

Menopause

And

Beyond

12 Steps to living life to its

fullest—Now!

By

Lisa S Arnold

Contents

Introduction

Step 1: Leg Go of Fear

Step 2: Give God Control

Step 3: Dare to Dream

Step 4: Begin a love Affair with God

Step 5: Forgive Everyone

Step 6: Minister to other Menopausal Women

Step 7: Laugh—A lot

Step 8: Write About it

Step 9: Build Memories

Step 10: Spread the Love

Step 11: Serve, Serve, Serve

Step 12: Become a Transformer

Menopause and Beyond

12 Steps to Living Life to its Fullest—Now!

Menopause, for many, is an unexpected intruder crashing into orderly lives with no sign of departure. It throws us into a whirlwind of emotions, and our once stable life becomes turbulent and unpredictable. It is the beginning of the “Change” and change is not welcome in most circles. It brings fear and uncertainty.

Menopause doesn't need to tear our world apart, or shatter our dreams. Grandma in her moo moo, rocking the hours away on the front porch is no longer an accurate representation. Women live longer and more vigorous lives than ever before.

The best years of your life are yet to come and I want to help you kick them off with 12 steps to living life to the fullest—Now! They are not all encompassing, but implement these and you are well on your way to living and discovering your life's purpose for menopause and beyond.

1. Let go of fear

Hot Flash: The future is not something to fear, but something to spring into with great anticipation and excitement for what is to come.

What do you fear? If you were to ask me, I would give you a long list: snakes, spiders, bats, and the dark are but a few. Yes, I am a wimp! But . . . my fear does not control me. It does not hinder my life.

Romans 8:15 says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” Fear unto bondage is fear that hinders us from doing the things we know we need to do.

The Bible gives us permission to fear, even commands us to fear one thing, one Person. “The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil” (Psalm 19:23). So I ask you again, what do you fear?

In order to live life to its fullest we must defeat fear. Old age, death, taking risks, and rejection are all major fear factors as we begin this journey. Give them to the Lord and go forward into the abundant life.

Practical Application: Fear is debilitating. It will keep you from living life to its fullest. Face your fears and break free from the bondage that hinders your zest for life. If you fear aging, study the lives of people who’ve accomplished great things after the age of 50, it will inspire you. Take time to read Bible passages that remind you of the breathtaking wonders awaiting you in glory. Start with these: John 14:2, 1 Corinthians 2:7-9, Revelation 5:9-13, Revelation 22:1-5. Pray daily asking God to help you conquer your fear. When you gain victory over fear, your entire perspective on life will change.

2. Give God Control

Hot Flash: Our weakness is transformed into powerhouse strength when God is allowed to take control.

What’s happening in your life right now that keeps you from accomplishing great things for God’s Kingdom? Do you have a hard time trusting others? Do you believe God has everything under control or do you try to take the reins from Him on a regular basis?

I have witnessed too many Christians live defeated lives because of their inability to relinquish control to God. They worry over finances, children, spouses, car problems, jobs, and

lack of jobs, the list goes on and on. It debilitates their life and blatantly slaps God in the face with their lack of trust in Him.

Our Creator desires for us to seek His strength as we maneuver through the murky waters of menopause. Each day as you “seek the Lord and His Strength” (1 Chronicles 16:11), He will transform you from an anxious menopausal victim to a confident woman of Christ.

You are hand-picked by a Holy God to do a great and mighty work for His Kingdom. This is only possible when you relinquish control of every part of your life to Him.

Practical Application: Most worriers are also control freaks. They can’t stand to leave anything to “fate.” It seems to give them some semblance of peace when they have “everything under control.” But do they really? Do you? What do you worry about? What do you refuse to relinquish to God? Make a list of the things you worry about. Is it finances? Your children? Your husband? Your health? Your job? Pray everyday that God gives you victory over your worry issues. Don’t stop until you gain the victory.

3. Dare to Dream:

Hot Flash: Menopause is not the end of something good, it is the beginning of something greater than you can ever imagine.

Okay, so maybe childbearing years are coming to an end (were you going to have more kids anyway?). Your hair may be turning gray (hair dye works wonders). Your children may be leaving the nest (blessed freedom). And you can’t wear that teeny, weeny bikini anymore (do you really want to?). What is the big deal?

It’s all a matter of perspective. Rather than pining for the yesteryears, why not get excited for the future? What have you always wanted to do? What dreams have you buried deep in your

soul? The world is yours. His Kingdom work is yours. Think big, think outside the box, dare to go where you've never gone before. Now is the time to serve God in a big way. If God is in it, nothing can keep it from happening.

Practical Application: Do you want to travel? Make arrangements to go on a mission trip? Do you want to help others? Volunteer for different organizations. Do you have an over abundance of love to share? Become a foster parent or adopt orphans. Do you have something to say? Write a book or paint a picture, then share it with the world. The opportunities are endless. What are you waiting for? Get going!

4. Begin a Love Affair with God

Hot Flash: Bask in the awesome presence of the Lord and become a divinely sculpted, graceful woman.

David's love affair with God is recorded for us in the Psalms. Yes, he failed often, as we all do, but oh, the sweetness of forgiveness poured out by His heavenly Father. His heart ached for God, panted for His Words, and desired Him all the time. He thrived on the statutes of the Lord and in his passionate zeal, turned many prayers into heartfelt songs. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times" (Psalm 119:20).

Do you thirst for the Word? How much time do you spend with this person you claim to love more than anyone in the world? If you gave your spouse or other loved ones the same amount of time would they feel loved? It is impossible to grow a relationship with someone you never spend time with.

The greatest supernatural Being in the Universe desires to spend time with you. This isn't Sci-Fi, it's not make-believe, it's real, and He has His eye on itty, bitty you. Why? I don't know, but if the all-powerful God desired me, I'd be a fool not to jump at the chance to spend personal time with Him.

Practical Application: When we saturate ourselves in His Word, we can't help but become like Him. Have a date with your Lord everyday. Don't rush it. Don't skimp. Don't do all the talking. Relish the time spent with your Savior and your entire world will start to look completely different.

5. Forgive Everyone!

Hot Flash: If you act contentious, hold on to bitterness, and spew out wrathful words, you will begin to resemble the person you don't want to become. Now that's a scary thought!

I've always considered myself a happy-go-lucky person, easy to get along with, smiling all the time, and not easily offended. But recently that has changed; I hate to admit it, but I am becoming a contentious woman.

A contentious woman argues and debates over everything. She disregards God's Word and replaces it with her own distorted Truth (reasons for her actions and reactions). These actions don't suddenly appear, more than likely they have always been, the result of bitterness and unforgiveness. Menopause amplifies bad behavior because of a fragile emotional state.

Matthew 6:14-15 says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Bottom line—forgive everyone—your parents, your former friends, family members, even ex-family members. Bitterness and love cannot coincide together One will overpower the other. Let love win this battle.

People mess up. You mess up. Forgive them, forgive yourself, repent and burst forth with renewed strength as you release the burdens that so heavily weighed you down. You'll feel like a new woman!

Practical Application: Here is where the rubber hits the road. Spend a day, an afternoon, an evening, or whatever quiet time you can find with pen and paper in hand. Think back to your earliest memories. Write down every offense remembered. Write down the person's name and what they did. Take it all the way to your present situation. This exercise may stir up unwanted emotions, but that's okay, keep going. When you have exhausted your list (and yourself), go back to the beginning of your list and start with the first person. If they're alive, and you are able, write a short note forgiving them for the offense. Don't say, but you . . . or point fingers, you did . . ., only forgive. Then give that person to God. Ask Him to give you a forgiving and loving heart towards that person. Move to the next name. You may need to do this every day until you have finally let go. It took me three years of taking it to God everyday until I let go of a hatred I had for one person. But praise God, I am free indeed!

You are not finished yet. On another sheet of paper, list all the offences you have committed. Yes, even the ones you don't like to talk about. Follow the same procedure, asking God to forgive you and to help you let go. You only need to ask forgiveness once, letting go may take much longer.

This exercise may take days to complete, but the release and freedom you will receive from it is incredible! I know it will be hard, and you won't want to. Commit! Persist! Persevere!

With the release of hatred and bitterness comes that glorious peace that passes all understanding. The whole world will look different to you.

6. Minister to other Menopausal Women

Hot Flash: It is not weakness to seek help. It is wisdom in action. Acquire help for yourself (doctors, other women), and passionately help other menopausal women walk this treacherous path in a godly manner.

What is a battle but two opposing sides warring against each other, each striving to gain victory? Isn't that what our hormonal struggles consist of, Spirit warring against flesh? "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" (Luke 14:31).

As a king would not go into battle without first determining his plan of action, neither should we. God in His Word has established his principles of preparation. Victory is possible if we seek to understand what menopause and raging hormones are all about. Education prepares us for the coming onslaught. It also enables us to educate others so they too can win this ferocious battle.

Practical Application: First, educate yourself. Talk to your doctor and read books on menopause. Read books that will help you physically, mentally, and spiritually. A great book that has helped me is *Holy Hormones: Approaching PMS and Menopause God's Way*, by J. Ron Eaker, M.D. I also recommend my new book *For Sanity Sake: 365 Days of Devotions for the Temporarily Insane: Otherwise known as the Menopausal Woman*, available in publication in October 2014. This will help you remain godly and in control during this time of hormonal

unrest. Don't stop there, what can you do to help other women struggling? Start a support group in your church? Begin a monthly luncheon in a restaurant with Bible study and share time? It may be writing a book or a blog, or speaking at conferences and seminars. Pray about it and let God direct you to where you are supposed to be.

7. Laugh—A lot!

Hot Flash: It helps to have a good sense of humor. Make the best of your circumstances, find humor in the moment, and get on fire for the Lord!

The new Christians in the book of Acts were “hot for Jesus.” Filled with confidence in their faith, they boldly shared the Good News to everyone. “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . .” (Acts 2:3-4a).

We women, as menopause sisters, (I like to say “Sanity Sisters,” or maybe (insanity sisters), experience a different kind of “hot flash.” One minute goose bumps and chattering teeth overwhelm us, the next we are tempted to strip off everything removable (I wouldn't recommend this). We are on fire! What is a woman to do with such a frustrating demonstration of the “Change?”

Well . . . you could cry, scream, holler and make everyone else miserable. I prefer to laugh and to have fun with my symptoms, (it's not always easy). I claim to anyone who comments, “I am hot for Jesus!” Of course, then I have to practice what I preach. My symptoms are severe and I do have emotional swings. After I've lost it and everyone is looking at me like I am a crazy woman, I calmly caution them that I am the female version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Truly at times, I am. In a split second my emotions can go from passive to aggressive to

passive again. Everyone around me is scratching their heads wondering what happened.

Through all this, I have to laugh. I hesitate to consider the person I'd become if I didn't.

Practical Application: I know how hard it is to find humor in your situation. Sometimes you may need to go outside yourself to find the humor in it. Go out and have fun. What do you like to do? I like to bowl, go to the movies, and read good books. Choose things that distract your mind and replace your thoughts. There are some hilarious books out there that are godly and uplifting at the same time. Actively seek God-honoring entertainment and release the tension by laughing until you cry. You'll feel so much better!

8. Write About it!

Hot Flash: Every experience is worth writing about. There is nothing you can go through that someone else has not experienced or will experience someday. Share your struggles and become a source of wisdom to the next person. Make a difference!

From the beginning God used the written word to spread His Truth. Throughout Scripture, He instructed His servants to write His Words on doorposts, hearts, and scrolls (paper). It is still the main way He reveals Himself to His most precious creation. "And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9). (Also see: Proverbs 7:3, Psalm 145:4, Psalm 78:3-8, Deuteronomy 11:20).

How do you think my book *For Sanity Sake* began? I was struggling with my extreme symptoms of menopause and started writing down my feelings, experiences and what God was saying to me about them. It kept me focused (most of the time), and helped me realize that I

wasn't alone and it gave me incentive to do more. I realized if I was having such a struggle, there must be millions of women struggling this same battle.

And I was right. It is predicted that by the year 2015, half of the population of women will begin their menopausal journey. That's a lot of potential Sanity Sisters!

Practical Application: Get yourself a pen and paper, or a computer, tablet, or whatever works best for you and begin a journal. Record your symptoms, emotional turbulences and anything your heart desires. You could start a blog and share it with fellow sufferers. Who knows where it could end up? Write it down, make a difference for fellow menopausees and future generations alike.

9. Build Memories

Hot Flash: Don't forget to remember to spend time building new memories with your next generation, so when it is their turn, they can start the process with theirs.

It is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life. We work too long and sleep too little. We fight the financial battle every day just to enjoy the pleasures of life. Unfortunately, we are usually too tired or too strapped for time to benefit from our tedious labor. If we are not careful, the end of our days will draw nigh and we will have nothing significant to show for all our blood, sweat and tears. Invariably, regret will overwhelm us. Why didn't we love more, live more, play more, complement more, serve God more? How could we have missed it so completely?

What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind and whom do you want to be part of it? Tomorrow is not promised. Start making memories today. Love more. Live more. Play more. Serve more. Not for self and not by yourself. Bring along the people that mean the most in the

world to you. You may be the only part of Jesus they ever see. If you don't show them Jesus who will? What you do with your children and grandchildren may determine what they do for the world. They may be your lasting legacy for God.

Take time to make time with those God has placed directly in your life. When you lie on your death bed, your regrets will be few.

Practical Application: What are you waiting for? Start now. Pick up that phone and make a date with your children, grandchildren, and closest friends. Go to the movies, buy them dinner. Share Christ's love in practical ways. Make a date with those you love at least once a month, if not once a week. It doesn't have to cost money. Have a popcorn and movie night. Don't do it just once. Don't stop after they grow up. Never stop building memories. Study your children and grandchildren to find out their likes and dislikes, their hurts and pains, their joys and fears. Don't miss a moment. Make a difference. You will never regret it.

10. Spread the Love

Hot Flash: You and I are called to be mighty love machines for the Savior. If His love is perfected in you, shine brightly for everyone to see.

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Matthew 5:14). As mature women, we have a unique opportunity. We've experienced many years of life filled with joys and heart-wrenching horrors. Our daughters, granddaughters, and many other women we rub shoulders with glean tidbits from our lives for future reference.

We can be the person that makes a difference in their lives. When we pour out Christ's love to those around us, others learn to show His love as well. This world is filled with love-

starved people. Spread Christ's love to everyone that comes into your life. Then go beyond that, deliberately implant yourself in the lives of others. Don't wait for them to come to you.

Practical Application: My husband and I share Christ's love through adoption and foster care. What are you called to do? Here are a few ideas: Volunteer at soup kitchens and food pantries, adopt or foster orphan children, take a homeless person out to lunch, volunteer to help with sick children or the elderly. Clean a disabled person's house or run errands for them. Smile at the people serving you and compliment them. This falls in line with number three, **Dare to Dream**, but it goes beyond that. Real life is messy, and if you are going to spread God's love, you have to be willing to get your hands dirty. The unfortunate and unlovable souls in this life are God's children and they need loving too. It's time to love outside the box!

11. Serve, Serve, Serve

Hot Flash: Jesus gave to His last breath. He didn't stop serving others when inconvenience reared its ugly head. We are to do the same, regardless the cost.

Service is the natural progression of a heart fully given to the Lord. To serve God is to serve others. Jesus set the example by washing the feet of His disciples. "After he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:5). He was servanthood personified!

Servanthood as Jesus lived it is a lost art in this "all about me" generation. Service comes with a smile, but for a cost. Even the Salvation Army bell ringers no long ring for free. The waitress smiles and flirts, all for the sake of a big tip. Few people serve for nothing anymore. That's where we come in. True service will change your life as well as others. It's time to do something—just because it is the right thing to do.

True service disregards the who. It doesn't matter. It's about the need. It must first start in the home. If we can't serve those we claim to love unconditionally, we will never serve others with a right heart. Being a mother, wife, or grandmother is not about us. It is about the love we spread to others.

When we have a big dinner, I always put all the food around my husband first, as a way to honor him. I never knew he even noticed until I heard him mention it in one of his sermons. It's the little things in service that make a difference. And it's all about attitude, attitude, attitude! Become Jesus personified in the way you serve!

Practical Application: Start at home. Shock your spouse with your servant's attitude. Make him his favorite meal, give him a back rub, or make sure he comes home to a clean, orderly house. Shock your children. Play a game with them, laugh with them, and listen to them. Don't stop there. Take this new found servanthood and start working your way around the community, town, state, and even world. Who says one person can't make a difference?

12. Become a Transformer

Hot Flash: I decided to become a writer and wrote my book *For Sanity Sake*. How is your "Change" going to change the world for Christ?

Menopause is often referred to as the "Change." That's okay, because it truly is a change from "what was" to "what will be." Not in and of itself better or worse, just different.

Paul endured a change every bit as dramatic. He went from hunting Christians to becoming one in a matter of hours. "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord Said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-5).

After his change, his friends tried to kill him and the Christians feared him. Still, he gained spiritual strength and went on to do amazing things for God, all because of the “Change.”

You too can become a life-changer. Paul transformed the world for Christ. I’m trying to in my little way. What are you going to do to transform the world? When God is in control of your life, everything is possible!

Practical Application: Implement steps one through eleven. In doing so, you will begin the journey of transforming the world (and yourself) for Christ. Here is a review of each step. Don’t wait another day!

1. Let Go of Fear
2. Give God Control
3. Dare to Dream
4. Begin a love Affair with God
5. Forgive Everyone
6. Minister to other Menopausal Women
7. Laugh—A lot
8. Write About it
9. Build Memories
10. Spread the Love
11. Serve, Serve, Serve
12. Become a Transformer

These 12 steps are not easy, but, if you follow them, you will begin to live life to the fullest right now! Life is too short to put it off another minute. Get busy and start living!

