

Community Spirit *with Fi Read*

Having survived puberty, pregnancy and parenting (well, just about) I now find myself at the beginning of the next phase, the menopause. Great. It's an ugly word which means 'the cessation of periods' and the end of a woman's fertility. I guess that's why it's also referred to as The Change. Kind of softens the blow a bit, as well as reflecting the fact that the menopausal years offer opportunities as well as challenges. I have to admit, it's not something that I'd given much thought about until fairly recently; until my fluctuating hormones started throwing up random symptoms, that is.

And sadly, it's not something that gets talked about much either, so when you do find yourself struggling with the physical, emotional and mental fallout, it can be quite scary. So, I feel really fortunate to have stumbled across a new social enterprise called Menopause Self Care (MSC), which aims to give women an overview of what the process is, and how best to manage their own health and wellbeing during this transition and beyond.

Founded by Isabella Quigley Moriarty, MSC offers support, a range of resources, and runs courses and workshops co-facilitated by Claire Lucas (Land's End School of Art; The Art of Ceremony). I joined one of their three-day courses held at Disability Cornwall in Hayle and I'm so glad I did, as I found out all sorts of really helpful and affirming stuff. And it was fun.

Sharing experiences and knowledge with a bunch of women of different ages and backgrounds, it was like a mini-consciousness raising group. From more formal presentations and discussions, to filling in worksheets and having a go at some role play, there was a lot of information to take in. Expressing our more creative side using collage and pastels was a hoot (even for those of us who aren't artistically inclined) and sampling freshly squeezed vegetable juices and nettle tea was a real treat.

MSC doesn't give advice or endorse any products, rather it explains what happens to your body as a result of falling hormones and how there are ways of minimising the effects. That might mean going down a medical HRT route, taking supplements, trying herbal remedies, or just making some simple dietary changes and getting plenty of exercise. Or in my case, getting more sleep. The other side of it, which everyone can do - women of any age and men - is to be kind to yourself. A little pampering goes a long way, especially in these stressful times we live. For me it was the perfect excuse to get my hair cut and coloured, and buy myself a new frock. I also stayed in bed and read a book for a whole morning, which is unheard of for me, and didn't feel even remotely guilty

To find out more, go to **www.menopauseselfcare.org.uk**

The trouble with going away at Easter is that I missed two really cracking community events: the 28th annual Penwith Green Fair at St John's Hall, and Bosavern Community Farm's Spring Fair, both of which took place on Saturday. At Bosavern, the day started with a Farmers' and Craft Market, followed by fun and games like welly-wanging, egg-throwing, egg-painting, egg-and-spoon race, guess the weight of the swede and how many spuds in a sack. From what I've heard, it went brilliantly. Keen to see more people eat food that's been grown and distributed locally, they also conducted farm tours, but if you've not been before, I'm sure they'll happily show you round.

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