Why So Many Smart, Capable Women Are Still Struggling In Midlife Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Welcome

Hi, ladies. Welcome back to Mastering Your Menopause Transition Summit 4.0. I'm still your host, doctor Sharon Stills, and I'm still super, super excited to be here and grateful that we get to have these important, important like life changing, mind shifting conversations and I'm so excited.

I have someone I've never interviewed here before. You may already recognize her because we have Doctor Claire Zammit in the house and I'm like such a fangirl myself.

So she has trained more women than anyone in the world today to awaken their feminine power. She's reached more than 100 million women in more than 100 countries.

She has her institute for Women Centered Coaching that actually signed up to be a part of and haven't finished yet because I got distracted, but that's how much I love her work.

That's why I'm like I told some of the girls in my cohort that I was studying with, I'm like, I'm interviewing Claire. And they were like, oh my God. So she's like a big deal.

And so she's also the co-founder of a transformational educational company called Evolving Wisdom. She, has a PhD in transformative learning and change, and she's just like someone you want to know and hear.

Because if you have any, like, doubt that this is not a powerful time and that this is not an exciting time. By the time we're done chatting today, I know without a doubt you're going to your brain and your mind is already going to start shifting when you hear what she has to say.

So welcome to the summit. We're so excited we're here. Oh, doctor Sharon, it's such an honor to be here with you. And I just want to appreciate your leadership and your light and your wisdom and the amazing community that you are convening for such an important and empowering conversation.

Well, thank you. I appreciate that. So I'm just going to dive in because I've got a lot of things I want to ask you in our next 30 minutes. So, you know, I want to start with, like, you are known for, like, connecting women to their feminine power.

And so if you can just speak to because, you know, we hear terms and I think we all have our own idea of what that means. So what does that actually mean to you.

Like connecting to your power. And how does that I mean, I think connecting to your feminine power as you're going through menopause is like they're so interrelated.

So how does that. Well, yeah. And so that's such a great question. I feel like I just want to put this in the kind of largest possible context, because I think, you know, so many of us have been traveling the fence in our lives trying to figure out all of the pieces and make everything work.

And it's a struggle, and it feels like a kind of impossible task.

Womenu2019s Power and Self-Actualization

Even though we're bright, we're talented, we've done a lot of personal and spiritual growth work, and a lot of us have been blaming ourselves for all of the places that we struggle or that we're held back.

And what I've found is there's a much larger story that our own journey is a part of that is about the awakening of

women's power and the evolution of women's consciousness. Us.

And the biggest kind of possible context I can see is, you know, we've been on this incredible journey as women where we have been individuated out of traditional roles in society and culture through over the last 60 years and standing on the momentum of women's suffrage.

And, you know, the women's movement. And what's happened is really kind of extraordinary, where, you know, women by so many measures of success are doing well or even ahead of men, even though there is a long way to go globally for gender equality, the opportunities that we have are kind of beyond the wildest dreams of our grandmothers or our foremothers, right?

In terms of we can do be anything that we choose now and a really interesting thing has happened at the very same time is we've never had more opportunity, more freedom, more success is that we are less happy and more lonely and depressed than we've ever been throughout, like the history of the world, you know, like that's it's kind of very, you know, you know, 1 in 5 of us is on antidepressants, you know, six out of ten of us experienced financial stress so bad we can't sleep at night, you know, so it's 50% of us are living alone without a partner.

When we used to be sort of so embedded in family and community. So this is, you know, we're a generation of women in transition. And the bigger thing that I found in all of my work and research is something really unusual has happened over the last 60 years as women rise to power.

Right? We've gotten all of this power. We've risen to power. And what happens is when women get power, our values and priority priorities rapidly change and we move very quickly up.

What humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow talked about in terms of the hierarchy of needs, where we move very quickly from the achievement stage, which is largely about external success, and being able to, create success in the world, you know, in the world and kind of make things happen, too.

We move up to this stage of self-actualization, where we feel suddenly this impulse not to achieve external goals, but to unleash inner potentials and to be able to become everything that we can be, to be visible and seen, to discover our own unique gifts and talents, to be able to make a difference in a contribution to the larger world, to awaken our spiritual life.

And what's really fascinating about that, and I think that happens even more as we reach midlife and menopause, right? This, this kind of imperative to become everything inside of us and give our gifts to the world without holding anything back.

And the big thing that I found says women rise to power. We feel this, begin to feel this, this self-actualization impulse. And here's the really interesting thing that how we got to power was embracing power in the world as it has been defined, which has been this very logical, linear, masculine kind of power is really the story of power.

And what it is to do, to act, to accomplish, to be able to make things happen. Strategic, logical, linear thinking. All of these things are really good and useful for creating a certain set of outcomes at the achievement phase.

Right? And so this kind of explains why millions of women are feeling what I like to call a power paradox, right? On the one hand, I'm powerful, but on the other hand, I'm powerless to create this things that I most deeply yearn for.

And so that was my experience where I could make so much happen. But I felt I felt lonely, I felt like I was stuck in relationship patterns. I didn't know how to get this bigger calling out of me and into the world.

And so what I realized is this wasn't my own fault or my own failure, which so many of us have been blaming ourselves for not being able to figure this out, that actually, really, I hadn't been cultivating the kind of power that I needed to become everything that we can be.

And so what I found in my work in research is to self-actualize we need to develop a different kind of power source

in relatedness, in connection to ourselves, to an intelligence bigger than us.

The actual process of creation is very different at this stage of self-actualization. So that's really when I began this work with women, and I made it my mission to discover how do we unleash this kind of creative, transformational, power that that unlocks our self evolution and ability to bring forth these higher potentials.

And that's really what feminine power is and what dominion power gives us. I love that. And so let's put it in the context of menopause. And I think the old way of thinking is menopause is the beginning of the end.

But I've you and I'm no you do to view menopause is to me it's like the door to the sacred second act. It's like such a new beginning and a powerful new beginning.

From a new place of knowing who you are. So how do you how do you view this time, and what could you share to inspire? Women like to connect to their feminine power as they're going through this?

Because, well, I think a lot of women think, oh, I'm going through menopause, and now I'm not going to be as feminine because I can't get pregnant. I don't have a cycle, and society's kind of taught us like, well, now you're a cow going to pasture.

And that's like the furthest thing from the truth. So how would I think that's so true? And I think, you know, it's it's kind of really interesting because I didn't really think a lot about going into menopause.

I turned 50 last year, but the year leading up to 50, 49 to 50 and now kind of through to 51, I think have been the most transformational years of my entire life where I felt like I was shedding a self.

And I've done so much work to deconstruct all the ways women are socialized and the internal barriers. But I think something happens is we crossed that threshold of 50 and into menopause, where we are shedding so many of the internalized pressures and expectations and perfectionism.

And, you know, I kind of think it's it's I don't know, I think I read somewhere like 48 is the kind of age of maximum human unhappiness because we're like in the middle of child rearing and aging parents, and we're maxed out financially.

Menopause as a New Beginning

And so it's kind of like, you know, you're building in your 40s, you're kind of building, but then you kind of get to this place that's kind of like a right.

It feels like getting to 50 is kind of like arriving at the weekend after a really long, hard week of work. And so, you know, you've built yourself and you've built your life.

And I think especially this is magical because it happens for women. And Gloria Steinem said this, that women become more radical as we age. We lose status in culture by traditional measures, which enables us to take more risks and not care as much what anybody else thinks.

And so I've been doing this work for decades, but there's kind of a freedom in the, you know, in self concern and a connection, not so much to what I'm here to do, but who I'm here to be in the world at a level that our deeper purpose and our creativity and our gifts, like all of that, just comes online in a bigger way than ever.

And I think if you pay attention to the opportunity, you can on a physical level, this was something that really changed where I, you know, really got into the best kind of health of my life that I have.

I am stronger and more, vital and energized. And I ever have felt my entire life. And I just feel like there's kind of like a new self that's free from so many of these pressures and expectations that women feel, you know, as much as I had done to kind of release myself from that and find and be free of it, there is a freedom and expansion that,

you know, enables us, I think, to double down on the opportunity of this moment, which is to have the most meaningful lives that women have ever had the opportunity to have in the history of the world, where we have the opportunity to literally shape and create the future of society and culture and participate in our own conscious evolution to participate in evolving, our families and our workplace and our world and our gifts and talents are needed.

And, you know, I think the opportunity is so rich. If we choose a path of radical growth and evolution as opposed to decline and stagnation. I think that's my new favorite quote.

50 is the weekend. I love that it is. You know how you feel on Friday night? Yeah. You're like, who? It's really true. It's it's kind of the opposite of what we were told that you and I just feel like every decade gets better.

And when I was growing up, I thought 50, like, what was what was shown to me and what was told to me is like 50 years old, but I'm like, now 50 is, you know, 50 is 50 is the weekend.

It is. But weekend. I can be the most radiant and energized and sensual and alive and dynamic than you've ever been in your entire life. You have the wisdom of experience.

And now and now what is front and center is like you get to become the person you were always meant to be. So any tips or suggestions for a woman who's watching and is like, how do I connect to that?

Like, how do I find my gift, or my passion or my purpose? Well, I think it's about cultivating, cultivating a listening to ourselves. You know, there is a Greek term that I really love.

It's called the intellect. And the intellect is the unmanifest an unrealized potential that's at the center of every living thing. So, for example, it's the intellect of an acorn to become an oak tree.

It's the intellect of a rose seed to become a rose. And see at the achievement phase, it's largely about external goals and external success. We're kind of looking to the world to kind of, you know, build our estates or build our wealth or build our foundation.

But actually the yearning of the self actualizing woman is to release her intellect into the universe. The rose that fully bloomed can return to the garden in peace, knowing that it gave all of itself to this world.

And I think that's the deep yearning that we have. And so that's an inside out job in the in the process of, of creating with feminine power, as opposed to things out there that I'm trying to get or accomplish or make happen.

It's like potential in here that needs to be released and, and embodied to come out into the world. So this is where the process of creation, at the level of self-actualization, is really this potent process of becoming, of growth, of, of expansion into, to a higher dimension of yourself and your gifts and your talents and what you're here to create and what you're here to contribute.

And that's going to come from the inside out. And so where we start to connect with the lived experience of that becoming the seeds of that in totality are inside of us in our yearnings.

And so a really powerful question to begin to ask to activate and ignite and begin to follow this deeper into sense that's inside of us, is from a place of connection to our power.

So we want to do this from a resource place. Connect to who you are, where you feel powerful, or where you feel creative. Connect to who you are, where you feel connected to an intelligence in the universe bigger than yourself.

It might be a time when you are connected to your deepest spiritual experience, where you felt a higher power and a higher calling. Step into that place of connection to yourself, of connection to an energetic field and force bigger than you.

Connection to a field of support. And then ask yourself the question, what is it that I most deeply yearn for? And then, instead of thinking about the answer, listen to the answer from the deeper part of yourself.

What is it that I most deeply yearn for? What do I most deeply yearn to experience? What do I yearn to express? What do I yearn to create? What do I yearn to contribute?

Listening to Yearnings and Inner Guidance

And when you ask those questions and you move into creation as a process of listening and receptivity, right? This is different from the kind of strategic make it happen power.

This is creating from receptivity and connection and listening and listening to yourself and then looking at what would it be to take the next step? What would it be to take the next step and the next step and the next step and take the next step.

And what you find is you're now in this process of emergence and co-creation, where that deeper potential starts to come out of you in ways that you can't figure out with your mind.

Even though you're a very smart woman, we cannot get there with strategic, logical, linear thinking alone as much as we get there with deeper connection and receptivity to step forward as that creator of your potential, and beautiful and such such truth.

And so we're always looking for outside of us and I, you know, I always say silence, like if your silence will scream the truth at you, if you just shut up and listen or it's right.

Right. Well, listening to ourselves. Right. And we're so disconnected. We have so many things in our head, our shoulds and our kind of pressures. But I love that question.

What is it that you most deeply yearn for? Because you cannot answer that question with your head in it? Actually, yeah, you have to answer it from a from a deeper place of connection to yourself.

And that that's I hope everyone wrote down those questions. And when we're done, you're going to go journal. And you know, this is a process. So it's a journey.

You don't have to have all the answers as soon as the talk is over. But they're just beautiful questions to contemplate I love that. So I want to kind of I have so many different questions and topics, but I want to talk about community and women.

And I always think about the red tent and how women used to go and menstruate in the red tent. And you're in a group of women and you all get on the same cycle because we're so kind, excited, and like you were saying in the beginning, we are not so communal anymore.

We we can, especially with computers. And you can go days sometimes if you work at home and not seeing anyone. And so what how important is community to you.

Oh gosh. You know, so I think not so much even important like add this to create outcomes at this stage of self-actualization, we need what I like to call a resonant field of becoming.

We need to be in a relational field. And it's not just any kind of community. It's a very specific kind of community that is rooted in growth and rooted in expansion.

Because what happens at midlife especially is identity transforms, and identity is really held into place through our matrix of relationships. And so to grow into our highest potential and our highest becoming, we need to have growth oriented relationships with other people who can reflect back to us and amplify us and evoke us and call us forth into who we're here to be at this next stage.

Right? Does that make sense? So and I think this is like a big thing where identity shifts and identity transforms. So if you're if you're in, you know, with your family or your colleagues and everyone's relating to you as the person that you were for the last 15 years, it's very hard for you to expand and evolve outside of the self that you've been.

And this is a big thing that I found is that, you know, and this is where, you know, my work now is really focused on on training coaches in this methodology to coach women because to to unlock power at this level of self-actualization.

It's about coaching. I identity transformation not coaching behavior change that behaviors actually change and transform downstream of identity. And so this is where you know this is an identity transforms in a container of growth and relationship where we forge new relationships.

Those who can mirror and reflect and and ignite and catalyze this next level of who we are becoming in the world. So we can't become ourselves by ourselves.

That's the short version. And so it's a very particular kind of community that's growth oriented, where we are amplifying each other, where we're catalyzing each other, and we are growing and evolving together that we absolutely need to find to be able to step into who we're here to be.

So how how do we find that? Is that something you can consciously create? Because right. We we arrive, we have these relationships. And then you always hear like let go of the relationships that don't serve you.

Well, what I would say is, and I think that there's a lot of different levels.

Community, Growth, and Power Partnerships

So I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't ever coach people to let go of the relationships that don't serve them as much as to change your expectations about those relationships, because there's a lot of ways in which we can receive emotional support or practical support from maybe other people who aren't as growth oriented as us, and we don't want to unwind those relationships.

They can still play a very important role in our life, but we don't want to be going to those people for the new needs that we have for growth partnerships that we need to forge and that we need to find.

And there are a set of principles of what it is to create a growth container and a growth relationship, and the skills that we need to step in at that higher level that we can learn how to do.

And this is something that not a lot has been written about. This is something at the institute that we've really pioneered and really work on coaching and training women to be able to create with their clients and with their community.

And I would say that one of the biggest things has to do with establishing a new set of agreements for the relationship that create a safe space, especially for women, to be able to grow and to be able to take risks and to be able to show up in new ways.

Because so many of us are held back by perfectionism and a fear of failure. And, you know, it's all about stepping into this radical, path of growth to get to the next level of potential and to be able to create relationships where we come together with an intention to learn and grow.

We give each other permission to be brilliant and imperfect. And we are, you know, committed to energizing and amplifying each other in the process on the journey.

You know, that's, you know, I would say, you know, go and find the person that you, you know, is as passionate and as excited about growth as you are in your life.

It could be even just one person and make them what I like to call a power partner, where the purpose of that relation ship is to expand each other's sense of possibility and each other's sense of power and, you know, commit to being power partners in create a relationship where you can reflect back, you know, your your role is to, to to create a shared commitment to growth and to reflect brilliance and to reflect opportunity.

And really, at the highest level, we ultimately want to be able to develop the skills where we're able to give each other feedback and to be partners in growth, and that's something that we need to learn how to do, because growth doesn't just happen through experience.

Growth happens when we're able to come back and reflect on what we experienced and we're able to then, you know, kind of harvest the learning and identify things that we're going to do differently.

And so much of that process happens through conversation, happens in community. Like that becomes a an accelerant for where we can move further and faster together.

When we're able to step into these collective growth containers. So what would you recommend if someone listening, you know, I'm sure a lot of women listening, like you have a relationship you've had for a long time, and it's definitely not a power partnership.

Maybe it's more of like a complaining and, you know, but you don't want to give up the like, do you go to them and say, I'm stepping into a new state of being.

And this like, how do you how do you feel? So that's a great question with like a lot of dimensions, because I think a lot of us find that we've been in dynamics that are not growth full, and then we start to grow and our partner doesn't.

Right. We could we can easily think, oh, I need to let go of the relationship. And that's where I just want to caution anyone to move, you know, any quickly into that any time soon because, you know, there is value in relationships where you have family together and you have built a life together.

And I think what I would do is I would encourage curious about the potential of that relationship if you were to change and transform. And so, you know, rather than go into that relationship and say, well, you're not a very growth oriented person, I'm not satisfied, right?

It's actually to go into that relationship and have a conversation and say, hey, I just want to check in and I really want to let you know about some things that are really changing with me, and you step into that conversation from a powerful place of self-responsibility and vulnerability.

Right? Because a lot of the time I find women will say, oh, I really want a spiritual partner. But what they mean is I want to experience more intimate see and safety with my partner.

Right? And I'm like, and I'm like, well, that actually comes. Intimacy comes from maybe you becoming more vulnerable and more open and more and more transparent and more willing to take emotional risks and more willing to be emotionally honest.

And you don't know what that relationship can become unless you step into that and find out. And so and so that's part of, I think, a really exciting chapter of growth as we can say, hey, I'm we're in a different stage of life.

The kids have left home. And, you know, we're looking at the next 20 years and I'm thinking about our relationship and I'm thinking about myself and my life.

And here my yearnings, and here are the desires that I have for closeness and for intimacy and for expansion. How do you feel? And so we're opening up those kinds of conversations, not knowing from a place of being responsible, of having co-created what is with the curiosity of what it can become.

And yeah, yeah, that's my favorite word is curiosity. I think when we get here, that's one of my words for the year. When we get curious, everything changes.

So I love that I, I think this is to me, this is such important stuff because, you know, our relationships are to our self and to others. This is some of the real juicy beauty of being alive and being a human being.

And you have such an eloquent way of navigate getting it that no one like, why wasn't this taught to us when we were in first grade, learning to share our cookies or anything, right?

Like we don't get well. Yeah. Or well-meaning parents and mentors. Their mission was to give us survival skills, and they succeeded. And we did it. And now we want to self-actualize.

And so there's a whole set of skills at that. And ways of aren't being at that level of higher thriving and conscious evolution that we need to step into for that, you know, and how exciting to be able to have the privilege of being among the first group of people where we have that opportunity for no longer just sacrificing ourselves so the next generation can survive and make it, and are pretty much every one, every woman in our family lineage that was old, she had the option to, focus on as the Northstar of her life.

You know, we have the incredible privilege of thousands of years of sacrifice that we have the opportunity of this moment. And I think, you know, for all of us, we're feeling that impulse to really step into using the privilege and the power and the opportunity of this moment to be able to bring forth the higher potential of who we are.

And that is that burning yearning, that impulse inside of us, that impulse to become, to self-actualize, to co-create the future of our world. And we really came here at this time to shape the future.

Closing Reflections and Resources

I believe that those of us who are coaches, who are healers, who are Transformers, we've known that our whole lives, that we're here at a critical time on planet Earth.

And so developing the capacity to self evolve and to co-create and to be able to step forward, this is our sacred opportunity. Amen. And I always say and believe, you know, and then we're changing what the younger generations are seeing.

And so we're helping to shift it. So it kind of becomes more the norm for, for the younger girls when they see how, how we are behaving and how we are in relationship.

So I love this conversation, but I miss our time is rapidly coming to an end. So for those that want to continue the conversation, how do they how do they learn more?

Do you have resources? What what? We're. Yes. So we have actually, we have, an e-book that, I share a whole overview of my woman centered methodology and woman centered approach, at the what?

It's actually I've got the URL here is it's one on the word one key shift.com, and you'll be able to go and get that e-book and look at what it is to make the shift to become woman centered in your approach.

If you're a coach or practitioner or healer or change maker or you're anybody who works with women in any way, one key shift.com, that e-book is going to show you this gist of things that you need to know.

To make the shift in how you listen and the questions you ask that can begin to evoke and catalyze and call forth women that are informed by this framework, this powerful shift to self-actualization, this impulse that women are feeling to have and to co-create, and the different way that we can be working to, focus on this identity transformation as opposed to behavior change.

That's like the biggest shift that I feel every coaching practitioner needs to make supporting themselves as well as

women. And that book will give you a download of everything I've learned in the last 25 years about how we can catalyze women in one on one conversations, and how together, we can accelerate the rise of women in our time.

And I even if you're not a coach or practitioner. Right. Just, download it and learn. Absolutely. Self read. I mean, everyone one key shift come. I'm like, soon as we're done, I'm going there.

I appreciate that. And you'll stay in touch with me. You'll be on my mailing list and all of the things that we're doing at the institute, and content that we share, you'll receive that for free when you sign up for the e-book as well.

I'd love to connect. Boing deeply to you for for being here and your wisdom and just, just, you know, in a short 30 minutes just talking to you, just like, opened up my heart and my thinking.

And so just well and work and right back at you, Doctor Sharon, for your light and your brilliance and your leadership. You know, I mean, the final thing I just want to say is the future is not fixed.

You know, there's no patriarchy. That's like a group of people. These are just unspoken agreements that can be renegotiated. And no one else is coming to create a culture that supports women to rise and actualize their gifts other than ours.

And I truly believe it's something that we can create. And it's by building community and it's having conversations like this that we rewrite those stories, we shift agreements, we create new possibilities, and we step into the opportunity that's here.

So, so grateful to you. And so honored to be here with your amazing community for this conversation today. Thank you. Beautiful. I'm I'm all in, diving in.

So thank you. Thank you everyone again for being here. I hope you go to one key Shipka. I hope you think about those questions. And I don't even say I hope.

I know this conversation was powerful and I know it served you. And if you continue listening and hanging out with Clare, you're. It's just going to keep shifting you and allowing you to step into who you truly are.

So thank you all for being here. And we'll be back with another talk. So night that much love everyone.