from your wisdom. I've taken all this, stirred in a little imagination, and came up with the stories you're about to read.

Now, just to set things straight: the stories are fictionalized, and names are changed to protect the privacy of our members. But the truth behind them? That's as real as it gets. The triumphs, the tears, the resilience, and the camaraderie. They're all from real women, just like you and me.

We've all heard the saying, "Every woman's journey is unique," and wow, is that true with menopause. You might find stories in here that feel like they're taken right out of your life, and others that are completely different. But that's the beauty of it. There's something in here for everyone.

The goal of Empart is simple. I want you to see a bit of yourself in these stories, to know you're not alone, and to feel empowered to navigate your journey. And once you're done, I hope you'll share this book with someone who needs a bit of that, too.

Remember, we're in this together. Your story, your experiences, they matter. And who knows? They might just be the inspiration for someone else one day.

So, let's turn the page and start this journey. Can't wait to share this with you.

With warmth,
Holly

Introduction

I'm 40 years old, just been told I'm in perimenopause, and I'm feeling like I've been handed a map in a language I don't understand. I'm not a doctor, not a therapist, not a fitness guru, and definitely not a writer. I'm just a woman standing in the middle of a life change that no one really talks about. But here's the thing. I knew I wasn't the only one. There were thousands of women out there, just like me, feeling lost and alone. And we needed a place to talk, to share, to feel safe. So, I did what any woman in my shoes would do. I started a community.

OK. Maybe it wasn't that simple. I always struggled with self-doubt. Will anyone listen? Will anyone care? After all, who was I to start an online community? But I pushed past the fear, sat in front of my computer, and typed three simple words that would change everything.

“What's Your Story?”

And the response was overwhelming. That conversation was viewed over 85,000 times and had almost 3,000 replies. Women did have stories to tell. They did listen. They did care. They shared their wisdom and offered support. But they also shared their frustrations, challenges, and victories. And on a regular basis, women shared how much this community changed their lives. They realized that they were not alone.

But the rest of the world wasn't ready to talk about menopause openly. Companies knew they had an audience, but they didn't understand how to talk to, or connect with, women in menopause. They didn't listen. Menopause would occasionally be part of a punchline on a sitcom or reality TV show. And we still couldn't have a normal conversation with our spouses, families, or best friends.

I was frustrated. I wanted to give up. In fact, I did. Over and over again. But our community kept going on, even when I couldn't. They kept supporting each other, encouraging each other, and confiding in each other.

They kept sharing their stories. And they felt as if somebody was listening. They felt validated.

Then I realized something important. These powerful stories needed to be shared with the world. And the world needed to listen. So I scoured thousands of conversations across hundreds of different topics. Of course, since our community was private and our members felt safe, I wanted to keep it that way. I changed the names and details. But the stories, struggles, and triumphs are very real. And those stories have become the book you're reading now.

What can you expect from this book? Well, each chapter is a theme, a topic that has been commonly discussed in our community. From perimenopause through post-menopause, to the hormonal rollercoaster that comes with it. We navigate through the mental and emotional storm, exploring how menopause can shake us up with worry and anxiety, and how we can regain control. We also journey down the path to wellness, discussing the various treatments and natural remedies that our community members have tried. Every chapter is a blend of stories, struggles, and triumphs, all very real and very relatable.

I want to make it clear that our goal is not to provide clinical guidance. We want to emphasize that every woman's experience is unique to them and, most urgently, that they should seek help from a doctor or other healthcare professional to discuss their symptoms. This book is about sharing experiences, about feeling seen and heard, about knowing that you're not alone.

So, why now, after all these years? Because the world is finally ready to talk about menopause. Thanks to so many passionate and dedicated people—doctors, researchers, authors, and more—people with vision who tried so hard to bring menopause out of the dark ages, people are talking. And the world is ready. Celebrities are talking about their bodies, their hormones, their emotions, and their menopause.

And the crowning moment? A major pharmaceutical company bought a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl. Yes, you heard it right. Menopause made it to the Super Bowl.

But as the conversation around menopause evolves, so too must our community. That's why we've said goodbye to the old Menopause ChitChat forum. We've launched a new community, one with more features, more ways to connect, and more wisdom and insight. It's also called Empart and it's a place where we can share and learn from each other's experiences. Our goal with Empart is to start a new conversation about midlife, menopause, and more. We want to create a space where every woman feels seen and understood. A place where we can all grow and learn together.

So, I invite you to visit Empart and join the conversation. You can find us at www.joinempart.com. Share your experiences, lend your wisdom, and learn from the stories of others.

I'll ask you: What's Your Story?

Part I

Phases & Changes

“Nature is change, and life is what happens when change is happening.”

— URSULA K. LE GUIN

Menopause is just another part of life’s changes, like nature itself. It might seem overwhelming at times, but it’s important to remember that we’re all going through it together. The different phases, from perimenopause to post-menopause, are just stages in this journey we’re all on. By sharing our stories and experiences, we can help each other better understand and cope with the changes that come with menopause.

Is This Menopause?

Your life is about to change.

Does that thought scare you? Worry you? Maybe it's a mix of both? You've been feeling a bit off lately, noticing changes in your body and mood that you can't quite put your finger on. You might have even asked your doctor or a friend about it, but you're left with more questions than answers.

You're starting to wonder: "Could this be menopause?" If you're nodding your head, know you're not alone in feeling confused and unsure. You're at the beginning of something new - a journey of understanding what's happening with you.

Menopause. It's a topic that often gets whispered about or avoided entirely. But we need to talk about it candidly, honestly, and with lots of support.

Nikki is a spirited, 47-year-old woman with a warm smile that could brighten even the gloomiest of days. She was raised in an era where discussions about 'womanly changes' just never happened, leaving her in the dark about menopause. In her family, it wasn't a topic that was freely discussed; her mom had a hysterectomy before she could even remember, which left her without a point of reference for her own experiences.

Nikki has always been on top of things. The sort of woman who always had a plan, who knew where she was headed. But when the hot flashes started, they caught her off guard. She was nowhere near her 60s, which in her mind was the age menopause ought to kick in. Too young for this, she thought. There had to be another explanation, right?

The hot flashes were just the beginning, then came the mood swings, the sleepless nights, and a handful of other weird signs that something was shifting inside her. Nikki wanted to know, "Is this menopause?"

She found herself stumbling blindly through this new maze. It felt lonely, confusing, and even a little scary at times. But she held on, managing to get by each day even as she struggled to understand what was happening to her.

Nikki just wanted someone to talk to about all this - her mom, a friend, anyone really. But instead, all she got was a deafening silence, a void that left her feeling isolated, alone and unseen.

“Goodness, it really gets to me when I don’t have someone to share this experience with. My mom went through a hysterectomy, so she’s no help, and I don’t have sisters or aunts either. Why does this feel so weird and taboo? I’d attend a regular menopause group if one existed. I had no clue how tough this could be and how many symptoms there might be.”

—Alison V.

“I was stuck in perimenopause for ages without even realizing it. Now when I look back, it’s clear. But I never thought about what it would mean. Menopause is an entirely different beast. Hot flashes aren’t that intense and they don’t last long. But the anxiety and panic episodes where I just can’t sleep or calm down - they’re brutal. I’ve been trying different natural products, hoping something will work.

“Stress is a major factor, it just makes everything worse. So does lack of sleep. This whole ordeal needs to be talked about more openly, not just in books, but in conversations with women from our doctors and the like.”

—Kathy

“Isn’t it amazing how we women keep performing our day-to-day tasks while battling menopause, and for such a long time at that... If I had the money, I’d rent billboards across town, asking women ‘Do you experience Memory Loss? Overly anxious? Can’t Sleep?’ Any or all of these might be signs of menopause.”

—Charlene

“I knew things were shifting in my late 40s, but with no one to share my thoughts, I just assumed it was menopause. Reading about it sure didn’t prepare me for the lifelong battle. Here I am, 11 years later, still grappling with it.”

—Teresa G.

“It wasn’t until I hit 49 and could no longer mentally or physically ignore what was happening that I started discussing it. I dove headfirst into it like most of us do. Now, I share my stories, symptoms, worries, and all with my daughter and younger female colleagues. They’re probably tired of hearing about it, but I hope someday they will be grateful and feel a little less lost in their future. We all need to get over not talking about it.”

—Gloria

“I’ve noticed that within my group of friends, no one really discusses their menopause symptoms openly. Apart from the occasional hot flash jokes, it’s silence. This forum has been incredibly helpful to me in the past few years. There’s so much relief in speaking openly about it - knowing we aren’t alone. So when did I start talking about it? As soon as these strange sensations began taking over my body!”

—GiGi

“We should push for more open discussions and not worry about the potential awkwardness. Especially with all of the physical and mental changes. We shouldn’t have to pretend everything is fine when our world is going haywire.”

—Jennie

“I recall making an appointment with my GYN when I started noticing symptoms. She gave me a photocopied paper with a Plan A, B, and C on it. Plan A was to just deal with it, Plan B was birth control pills, and Plan C was birth control pills with antidepressants. Needless to say, I found a new GYN.”

—Rae Ann

Recognizing the signs and knowing a little about what’s ahead are just the first steps. It’s about understanding what’s happening within you, and acknowledging that yes, your life is changing. Change isn’t always a scary thing. It’s a transition, a shift. It’s about evolution and growth. Surround yourself with people and a community who want to evolve and grow with you.

Shared Wisdom

Develop Your Doctor Dialogue. Write down specific symptoms or changes you’ve noticed and any questions you have about menopause. Bring this list to your next healthcare appointment to ensure you cover all your concerns.

Share Your Story. Write a blog post, social media update, or forum post about your personal journey with menopause. Sharing your experiences can help normalize the conversation and provide support for others going through the same process.

Create Your Menopause Map. Document the changes you're experiencing, both physical and emotional, in a dedicated notebook or digital document. This can help you identify potential patterns and signs of menopause.

Your Turn

What's one thing you believed about menopause that turned out to be a myth or misconception? How did discovering the truth change your perspective?

Your Story Matters: Explore More with Empart

We hope you enjoyed this preview of “Empart: Real Stories. Real Wisdom. Real Menopause.” But there’s so much more waiting for you. Remember, it’s about feeling seen, heard, and most importantly, knowing you’re not alone.

Get Your Copy Today

“Empart: Real Stories. Real Wisdom. Real Menopause.” is available on Amazon in both ebook and paperback formats.

Be Part of the Empart Community

The conversation continues beyond the pages of this book. Join our vibrant community of women who are sharing their stories, experiences, and insights.

- Visit our website: joinempart.com
- Join the conversation: community.joinempart.com
- Connect with us on social media:
 - Facebook: [/joinempart](https://www.facebook.com/joinempart)
 - Instagram: [@joinempart](https://www.instagram.com/joinempart)
 - Twitter: [@joinempart](https://twitter.com/joinempart)

Spread the Word

If you found value in this Preview Copy, share it! Together, we can start a new conversation about menopause.

For inquiries, collaborations, or feedback, reach out to us at team@joinempart.com.