

Appendix 3 Planning a single session, half day, full day or weekend

Principles of planning sessions to suit your needs

- As all the session plans have timings included for each activity it is possible to put together a session plan using activities from several sessions so you can concentrate on what you feel the group needs to deal with most urgently.
- Make sure the timings don't exceed the session time - and maybe allow some spare time as it may be slower to get a new group to move quickly from one activity to another.
- Always do a "Thorns and Roses" evaluation - see "Running menopause groups that can be fun and successful" so you can gauge how well the group has gone - and what the women might value in the future.
- It's also good to have contact details for the women, if they are happy with that, so you can let them know if another relevant group is being run any time. Pass a notebook and pen round at some point during the session to get their details and reassure them that only you will use them.
- If they are asking for more group work on the menopause, you can then either offer to do more sessions if you have funding for that - or explain that the pack has worked very well for **self help groups** taking it in turns to lead each session. See if you could facilitate that for them if they would like to do that. You or your local Health Promotion Service could order copies.
- Women really need to be able to talk about their own experience - so always allow for some of this in the session - but also some "chatting" time in refreshment breaks or shared lunches.
- Using the photos (**See Activities B and C - Session 1**) at the start of any short session, day or weekend encourages women to concentrate firstly on their feelings or anxieties about the menopause and how that it is affecting them. It is also a way of getting people out of their "intellectual sensible mode" and into a more natural and realistic way of thinking.
- For a short session the photos can be used all together mixing up Sets 1 and 2 - so that some women will choose photos showing the downsides of the menopause years - and others will choose photos showing how we can resource ourselves and enjoy life more. If they mainly choose photos from Set 1 or Set 2 discuss that in the group and show examples from the other set.
The most important part of that activity is the choosing of the photos and sharing in a pair - so to save time, you can just ask for one or two people to feedback to the group if they have something special to say - or just summarise what you feel they have learnt from the activity and move on.
- It can also be very helpful to do **Activity A from Session 1** - as it is so reassuring for women to hear from other members of the group that they are also coping with some of the heavy demands and stresses of this stage of life. As the sharing in 2's is the most important part of that activity you can make the feedback quick - or just summarise it briefly.
- If you are needing to **summarise any topic** that you don't have time to do an activity for, in a short session, try using the "Main points to be learned....." at the end of each session or activity - or use the handouts.
- If you are trained to lead a relaxation or stretch session that can be great for the women.

- Do use the poems or music at the end of the toolkit to add in fun or poignancy to the sessions.

Suggestions for a variety of different menopause group formats

Single session - 2.5 hours

Introducing yourself, Welcome, groundrules and confidentiality, name stickers 20 mins

Talk in pairs about what brought them to the session today -
Introduce themselves very briefly to the group 5-10 mins altogether

Activity A Session 1 - Brainstorm - "What personal, social and family changes may happen to women or their partners in the "menopause years" ie. aged 45 – 60
If you feel the group would be happy with this do this straight to the flipchart - 15 mins only

Photo session using Sets 1 and 2 together See Activity B and C Session 1 - 20 mins only

Menopause Symptoms and self help

- Give out the menopause quiz sheets and give them 10 minutes to fill them in. Explain that you will go through the answers with them fairly quickly but that if they are having real problems they must go and see their GP or book into a menopause clinic.
- From the Menopause Quiz answer sheet read out the answers to questions 1-6
- From the Summary Sheet for Common Symptoms of menopause read out all the menopause symptoms on the left hand side - then read out the symptoms that are not due to menopause and explain they should see the GP for any of those
- From the Menopause quiz answer sheet read out the answer to question 8 - ask for their ideas first. 1 hour

Summary only of :-

- HRT
- Osteoporosis - high risk factors - mention the crunchie bar or bring some to share!
- Complementary therapies concentrating on those shown to be useful in menopause

See answer sheets or "Main points to be learned..." from relevant session

15 mins only

Give details of local doctors and practice nurses who are experienced in menopause care if appropriate - and details of local menopause clinics and if they are self-referral or not.

Read out full list of other services or agencies that might be helpful - see end Session 2

Give out handouts - take a selection from the whole pack and offer to send copies on if not enough.

Pass round a notebook and pen to get contact details if they want to be contacted about future menopause events

Do "Thorns and Roses" evaluation 10 mins

NB. This programme is pretty tight and if you have a slow or very talkative group you need to

shorten or skip one or two activities and keep a close eye on the time.

People may have to leave to catch buses so it's important you finish all the parts of the session on time.

Other useful session formats include

2 evening sessions of 2 hours each

Include all the elements of the single session as outlined above - but allow a bit more time for the ones you feel are most important and add Activity A or B (or both if time) from the stress session - Session 7 - or other topics that you feel are most relevant. It would be good to ask the group at the first session which other topics they want included in session 2. Women often want some input on Complementary therapies.

A half day

If you can make this 3 hours you can add in more detail and activity A or B from Session 7.

Having a bring and share lunch at the beginning or end will allow for a lot more talking and relaxation and makes people feel really cared for.

A whole day

This can run from 10 to 12.30 and 1.30 to 4 with a bring and share lunch in between.

This allows you to run more activities in their full format, summarise others and introduce one activity from Session 7 or Session 8 at the end of the day.

A weekend

The world's your oyster! - but remember to intermix written activities with moving around and include some yoga or relaxation if you have someone qualified to run them. If not - you could get people to close their eyes and put on some really soothing music for a few minutes at the beginning or end of the sessions. Explain exactly what you want them to do and how long it will last. Some people feel very vulnerable with their eyes closed.

Allow some time for people to chill out and do nothing for a while if you can see that attention is wandering - so do not pack your programme too full. It may also be useful to have ideas for another session in case you have a very fast-working group!

If it's a residential weekend have an hour or two free after lunch so women can catch up on sleep if they need to, or go for a walk, or whatever they feel like doing.

If it's possible to arrange for the women to have a massage or other nurturing therapy that can be a wonderful addition to the weekend - but this will need paying for and it's difficult if it impinges on your session time.

You may also need some relaxation time - as running a weekend can be quite demanding.

You can get the women to tell you what they would like best in terms of a mix of sessions and relaxation - but you may have to sort out opposite opinions on how to use the time!

Have lots of books about menopause, or life as we get older, for women to browse through.

Having a box full of art paper, card, felt pens, paints, brushes, crayons, pastels, scraps of material, tinsel, sequins, shiny stars, glues etc - can allow you to have a "cutting and sticking" session(sounds less scary than an "art" session!) and allow the women to make a picture or a card - for themselves or someone else - either just for fun - or to express how they are feeling about life at the moment. This could be an optional activity when others are sleeping or out walking.

Getting the women to walk around outside and collect little things from nature for this activity can add a lot of beauty to their creations.

Although every woman is likely to say they are no good at art - if you can get them to share what they have made it can be a truly moving experience for the whole group - and may encourage them to start playing with their creativity and learning to value the artistic side of themselves. This will all take some time - at least an hour for the “cutting and sticking” session and another hour for the sharing.

Ending one evening with a bonfire, mulled wine and sparklers can be a very special experience - and if you have someone who can also lead circle dancing or singing round the fire that can be lovely.