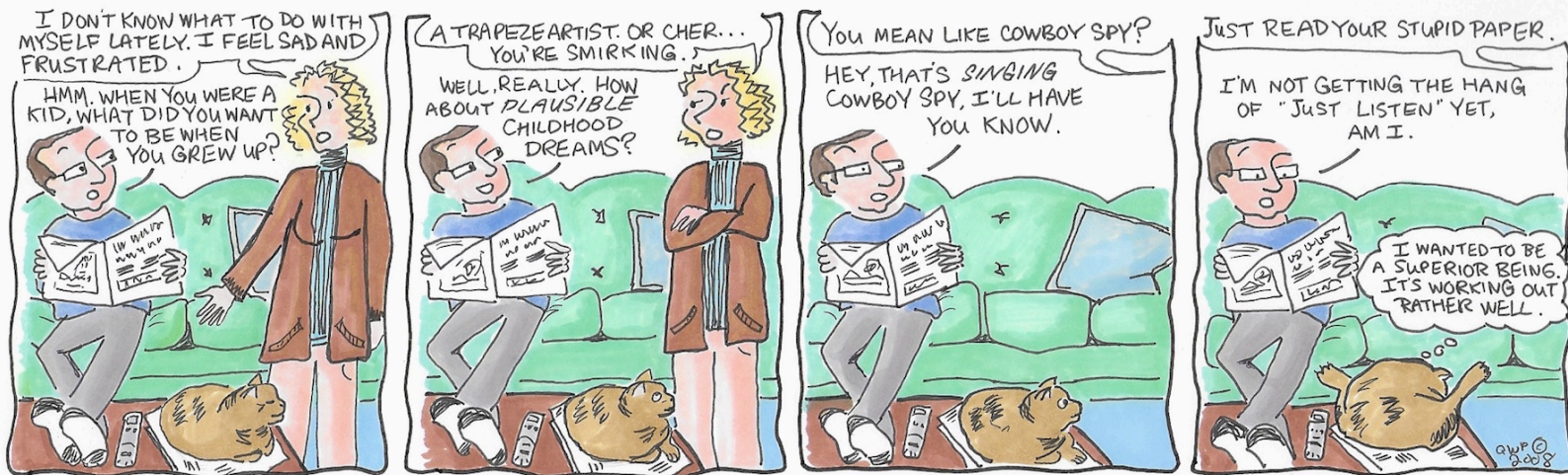


Depression



It may be common to feel blue during periodically throughout menopause however depression may become a much larger problem for some women during this time. In fact, it is four times more likely for a woman above 45 years of age to experience depression than a woman of younger age. Depression was a very real struggle for me and I will discuss this symptom with more seriousness. I think it's important to start by understanding what depression is and the different types it can be experienced as.

Let me start by explaining that depression is different than mood swings or anxiety. While one symptom may lead to another they are separate from one another and should be treated differently. Menopause does not directly cause depression but the hormonal fluctuations, and other symptoms experienced during menopause, can dramatically increase a woman's chances for developing or re-experiencing depression. Depression may be experienced as extreme sadness, feelings of worthlessness, mood swings, suicidal thoughts, lethargy, etc...

There are several forms of depression:

Many people have experienced a depressed mood, known as dysphoria or Dysthymic Disorder, which is feeling blue, low energy, sad, etc... this is less intense than other forms of depression and most often does not need medical attention though it may last for a few years.

Another common form of depression is known as Adjustment Disorder. This is when you experience depression as a symptom or a reaction to something happening in life, it could be medical or physiological, such as a death of a loved one, a divorce or losing a job, etc... Empty Nest Syndrome, when your kids are grown and have left the house, is also connected to this type of depression. This form of depression usually lasts for a shorter amount of time, around six months or so, unless it is chronic, which would last longer. While this type of depression usually can be handled with therapy and self-care it may lead to a more serious form of depression called clinical depression.

Clinical depression is a real mental disorder, also called Major Depression, and is believed to be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Chemical imbalances may exist from birth, be unrelated to menopause, or even be formed by other forms of prolonged or untreated depression. Major depression lasts for more than two weeks and is experienced as intense feelings of sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, suicidal thoughts, withdrawal from family and friends, lack of energy, etc... This type of depression is very hard to live with and requires medical attention and therapy.

There are types of depression such as manic depression or bipolar disorder, psychotic depression or seasonal affective disorder (SAD). These are much less commonly associated with menopause but are just, if not more, serious and require medical attention.

Depression may feel like a dark battle that you are fighting alone but know that help is available and there are many treatment options for each type of depression. It may be tricky to understand what type of depression you are experiencing and whether or not it is happening from a life even or a chemical response. I strongly recommend that you talk with your doctor and therapist about what type of treatment is best for you. Also, stay open and honest with your friends and family about what you are experiencing. You are not alone and experiencing happiness and joy again is on the way!