

Hormones : A must read for every woman

Dr. Helene Leonetti - The Gynecologist of your Dreams!

Dr. Helene Leonetti is the gynecologist that every woman dreams about. In addition to being a competent, well-respected physician and researcher, Helene is also a compassionate healer dedicated to assisting women in empowering themselves.

SS: A description of your book, "Menopause: A Spiritual Renaissance: What you Can Do to Empower Your Life From Someone Who Has Been There and Done It" says that "As a registered nurse, Helene Leonetti recalls having to stand and offer her chair to the doctor when HE entered the room. Her journey from that day to this has been a long one and not without almost overwhelming trials. During her transition from RN to Physician to holistic and herbal healer, Dr. Leonetti had to face severe depression and other challenges during menopause." Obviously your experience during menopause was a profound journey that led you to write your book and become a more compassionate healer and teacher. Can you share some of what you experienced and your personal insights about menopause?

HL: I suffered, despite my incredible accomplishments, from serious self-doubt. About the time I was entering menopause, I was in a very toxic marriage. My 16 year old son was spinning my buttons because he knew my husband was not good for me. In addition, I was feeling totally overwhelmed at becoming a physician after being an obedient nurse for twenty years. So, I decided that I would literally check out.

My suicide attempt was soberly orchestrated, and I was confident in my imminent success. You can imagine my horror when I awakened, with an endotracheal tube in place, to the voice of a female psychiatrist asking, "How do you feel?"

My depression persisted, but somehow I catapulted myself out of the deep abyss. My anger allowed me to seek a divorce from my partner for whom I had willfully sacrificed my identity, my very soul. for many years. This was the catalyst that brought me to my dharma, my life's mission: to become a beacon for my fellow sisters suffering the emotional and physical and spiritual effects of menopause.

SS: Can you please explain exactly how an holistic gynecologist differs from a traditional gynecologist and why you chose to become one?

HL: "Holistic" comes from the word "holy". It is a spiritual path that I literally tripped upon after a wonderful patient flew in from Chicago for her regular check-up. She uttered the words that would change my life forever. "I teach meditation, Are you interested? To which I answered, "What is that?" That was 13 years ago and the rest is history. The more I practiced meditation, the more impossible it was to surround myself with toxic people.

Other things priorities and interests in my life also changed; recycling became important to me ; organic food was all that my body craved; and , in my practice, I was no longer willing to give quick fixes with band- aids to my patients:. I needed to understand the underlying emotional and spiritual causations for their dis-ease so I could help them truly heal. Well, my new approach wasn't accepted with open arms

by any stretch of the imagination. Oh, maybe 25 percent of my patients embraced my new practice, but the vast majority resisted the need to change. As a result, many patients actually left the practice angry and complaining to my office manager.

At first, I was frightened, especially when I took on the entire medical community when, as a menopause specialist, I proclaimed, along with my mentor, John R. Lee, MD, that menopause is actually an estrogen excess condition, rather than estrogen deficiency. Eight years later, and three top notch published research studies later, I am still called a quack by many of my traditional colleagues. In a word, holism embraces the whole patient, mind, body, and spirit, and acknowledges the connectedness of these components to assure total health. Most importantly, the patient must be held responsible for her care.

SS: In the last two years the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology has awarded you and your colleague, Dr. Jim Anastasi, third prize out of 800 clinical trials for your celebrated research on natural transdermal progesterone. What made you go where no other researcher dared to tread? And what were the results of your studies and the significance of this research?

HL: John Lee, MD had two self published books, one called "Natural Progesterone: The Multiple Roles of a Remarkable Hormones" and "Optimal Health Guidelines"-- a synopsis of a course he taught at Marin Community College. I was totally blown away with his biochemical acumen. When he came to my area to lecture, we started a relationship that has developed into a wonderful friendship with him as one of my most treasured mentors.

His study using 103 women, two thirds of whom used estrogen as well as transdermal progesterone showed a significant improvement in bone mass on bone mineral density. His work, however, was not placebo-controlled and so my colleagues were disparaging and would not honor him with the credibility he so earned.

So, Dr. James Anastasi, a brilliant reproductive endocrinologist, helped me get FDA approval and 107 women were enrolled. Our bone density did not achieve statistical significance; however, 83% of the women had wonderful relief from their hot flashes, while only 19% in the placebo group did so.

This can be found in August 1999 edition of the journal. Obstetrics and Gynecology. We have been quoted worldwide.

Not happy to stop there, I had to acknowledge my colleagues' skepticism in achieving protectiveness of the uterine lining when natural transdermal progesterone is used with estrogen. In the February 2003, edition of the journal, Fertility and Sterility, our pilot study was published, demonstrating a protective effect on the uterine lining.

Finally, I am proud to announce that our year long study, using 6 months of natural progesterone cream and Premarin, followed by 6 months of Prempro, the synthetic progesterone mixed with Premarin (which in July was indicted for causing an unacceptably high amount of breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, and blood clots to the lungs) has finally received significant attention.

At the beginning, after six months, and after one year, uterine biopsies were all equally protective. There was not one case of cancer or pre-cancer. This has also been awarded third prize by ACOG, and I will fly to New Orleans in April to present this incredible study. Remember, this can never be repeated again because of the dangerous findings with Prempro.

SS: You believe that one of the biggest problems facing women of all ages is the effect of stress. There is no doubt that stress is a major contributor of hormone imbalance. You believe that "The Martyr Syndrome" is a major cause of stress for women. Can you please explain?

HL: For eons women have been treated like second class citizens: walking ten paces behind their men folk; aborting a female fetus to avoid losing their dowry and possibly their life; getting the vote a mere eighty years ago. This has been such a collective and almost cosmic experience that we as women have incorporated this mass belief into our own consciousness.

Make no mistake this is a most powerful belief and one that has shaped our very souls. We have bought into the teaching that we are here to serve everyone in our sphere- husband, children, parents, work-mates. Now, service is what we are here to do, but never at the expense of our own well-being. We cannot fill another's cup if our own is empty. What is the greatest Commandment? Love thy neighbor as thy self.

Think of what psychic damage we do to our children when they always see us on vapors and doing nothing nurturing for ourselves. We have been given our children on loan, to honor the words of poet Khalil Gibran, and it is our obligation to serve as role models for their development. What a great gift for them to witness our self-love, serving as an inspiration for them to anticipate with joy the experience of parenting.

SS: What are some of your suggestions to help women who find themselves falling into this pattern?

HL:: My biggest gift was learning to meditate. Sitting peacefully 20-30 minutes once or twice a day grounds me and keeps me in the moment. Staying in present time prevents the negative emotions, fear, anger, resentment, envy, from invading our tranquility. For when we are always in the moment, the toxic experiences of the past do not exist; nor do the fears and anxieties of the future, for it is a phantom. This precious time spent with God, tapping into the wisdom of the ages, gives us courage to do right action in all situations.

Once we are grounded firmly in the present, we can create boundaries and use the powerful word, : "NO". Our greatest stress is our inability to honor our own needs, and not agreeing to diffuse our precious time in to everyone else's request for it. This really gets down to a self-esteem issue: not wanting to say no for fear we will not be loved and approved of. I definitely had a challenge with this one!

Within the nuclear family, I see the need to share with each other on a regular basis and speak our truths from our hearts, requesting help and delegating certain chores to the appropriate family member. Remember, we will never receive if we don't ask.

Finally, we need to recognize that the greater culture does not want us to take our power back. The masculine mind, totally devoid of the feminine can be purely cerebral and ruthless. We must surround ourselves with loving, nurturing, and supportive colleagues on the empowering, transformative journey of self-love.

Use our link to order Helene's excellent book "[Menopause: A Spiritual Renaissance](#)".

Catherine Rollins

Author: *'[A Woman's Guide to Using Natural Progesterone](#)'*

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