

Session 8 - Women growing older – having fun and meaning in their lives

This can be used without the previous menopause and stress sessions

Welcome

Introductions

If Appropriate

Name stickers and felt pens

“ “

Icebreaker

“ “

Groundrules and confidentiality - Remind group from previous session

Time 10 mins

Refreshments – at start or half way through

Things for a “Goodbye” Celebration at the end if last of several sessions

Aims for this session To think about our role models as women and see what qualities inspire us and how we might develop those qualities in ourselves.

To understand that we all have a creative inner self - and learn what conditions are needed to nurture this and allow us to be fulfilled and happy older women.

Introduction

We are going to look today at who or what lifts our spirits, fires us with enthusiasm – and gives real meaning to our lives.

We'll start with who your women role models are – and what were the special things about them that made you choose them .

Then we'll look at how we know we are in contact with our inner selves and think about how to listen to this part of ourselves, how to start dreaming – and how to make some of our dreams a reality in our lives.

One **Eastern philosophy** divides our lives into three sections

In the first stage - the spiral of energy is pointing inwards - as children are taking ideas and knowledge into themselves as they grow and learn.

In the second stage - the spiral of energy is pointing outwards as adults give of their time, energy and knowledge - as they work for a living and care for their families or those dependant on them.

The third is the time for the “Forest-dwelling” stage of life - when we need to make time to be quiet in nature and learn from the beautiful world around us.



Many women in the menopause years instinctively feel a call to be out in their gardens or on the hills, walking, gardening or learning to be still and meditative as they consider what life means for them as they are approaching the “Third Age” of life.

Time 5 mins

Activity A

Sharing women’s contributions on their own women role-models – bring one or two of your own in case the group have forgotten or are reluctant to start the ball rolling.

Flipchart or A3 pad for feedback

If this is run as a one-off session give the women a few minutes to think who their role-models might be, maybe from their families or from the wider world, then continue.

- Ask the women to talk about what the role model they have chosen means to them - reading or showing what they have brought in to illustrate their women role-models if requested to do so at previous group.
- Go round the circle – or ask people to volunteer in turn.
- As the women are talking, select key words that summarise the role-models and write them on the flipchart.
- After all the role-models have been talked about – go through the flipchart summary and discuss with the women how they think they could become more like the role-models who mean the most to them.

Time 45 mins

Short break

Activity B

“Focus on Creative and Inner self” worksheet – do this yourself before the group starts, so you understand the point of the worksheet and can give a lead if needed.

Answers and discussion points sheet

Pens

Flipchart or A3 pad for feedback

Post-it notes for Thorns and Roses evaluation - or full evaluation sheet if end of ongoing group sessions. (See sample evaluation form at the end of this session)

Introduction

We all have a creative and spiritual side to ourselves, and even if we have not been aware of it much before, this often becomes important at this stage of life.

- Ask the women to sit and fill in the “Creative and Inner self” worksheet.

- Keep an eye on how they are doing - and when most are nearing the end give them a 1 minute warning.
- Explain that they may need more time at home to think about questions 4, 5 and 6 – and move on to the feedback when most of them are ready.
- Feedback onto the flipchart – using the Session 8 Answers and discussion points sheet.

All the quotes on this sheet have come from previous women's workshops.

Time 45 mins

Main points to be learned in this session

Check that each idea has been dealt with during the activity or session.

Read out a selection, in these or your own words, as a way of reminding people of the most important points and rounding off the activity or session. Include any new points the group has made which you know to be relevant and accurate.

- We need to make protected free time for ourselves in order to access and enjoy our creativity.
- This may involve pruning things from our busy lives before we can add in new creative time.
- If we don't manage to make time for ourselves we are likely to become irritable and resentful, have worse menopause symptoms, have problems at home and at work - and maybe end up with depression or broken relationships.
- We need to take time to think quietly what we really want for the rest of our lives, and start preparing for new possibilities - maybe by cutting down the time we give to some of the things or people who are taking up more time than we want.
- We need to warn people of the changes we plan to make, handing over some of our responsibilities where possible, and booking specific "time out" to do what we want.
- Going away from the house for the day or a weekend may be necessary for some people to relax completely.
- Some Retreat Centres can provide peaceful sanctuary for busy people, at B&B rates, or you may be able to do part time work in exchange for your stay. There are a huge number of different types of retreats, including women-only retreats, on the internet. Your family or local library could help if you can't manage the internet well yourself.

- Women who spend time regularly with other women live longer, healthier, happier and less stressful lives than women who don't! (See references)

Time 5 min's

Other issues that might come up

Caring responsibilities

Problems with assertiveness

Lack of confidence

Learning to organise our time and make the choices we want

Using counselling to help us sort things out

Lower income in retirement

Other services or agencies that might be relevant

Adult education and Community centres that have creative sessions available for people on low incomes

Assertiveness classes

Local menopause clinic

Local counselling services – individual, relationship, bereavement, alcohol sexual preference, sexual and relationship etc.

List of Helplines for Carers, Domestic Abuse, CAB, - or whatever may have special relevance to your group

Colleges/Access courses/Universities

Exercise and relaxation classes/centres

Handout

“What other women shared about having fun and meaning in their lives”

Time for short 1-to-1 sessions

“Goodbye” celebration - and arranging on-going support group if wanted

If this is the last session for your group – create a short “Goodbye” celebration at the end (see Running Successful groups and Appendix 4) and discuss if the group would like to continue meeting as a support group, and how they might go about organising this.

Make sure no-one's contact details are given out to anyone without their explicit agreement.

Time 20 mins

Session 8 Focus on Creative and Inner self

Answers and discussion points

Read out to group or put into your own words:-

Many women do not see themselves as either creative or spiritual – but often feel the need to explore this side of themselves for the first time during the menopause years. They need time and space to do this.

1) What words do you use for your inner self/core/soul/spirit?

All the examples below come from women's answers in previous workshops

Make sure that at the end of the feedback the flipchart has a wide range of different words that women use for this part of themselves – so that everyone realises that it applies to them – not just to people who label themselves as “creative” or “spiritual”.

Some women may use a group or inclusive word – to show that, for them, connection with others is an essential aspect of this experience.

Add some from this list if you don't get much variety.

- my inner self
- the “real” me
- heart, core
- essence, spirit, soul
- our community
- our family
- life
- “centering down”

2) How do you feel when you are in touch with this part of yourself?

- feel in tune with all life
- at one with myself, I shine!
- it's when I put my whole self into something, lose myself in what I am doing
- feeling of freedom and harmony
- look and function more positively”
- feel in touch with the cosmos
- in touch with something beyond ourselves - something all-encompassing

3) What conditions do you need for this part of yourself to be nourished and growing?

- relaxed and safe
- not to always put work or housework first
- “ME time”!
- no distractions – put my apron over my head!
- no time pressure
- permission to nurture something creative
- choose to go to a ‘Sacred Space’ – to make ‘Sacred Time’

4) What would you love to do - when you can make some creative or soul-space?

- Time out in nature – wandering
- creative things (eg. art, crafts, music, dance, writing etc. at home on your own - or in classes/groups/workshops)
- gardening (a real ‘soul-space’ for many women!)
- have a creative time each week to ‘play’ and try out new things
- daily walking or other exercise
- doing nothing (it’s really hard to learn to do this properly and very good for you at times!)
- Yoga, T’ai Chi
- meditation, prayer, attending place of worship
- make my own ‘Quiet Space’ in my home and garden – eg. under the stairs, part of a room, shed, wigwam and fire, summer house

5) What might you need to change or prune out of your life – to make the space available?

- Things that are taking up more time than I want
- Friends or family I don’t enjoy being with any more
- Stop rushing around, trying to be “all things to all people!”
- Organise myself better
- Learn to say “No” – and stick to it!
- Set small easily achievable goals – and work up to bigger things
- Tell people I trust that I am trying to change
- Ask for help if I’m not achieving what I really want”

6) Who do you need to tell about the changes you plan to make so the changes can happen and will continue long-term?

Partner, family – especially dependants, friends, manager at work if appropriate

S8 What other women shared about 'Women growing older having fun and meaning in their lives'

“Try new things

“Take more risks

“Create opportunities to be alone – away from pressure

“Be myself

“Enjoy what I have

“Make time for women friends

“Get more involved in our local community

“Now is my time to live and enjoy myself

“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”

“Do one thing that feeds my soul every day

“Stay balanced in ourselves

“Give myself permission to be less Task-orientated.

“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 rethink how I want to spend the remainder of my working life

“I am very aware today that the stage I have finally arrived in is very much about a spiritual journey. It is my time to focus on me, and it has taken me a long time to accept that I need space and time and solitude.

I enjoy being away from the hustle and bustle and I know I will not go back to how things were. It has taken five rather tough years to get here, but it makes it all the more precious to be where I am now

“Emphasis on having fun and on living in the moment!

“My changes for the future

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

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

Evaluation form

How did it go for you?

How did you find out about this session/ these sessions?

Was the venue easy to find and to access?

Did you feel the venue was suitable for this group? If not - why not?

Are there any new ideas that you will take away with you today?

Are there any changes you will make in your life as a result of these ideas?

Who might you need to talk to - to make the changes stay part of your life?

Would you have liked anything else included today?

Do you have any suggestions for similar sessions in the future?

Any other comments?

Thank you for filling in this form