

Appendix 1 Women's wisdom - Humour, Quotes and Poems

to use at beginning and end of sessions or activities

1) Quotes from life, famous people, fridge magnets etc!

Credited to authors wherever possible

It's hard to feel fit as a fiddle when you're shaped like a cello!

A woman's path through the menopause will be unique
The menopause is a Gateway and once you are through it,
You can reach a new equilibrium

How beautiful it is to do nothing and then to rest afterwards! Spanish proverb.

Don't spend time with people who don't respect you.

Home is the place we find inside ourselves.
Once found, we take it with us everywhere we go.

We can do no great things - only small things with love. Mother Theresa

It is a pity that youth is wasted on the young!

You can take no credit for beauty at 16.
But if you are beautiful at 60, it will be your soul's own doing. Marie Stopes

People are like teabags
You find out how strong they are
When you put them in hot water!

In youth we learn, in age we understand. Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach

If women feel limp in their 50's – it may be because their children
have taken their stuffing to build their own nests.

It's never too late to be what you might have been. George Eliot

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

Life begins later than you think Carol Shields.

May the sun bring you new energies by day Irish blessing
May the moon softly restore you by night
May the rain wash away any worries you may have
May gentle breezes refresh your soul, and
All the days of your life - may you walk gently through the world
And know its wonders

2) Poems

Credited to authors wherever possible

Slipping

Slipping
so
easily
from
daughter
to
wife
to
mother
she
wondered
who
she
would
be
if
ever
she
had
the
chance
to
be
herself

Author unknown

Dust

Dust if you must but wouldn't it be better
To paint a picture or write a letter
Bake a cake or plant a seed
Ponder the difference between want and need

Dust if you must but there's not much time
With rivers to swim and mountains to climb
Music to hear and books to read
Friends to cherish and life to lead

Dust if you must but the world's out there
With the sun in your eyes, the wind in your hair
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain
This day will never come round again

Dust if you must, but bear in mind
Old age will come and it's not very kind
And when you go, and go you must
You, yourself will make more dust.

Author unknown

Nurturing "Me"

I am the middle-aged woman,
I do the caring,
The washing, the shopping, the cleaning,
I do the giving,
Sometimes cheerfully
Sometimes resentfully
Why can't someone else do it for a change?

I am the teenager with Tourettes
I like being angry and swearing a lot,
And thinking, "Sod everybody
I'll do what I like!"
But I feel that I'm old enough
To know better.

I am a spirit seeker,
But I've gone off religion,
It caused too many problems.
I like running on the beach
Watching the turbulence
Where two rivers meet
Making spells in the woods
or building a fire.
I want God to look like Miriam Margolyes

I am the little girl
Who wants to feel safe
And be cared for
Let someone else do the worrying and
Take responsibility
I get scared when I'm on my own
At night,
Or I feel poorly

I need somebody
To be there for me

Penny Potts

Escape

My heart's too light to write of life today
I feel my body rise and drift away
Above the humdrum hassle of my life
I am no longer mother, friend or wife
I am a golden spirit
Flying high
Racing like the wind to reach the sky
My spirits soar like a captive bird set free
For a brief bright moment
I am one with me.

Norma Evans

Finding Myself

I shall seek wisdom to nurture my heart, mind, body and soul
so that I may have the energy
to climb the mountains in my own life
to love and support others, who are climbing their own mountains,
and to have time for friends, play and the celebration of life.

I shall allow myself to feel capable so that I may seek excellence.
I shall allow myself to feel sadness so that joy may return
I shall allow myself to feel joy so that I may be revitalised
I shall allow myself to feel afraid so that I may find courage
I shall allow myself to feel alone so that I may know me
I shall allow myself to feel beautiful so that I may feel free
I shall allow myself to feel lovable so that the loving may seek me
I shall allow myself to feel worthy so that I may fulfil my purpose in life

Author unknown

Comes the Dawn

After a while you learn the subtle difference
Between holding a hand and chaining a soul,
And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning
And company doesn't mean security.
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts
And presents aren't promises
And you begin to accept your defeats
With you head up and your eyes open
With the grace of a woman, not the grief of a child,
And learn to build all your roads
On today - because tomorrow's ground
Is too uncertain for plans, and futures have
A way of falling down in mid-flight.

After a while you learn that even sunshine
Burns if you get too much
So you plant your own garden and decorate
Your own soul, instead of waiting
For someone to bring you flowers.
And you learn that you really can endure...
That you really are strong
And you really do have worth.

Author unknown

Who am I?

I reflected on my son's 32nd birthday and came up with the following:

First and foremost - a creature of the Universe, a member of the human race
and custodian of the planet.

A woman (with a playful child still inside)

Sadly a widow - not so sadly an orphan

Relatively speaking: happily a mother, Rachael now 34, Michael 32 today,
mother in law, step-grand mother, soon to become a step-great grand mother.

Siblings: A sister x 5 - sister in law x 10+

A niece, cousin, aunty (2 generations)

A friend, soul mate, family counsellor, confidante, neighbour,
villager (Membership Secretary),
British citizen, (now senior!) English patriot, householder.

Professionally: B & B proprietor; M.D. of small printing company.

Spiritually: A thinker—well I think I am! Agnostic, humanist.
Comedienne, humorist, day dreamer, star gazer.

Hobbies: A wordsmith, but not a reader!
A gardener, compost maker, environmentally friendly re-cycler,
National Trust member + member of other Societies & Clubs.
Owned by 2 cats.

Values: An inter-dependent society, where
some people work,
some people drive and
some people stay home and grow the carrots to satisfy the palate
and sweet peas to please the sensual palette.

Ambition: To become a “human being” instead of a “human doing”

When I was a child, I was just a child - **being** part of a family,
now I have become a Life Engineer!

There is no wonder that life passes by more quickly as you get older.
With all these hats to wear - I should be a milliner!

Now I know **Who I am!**

11 August 2006
Tweaked on my birthday 12 October,
As the song goes..... now I'm 64!!!

Jenny Wilson

Post Script. Update on life - three and a half years later

Now retired – still working on the “human being” instead of a “human doing”,
but life “walks” (as opposed to “runs”) at a more gentle pace.

Values remain the same

More time for sharing with family and friends,
more time for projects
more time for reflection
more time for leaving things until tomorrow (or the next day!)

If I had my life to live over again

If I had my life to live over again,
I'd try to make **more** mistakes next time.

I would relax... I would be sillier than I have been this trip.
I know of very few things I would take seriously.
I would be less hygienic
I would take more chances, I would climb more mountains,
swim more rivers
and watch more sunsets.
I would eat more ice-cream and fewer beans.
I would have more actual problems and fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I am one of those people who lived seriously and sanely
hour after hour, day after day...
If I had to do it over again, I'd just have moments,
one after another, instead of living so many years
ahead of each other.

I would start barefoot in the Spring
And would stay that way later in the Fall

I would ride more merry-go-rounds.

I'd pick more daisies.

From an interview with an 85 year old woman from the hill country of Kentucky

“And I heard you say,
Let me be wild and tangled and free
Let me run and yell and catch things
And come back dirty and shining, with thistles in my hair.

I am tired of being timid, you said.
I am tired of being quietly, perfectly creative.
I want to leave my closet door open at night
I want to climb out of the window of who I
am expected to be
And leap into the reality of wishes,
landing in a cascade of cherry blossoms.”

Miriam Rubinow
(from Carol Gilligan's book “The birth of Pleasure”)

Within our often mundane lives women need to reactivate and trust the ancient instinctive “knowing” that so many of us have lost in this frenetic modern world.

“The old one, The One Who Knows, is within us
She thrives in the deepest soul-psyche of women, the ancient and vital wild Self.
Her home is that place in time where the spirit of woman and the spirit of wolf meet – the place where minds and instincts mingle, where a woman’s deep life funds her mundane life.
It is the place where the I and the Thou kiss, the place where, in all spirit, women run with the wolves”

“We must strive to allow our souls to grow in their natural ways and to their natural depths.
The wildish nature does not require a woman to be a certain colour, a certain education, a certain lifestyle or economic class – in fact , it cannot thrive in an atmosphere of enforced political correctness, or by being bent into old burnt-out paradigms.
It thrives on fresh sight and self-integrity. It thrives on it’s own nature.

So whether you are an introvert or an extrovert, a woman-loving woman, a man-loving woman, or a God-loving woman, or all of the above:
whether you are possessed of a simple heart or the ambitions of an Amazon,
whether you are trying to make it to the top or just make it through tomorrow,
whether you be spicy or sombre, regal or roughshod – the Wild Woman belongs to you.
She belongs to all women.”

From “Women who run with the wolves” Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype
by Clarissa Pinkola Estes

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Sadly we were refused permission to reproduce Jenny Joseph’s poem “Warning” - probably better known as “When I am an old woman I shall wear purple” but this can be found on the internet, and in a small book version, and is a lovely imaginative look at what women can get up to after the menopause years!

3) Quotes from evaluation forms from previous groups - as relevant to different sections of the handbook

Preface, Introduction and Running Successful groups

I found listening to the others very useful – and enjoyed the focus on the future as an exciting and empowering adventure!

Really glad I came – makes me feel I'm not the only one

Thank goodness I am not going mad or falling apart. ALL NORMAL THEN!

It was so useful to know “I'm not the only one” going through these feelings etc. – great help from my peers!

Wonderful, reassuring, sensible, supportive, informative. Thank-you!

Brilliant! Just so glad I came!

Refreshingly informative. Enjoyed the experience!

Very well balanced presentations. Excellent!

I now see this stage of my life as a new beginning, rather than the beginning of the end!

Excellent evening – very interesting – held our attention

Session 1 Experiencing the Menopause - using Photos - Sets 1 and 2

The photo session was really good and inspiring

Thought provoking - stimulating

Comments from the photo cards Set 1 - “Facing the problems”

How will I cope with what's ahead?

Who will do for me when I can't manage?

Poor sleep – pains – stiff in morning

Enjoy being part of 3 generations of women

Make too many demands on myself

Feel guilty if not giving

Wrestling with many things

Feel as if living 2 separate lives

Don't care what people think any more!

Comments from the photo cards Set 2 - "Looking after ourselves"

It's good to have a laugh!

Enjoy exercise – Yoga, walking, Pilates, swimming – whatever you like best

Freedom out of doors

Accepting life

Women friends

Totally new interests

Learning to relax

"Whatever" - attitude to life!

Spend as much money on **my** hobbies and interests as my partner and friends do!

Become softer

Know your own mind

Make time for fun!

Helped me to focus on my own journey – and where I am at the moment

Session 2 Menopause Symptoms and self help Solutions

I will let my partner know how I am feeling and try to say "NO" to family and friends when I am so tired and they want me.

Let them know that I will be there for them – but not at that moment!

Change sleeping arrangements if I am restless or if my partner is restless or snoring

Feel the guilt – but do what we want anyway! (the more you practice this – the weaker unnecessary guilt becomes)

Don't care about looking a fool

No "shoulds"

No longer living up to an image

Create boundaries for ourselves

Create our own space and **work to keep it**

New ideas for the future –

- 1) Make some time for me
- 2) I am not alone
- 3) Life does not stop at 50!

Good to get some perspective – It's not just me – and it's ok to be who I am.

Rest more – acknowledge when I am exhausted mentally and physically

Stop being stoical – tell other people how I am feeling

You have given me hope that this will not – may not! – last for ever – and at least one other person in the room is feeling any of the things I am experiencing

Think about life as a pound coin – you’ve now got 50 pence left. How do you want to spend it?

I learnt that I can care for myself as I would my best friend

Session 3 Treatments - HRT, Osteoporosis

Arrived with lots of questions on HRT

Having found the menopause clinic made a tremendous difference to me, as it is only there that I have had help to understand that all this difficult change is part of the menopause. I decided to try HRT in a mild form to help me balance mood swings and dark feelings: it was a difficult decision to make bearing in mind my history of fibroids.

HRT certainly helped in levelling things out. It took away the bad feelings of going through the menopause and enabled me to work my way through it.

I fear that using HRT, which I did for 18 months, simply stopped the menopause from proceeding, so to speak.

For someone like me, who always tries to solve problems by working harder, it licensed me just to “get on with things” as if the menopause actually wasn’t happening to me.....which didn’t really help.

My mind is calmed – I am not a fool to refuse to go on HRT

Enjoyed the session – thank-you!

I can grow old and daft with grey hair and a smile!

Session 5 Living with hormone swings - PMS

“If only it was widely known that it really is REAL!
Tell everyone!

“I found the “Living with hormone swings” session very comforting and enlightening - lots of practical advice and support

“I think it should be possible to perceive PMS as a positive, insightful experience rather than something always to be fought and battled against.

I suppose I mean “Embrace” rather than “Endure”.

I find this almost impossible myself, but I do realise I am starting to perceive it differently as I understand it more and observe what is happening emotionally, deep inside.

“My own experience of PMS feels that what is being required of me is to work through the shit at its root. To face it full on, at its full depth to create genuine change.

“PMS can be experienced as being the most important time of the cycle, a reliable and powerful up-welling of all the unresolved, unprocessed feelings that persistently come up to the surface until you genuinely face them and address them.

“PMS can be a time when you are deeply connected to your truth, and if we could perceive this time differently, and care for and nurture ourselves, really listen to the stirrings and calls inside ourselves, it would create a holistic attitude to caring for ourselves and others at this time of the month.

“I experience PMS as a terrible but **wonderful gift**, and that although it is incredibly painful and scary, and when I am in the middle of it I hate it, I also am utterly grateful to have it, as in a way it is a constant and consistent friend that doesn't let you shy away, but through love challenges you to grow.

Session 4 and 6 - no quotes available

Sessions 7 Stress

The mix of physical and emotional brought up issues I've tended to bury that I need to talk through with someone else.

Need to let off steam!

No more tolerance for patronising people!

Learning to cope with anger – becoming stroppy women when we need to!

I must carve out my space – in spite of the obstacles

To put myself and my needs first and believe that all else will follow

I am more determined than ever to live my life for me, removing myself from situations that cause me stress and upset

Try out letting go of my self-criticism – just don't give it a look in!

I can make practical changes so I have more time for myself – also explore more women's events

Find some “Me” space and time

Give ourselves permission to do hobbies **before** all the jobs are finished!

Ask for more help at work and with family demands

Throw out junk – get more organised

Session 8 Women growing older with fun and meaning in their lives

Try new things – take more risks – give myself permission to be less Task-orientated.

Be myself Enjoy what I have

Make time for women friends – involvement in our communities

Now is my time to live and enjoy myself

Increased focus and concentration comes with confidence and self-absorption – and I do need to devote my time more to creativity and inner work

To think in a different way about how I want to spend the rest of my life

No one has ever said before –” being self-absorbed is the way we learn new things about ourselves”

To think in a different way about how I want to spend the remainder of my working life

Do one thing that feeds our soul every day

Create opportunities to be alone – away from pressure

Stay balanced in ourselves

Emphasis on having fun and on living in the moment

Changes for the future

- make a quiet space in my home and garden - just to sit

- have a creative time each week to “play” and try new things