

# Ep #130: Ayurveda and Menopause – Making the Transition Easier



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Susi Hately**

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## Ep #130: Ayurveda and Menopause – Making the Transition Easier

**Male Announcer:** You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hately.

Susi: Welcome and welcome back. I am so glad that you're here because we have another Ayurveda based conversation, and this one is related to menopause and the menopausal transition. It's something that I am certainly on my way through or whatever I can call it that as we move from perimenopause towards menopause. And a lot of people struggle with it.

No matter what your gender you identify with, whether you are someone who is going through a menopausal transition or you are with someone who is going through a menopausal transition, it's a transition. It's a real thing and there's a lot of different views on how to move through it with more ease, I could call. And that is why I have brought Mona here.

There's a lot of conversation around a western medical perspective, which is great. And I know for myself, I discovered acupuncture when I was, just before I got pregnant. And I used acupuncture to help me get pregnant and throughout my pregnancy. And I work with that even still today, it's a part of my toolkit. And there's just so much benefit I get from it.

And similarly with Ayurveda, the traditional Indian form of medicine, same idea. It's the concepts that I've learned from Ayurveda have really made a lot of bumps, wrinkles, burps, those types of things that happen in life a lot smoother. So I'm finding the same thing is happening as I move along in my age, I'm 51 now.

It's curious and I see a lot of people who are suffering. I see a lot of people who are struggling. So this is an episode where I really want to emphasize it's not an alternative, it's an adjunct way of thinking that I believe is super supportive. And we are going to be doing more of this with Mona this fall.

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So I really want you to enjoy this. If I could have a demand, or an ask, or a request, I really hope you enjoy this because it really does open one's eyes to how we can make the process, I don't know, Mona, is it with grace or ease or something of that sort? How would you describe it?

Mona: I think I'd probably say with increased awareness. And awareness goes a long way to allowing us to flow in a way that we want to flow. So if we are looking for more ease, awareness can help us to figure out how to make things more easeful. If we're looking for more joy, awareness can help us find a way to make things more joyful.

So I would say the intention behind Ayurveda in this context, and in most contexts, is that increase of awareness. And then we can then be like, okay, now that I know this, how do I get to where I want to go?

Susi: So with that in mind, for people who are new to the podcast and are new to you, can you give a little bit of a background on you so people have a perspective on who you are and what you bring to the table?

Mona: Sure. My name is Mona, I'm an Ayurvedic practitioner, and an Ayurvedic yoga therapist, and a yoga teacher trainer. And so for the past few decades I have been steeped in the studies of the various Vedic Sciences. I'm also a Vedic Astrologer.

And so I've been studying yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedic Astrology in order to help me help other people get to where they need to be. Whether it's a shift in their health, whether it's an understanding of their life purpose and direction, or whether it's simply to move with more ease in their bodies and get along better with their family members. Does that sound about right?

Susi: That, as I know you, sounds about right. Mona and I go way back. She's done training with me, I've now done training with her. She's an avid trainer inside of the yoga therapy certification program that I run. And that is a program that is just getting more and more steeped in combining biomechanics and Ayurveda.

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So if this is a conversation that you are really resonating with as you listen to us, we'll also put into the show notes the other conversations that we've had on the podcast so you can go and harken back to those.

And if that really resonates with you, then two things, one is if you would like to have one on one attention with Mona, then her contact details will be there in the show notes. As well as if you want to reach out for us about the yoga therapy certification program we'd love to chat with you about how that could fit into your professional goals.

So with that, let's talk menopause. Let's talk the menopausal transition. When people are suffering, because that's what you hear most about. What we don't hear about are people who are doing it, I don't think people would talk about it. Because I learned, like my kids started sleeping through the night about four or five months into their life. And it wasn't because I sleep trained them, it was a bit by happenstance but also a few things that we did around a routine with them.

And I learned very quickly that you don't share that knowledge widely because people wonder what are they doing wrong in that such. I sometimes wonder, and not that anyone's doing anything wrong, it really was by happenstance that we landed in this result of what our kids were doing, sleeping through the night.

I wonder sometimes if that might be a reason why people don't speak about moving through it well, or gracefully, or whichever. We hear more about the problems. So let's just start there. Let's talk about the problems that people tend to face when they're going through this transition.

Mona: One of the things I find really interesting about transition times, and this could be a seasonal transition or in this case we consider this a season of life transition, right? So we're going from more the midlife that's a little bit more fiery in its nature to another stage of life that's governed by a different element, governed by the air element, which is why we see things like dryness, fluctuation, and variability where there was stability before.

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And so all transition times tend to bring to the surface anything that might have or was out of balance in the first place. So we could think of it as if you had something that you were managing, like it was okay but it wasn't fully stable, and then we throw a big gust of wind into it, it's really going to highlight that instability.

And so Ayurvedically where people are having symptoms of discomfort as part of the process, it's not that menopause caused that discomfort, it's that there was something that was already out of balance. And when we add the transition and all the hormonal shifts that are happening in the system, now this has floated to the surface.

And so it can get really easy, I think, in these types of conversations and scenarios to get very rigid, and rights and wrongs, and blame, and all this kind of stuff. And I don't know if that's really helpful, so I just want to clarify that we're not approaching it, I'm speaking for both of us, we're not approaching it from that perspective.

It's not about if you have hot flashes, that means you did something wrong in the past and this is your Karma is a bitch thing happening. It's not about that. Some of the instability that might be in the system can have root causes in things beyond our control, like a pandemic, and levels of stress, and maybe we've had to use a lot of our resources to care for others, whether it be small children, or aging parents, or a partner who's not well.

And that takes resources and it turns out transitioning from one stage to another also takes resources. And so when we run low on resources, if we don't have enough gas in the tank, you can push on the gas pedal but the car's not going to go anywhere. And so this is that stuckness or that stalling of the car. These are those little areas that show up or these gaps that can appear when we're going through a fairly significant transition.

Menopause is considered the second puberty and I don't know if everybody like remembers remembers puberty. However, most people I know, when we reflect back, we never say, "Oh, let's do that again." We say even if I

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could go back, knowing what I know now, I would still choose not to do that again because there's so much fluctuation and so much instability and so much change. And it's affecting us on all the levels.

So our body's changing, now our energy is fluctuating, our moods and emotions are like up, down, left, right, forward, back in a spiral. Our thoughts are shifting and changing, sometimes old stuff comes up, sometimes new things show up. It's really a lot of change and transition and it can be a little bit bumpy.

It can be a little bit bumpy and there are also lots of different practices that we can engage in and undertake to support ourselves and to support us in going through that transition to, again, increase our awareness and then from there smooth out any, I liked what you said about smoothing out any wrinkles or any rough edges.

Susi: When you talk about resources, can you talk a little bit more? Go into that one a bit more about what do you specifically mean by resources? What do you mean by, I don't think you used the word dwindling, let's call it like when someone has low resources, what does that actually mean? And then what does it mean to rebuild resources?

Mona: Yeah, so when I talk about resources I'm, again, talking on a couple of different levels. I'm talking about biological building blocks in the body. And so whether that's the building blocks for hormones, whether that's enough protein to rebuild your structure, whether that's enough water to be hydrated. Any of those things can fall into the bucket of being physical resources.

And then energetically it's literally like our prana, our aliveness, how much energy do we have for the doing of the things that we want to do? And from an Ayurvedic perspective we're often talking about ojas, the vital essence of resilience and immunity.

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And ojas is really important from an Ayurvedic perspective for all transitions, because as soon as stress levels in our system increase, our body uses the ojas or this idea of strength, resilience, of immunity, to protect the body against any harmful effects that stress will have on the body.

And it does the same thing in a more subtle way, in a more energetic way for the heart and the mind. And so when we have lots of ojas, something really hard or weird can happen and our response is, okay, that's really hard and weird, but I got this. I can figure this out, I'm okay. We can stay seated in ourselves and we can figure out what action comes next.

When we don't have a lot of ojas and something weird or hard happens it's the straw that breaks the camel's back. Everything sucks, the whole world is a mess, I can't believe this is happening, my entire world is falling apart. It's like the destroyer of worlds has come in and just ripped the universe in half.

And we're talking about resources in a more general way because there's a lot of things that fall under that purview. It can be the right amount of nutrition, the right amount of energy, the right amount of immunity, the right amount of resilience. Not necessarily right amount, I'm sorry I used that word, an adequate amount. An appropriate amount for us.

And anything we do, any action we take requires resources. It takes energy and it takes substances. So if we want to go for a 10k walk, we need to have enough fuel in the tank in order to be able to do that activity. If we want to work eight hours a day, we need to have enough resources in our system to be able to adequately perform those activities.

And although very few people choose, let's today go through the menopausal transition, it is still an activity that takes place in our system where our bodies are reallocating tasks to different organs and are reorganizing different systemic functions, so to speak.

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So what would have been a resource production element that would have been starting more in the ovaries, it's now being transitioned into the adrenals. And the adrenals are like, "But I already have a job." And the ovaries are like, "Yeah, but it's time for me to retire, and so now you get to do this job too."

And so this is what I mean by that idea of having enough resources. If we're already like just barely hanging on with the level of activities that we're doing and the amount of resources we have, when we then add this other thing to the list, our bodies will let us know if it's too much. Our hearts will let us know if it's too much, our minds will let us know if it's too much.

And typically, one of those languages is to create something that gets our attention. So it might be discomfort, it might be a sense of suffering, or it might be a sensation that we're not habituated to, our body is calling to us saying, "Hello, you will need to attend to me now, something is happening, please help."

Susi: We have often talked about Dr. Claudia Welch's work and she refers to something called the bucket syndrome. And I think she has a great model that outlines and highlights this really effectively. Can you speak to that?

And those of you who are interested in this, we'll have Dr. Claudia's book, which you could name for us, Mona, because I might get the title of it wrong. We'll have that in the show notes as well that you can look her up and see what her book is about because she's got something, she's got a program too by the same name that I think will be helpful.

So can you explain the bucket syndrome, and then share what the book title is that Dr. Claudia wrote?

Mona: Yeah, so Dr. Claudia Welch is an incredible practitioner, I've loved having her as a mentor and a teacher over the years. The book is called Balance Your Hormones, Balance Your Life. And the course, it's now a two

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part course. So she took the foundations course, which was the healthy hormones program, and she's now split it, she's made it bigger and it has two parts. So excellent work, you can find her at [drclaudiawelch.com](http://drclaudiawelch.com), and it's Welch like the grape juice.

And bucket syndrome, which is Dr. Claudia's explanation is actually based on a phenomenon known as the pregnenolone steal. And what it basically talks about is how we have a different amount of hormonal resources in our bodies.

And so you can think of it as you have sex hormones, and you have metabolic or digestive hormones, and then we have stress hormones, and then we have like thyroid hormones, and we have other hormones as well. But when we talk about the pregnenolone steal, this tends to be the start point.

And the way it works is that there are relationships between the different types of hormones in terms of their actual component building blocks. And if, for example, something happens and your body needs a lot of stress hormones, in the human body survival is always prioritized over every other function. Because if you're not alive, there's no point in all the other functions. It's very straightforward.

And so if you go through a process where you need a lot of the stress hormones, but based on what you have in your stress hormone bucket you run out, your nervous system is allowed to go to other buckets. And it's the best loan ever, if only we could get mortgages this way. They can borrow without paying back.

So what happens is if you need more stress hormones because things are very stressful and your body needs to keep up with that process or that activity, then it's going to go and first it's going to borrow from reproductive hormones. And so it's going to steal, pregnenolone steal, it's going to steal progesterone and convert it into stress hormone.

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So what this does is it gives you more stress hormone, which is great for your nervous system. But it depletes your reproductive system hormones, which is not so great for your reproductive system. And then if that bucket runs out, it will go borrow from the next bucket, which is metabolic hormones.

And so then all of a sudden, not only do we have reproductive issues, but now we have some digestive challenges. And then from there it will borrow from the thyroid bucket, then we can find out, oh, it looks like my thyroid is not working quite the same, I wonder what's happening with my energy.

And so there's this, the body was designed in a way to prioritize survival over every other function. Over reproduction, over digestion, over energy management. And that makes things really interesting because, one, it shows the interconnectedness of the being, which I think is really a brilliant illustration.

However, it can also then cause challenges. There can be a lot of discomfort if we have a bucket that, if our adrenal bucket or if our stress hormone bucket is constantly borrowing from the other buckets, then we're going to have issues and all those other functions.

And then if we go and try to do something like a menopausal transition where we're needing to actually access things in the reproductive bucket, but it's empty, this is where things become really challenging.

Susi: So what can somebody do then? They're listening to you and saying, "Okay, awesome." What are some steps that people can just start with to consider?

Mona: So each person's transition is very unique to them, just like everyone's constitution is unique to them. And so in terms of ideal practices, this is where it can be really helpful to chat with somebody and lay your cards on the table and say, "Hey, this is what's happening with me." And then it's like, okay, let's create a system for you.

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That said, I do think that there are certain things that are really helpful. And me, I tend to lean into Ayurveda's three pillars of health. And so if you want resources in your system, you need to have a good digestion. And so doing something that makes sense in your own body to support your digestion will be really great.

Whether it's eating the appropriate amount for your own appetite and stomach. Whether it's eating on a schedule so that you're not over eating, not under eating, you're not going hungry, and then you're not starving, and then you eat the whole kitchen.

So whether it's timing the meals, whether it's mindful eating, so be very present with what you're eating so that you can get a sense through your own awareness and experience the level of nourishment and which foods are working for you right now. Like sweet potatoes are really great for a transition like that if you can eat sweet potatoes or not, things like that.

And then the second pillar is sleep. So make sure you're getting adequate rest because that's one way that we can, like our body helps to refill the buckets while we're resting. And so if you're able to get as good of sleep as you can. And part of it is a simple math equation, if you need eight hours sleep, you got to figure out how are you going to give yourself eight and a half to nine hours in your bed so that you can try to at least get the eight hours of sleep?

One of the biggest things I see in my practice is people are like, I'm exhausted. And I say, what time do you get up in the morning? And they say five. And I say, what time do you go to bed? And they say midnight. And I say, how much sleep do you need? And they say eight hours. And I say we have a math problem because 12 to five is nowhere close to eight, and it never will be.

And so figuring out some of those, they're simple, but it doesn't mean they're easy to implement in the context of a real lived life. But that idea of getting enough rest, finding and having and making time, prioritizing some

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form of rejuvenation for your system can be immensely helpful. A lot of us will realize during our menopausal transition if there's gaps in our rest and restoration, it'll show itself.

And this is part of that incredible fatigue that people feel is now that we've added the load of the menopausal transition, now they can't pretend it's not there, right? Now it's become very obvious, it's really entered into our awareness.

And then the third pillar is about things like daily routines, and level of activity, and doing things that refill, again, our emotional and mental wells and capacity, it's about ojas building. But it could be things like figuring out what level of activity is really the amount of activity you can do in a day, and then being with that, especially through the transition, right?

We might need to be a little bit more cautious around our resources when we know that there's this whole extra biological function happening that's requiring resources from us. So during that time it might not be the time of I'm going to start staying up late and waking up super early and I'm going to add CrossFit. That might not be the time for that. Post transition you can check in with yourself, see what makes sense and go do the thing.

For some of us during the menopausal transition there can be weight gain that can happen. That's often your body trying to garner resources so that it's got lots for when you're doing the transitioning thing. And so people will then go on these extreme regimes to try to lose the weight, and your body's not going to let that go till it's good and ready.

And so how can we eat well and support our nourishment? How can we sleep well? And then how can we work with our daily routines that we are factoring in the rest and the nourishment we need, we're doing the things we need to do, but there's something left in the bucket at the end of the day.

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We're not running the tank right down onto empty by noon and then trying to get through the rest of the day on fumes and then hoping tomorrow is better, right? There's a certain amount of energy management and routine management that can be really helpful.

Susi: I know that sometimes people can hear that and say, "All right, that sounds really great in theory. But here's my life and this is the reality." One thing I want to mention is that it doesn't need to be a full scale change. It could be one arena of paying attention.

So in all the things that Mona has listed, it could be simply you eat until you're satiated, or you're eating at certain times of the day. And you'll know by checking in with yourself what makes the most sense. And maybe it's not the digestive side of things, maybe it is the sleep side of things.

And then if you are someone who struggles with sleep, or sleep is an issue, then there might be other practices like yoga nidra, or ways of supporting a rejuvenation. I remember when I was a new mom and I was hearing all this stuff about how sleep is so important, I've said this to Mona before, and I was just laughing out loud. I'm like, "Okay, you guys are not speaking do the new mom." And what I did make sure of though is that I was getting rejuvenation.

Without going down the rabbit hole of being a new mom, back a few years ago the piece of this that is interesting is that if you aren't getting the sleep that you feel that you need, there are other ways in the other hours of the day that you can get the rest that your system is asking for. So there are ways, really small steps that lead you toward the outcome that you're seeking that you don't need a full scale change.

And it can be a step by step process. And in those small steps, as I like to say, the turtle wins. In those small steps lots of shifting and changing can be helpful and can support your system as it moves through this change because as Mona has mentioned, it really is a resource conversation. And

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so if you can grow that, you can really grow your capacity to work through it.

Mona: And I think there's this piece too where it takes resources to affect change. That's the whole reason why we're having this conversation in the first place, is we're going through this transition and that's asking for more from us. And then if we want to change something else to ease that load, it's still going to ask something from us.

And I had a teacher, Dr. Rosy Mann, if you're out there, Dr. Rosy, I love you so much. She's so amazing. She used to always say to us, slowly and slowly. And it's this idea of it doesn't have to be a big change. If you do one small shift and you do it consistently, one, it will become easy and it will require less resource for you to keep that change.

And sometimes it's the first domino and when you knock that one over, it knocks over all the other ones itself. So it doesn't mean you have to walk through the whole board and flick every single domino to knock them down. So it doesn't have to be big change.

Big changes are really hard to sustain. And so I love what you said, Susi, pick one thing that feels within your reach, that feels doable and feels like you could work with that, and then trying something.

Susi: Love it. Love it. If this is resonating with you and you are wanting some help with navigating this transition and Mona is speaking some words that are really landing for you, Mona, how do people find you?

Mona: At this point the best way is via email. My email address is Mona, M-O-N-A, at, same at symbol you use for all your other emails, monawarner, M-O-N-A-W-A-R-N-E-R, .com.

Susi: Brilliant. And if you want that contact, it's in the show notes. Thank you, Mona, again.

Mona: Thank you for having me.

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Susi: I'll see you next time everyone, take care.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at [health@functionalsynergy.com](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com) where we can customize your learning path. That's [health@functionalsynergy.com](mailto:health@functionalsynergy.com). Looking forward to hearing from you.