



Hormones, Women & Stress: Okay, About That Hormonal Thing by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Dear Susie, I am so stressed. I've been feeling so sad, stressed and irritable. It's not PMS, but it sure feels like it. Could it be hormones anyway?

A: Oh, the complex range of influences our hormones have upon functions of our bodies, minds, and spirits. You didn't mention your age, which can be significant. Women of any age may experience physical and emotional symptoms associated with hormonal shifts. The only way to be sure is to have your ob/gyn do some blood studies. You might not be menopausal per se, yet you might notice subtle changes. Whatever your age, go talk with your doctor to explore what might be happening. There are all kinds of accompaniments to the melody, *"I Enjoy Being A Girl."* Stress and depression can stem from somewhere else. Is anything going on at home? At work? Is there a relationship that feels out of balance? Have you made a change in medications or exercise routine?

It is quite a scenic trail we women trudge along the peaks and valleys of The Hormonal Range.

Some women experience mood or weight fluctuations at various stages of their monthly cycle and life cycle. Some crave salt or chocolate, get clumsy, are over-sensitive. Others become keenly intuitive. Some indigenous tribes provided a communal hut for women in their "moon time," not as a shunning but rather, to honor their heightened intuitive wisdom. Often women emerged sharing insights to guide, even preserve, the tribe.

Throughout peri-menopause, which can span ten or more years in some cases, a lot of women notice mood changes, even changes in their flow, etc. As one gynecologist put it: *"Once you hit peri-menopause, all bets are off!"* Each woman will experience those changes differently. Whatever your age, my first suggestion would be to talk with your gynecologist or internist, and explore what might be happening, or see if your depression and stress are coming from somewhere else altogether.

Two Books by Christiane Northrup, MD Worth Reading

"Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom": A classic. That explains how it all works.

"The Wisdom of Menopause" is also very informative.

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"3-D" Tips for Guys on the Subject of Women's Hormones:

If you love a woman, or ever have loved a woman, or ever hope to one day... please, please, don't ask her if every harsh word, each tear or expression of frustration is hormonally-motivated? I don't know any woman anywhere who appreciates the suggestion that her feelings can be **Dismissed**, **Disrespected** or **Discounted** on that basis. Do yourself a favor, fellas: Even if you think it -- don't say it. Instead, earn valuable peace points by asking if there's anything you can do to help her today. Give her a smile, a warm hug... and a little space.

"3-D" Tips for Women on the Subject of Women's Hormones and Men:

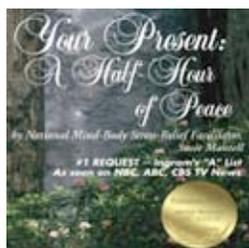
That last tip cuts both ways. With the exception of a true disorder of extreme hormonal imbalance requiring medication, the stress of PMS, pregnancy and menopause are very real, but none is license to, **Dismiss**, **Disrespect** or **Discount** those around us. On rough days try hard to maintain your sense of humor, journal, take a long, quiet bath, make some nice plans for yourself. Apologize if you are irritable, and when you need to...get out of your loved ones' way for an hour or two. Several medications, supplements, herbs and healing arts are available to diminish symptoms. Explore what might be beneficial for you when hormones start to swing.

A Few Non-Hormonal Possibilities to Explore

1. Eliminate sugar for two weeks, and drink plenty of water to flush out your system. For some, sugar can act as a mood-altering drug, and some would say it can bring on what a book on this very subject calls, "Sugar Blues." (See more about sugar and stress on the Tips page at www.relaxintuit.com)
2. Jot down on a calendar the times of day or days of the week that are better/worse. Look for a pattern.
3. Try reducing caffeine. It is amazing what even one cup of caffeinated coffee or caffeinated diet cola can do! Don't forget chocolate. Sorry. A word to the wise: Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant.

BONUS: Other people often see us differently than we see ourselves. Sometimes someone who loves us can observe what we cannot see in ourselves. Try asking a truly trusted friend if s/he has any idea what might be causing you to feel as you have been.

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END OF THIS TIP