

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

Before we jump in I wanted to let you know I have a brand new free resource I just compiled and wanted to share with you asap: It is my special COVID-19 resources list: these are essential information for job hunters and also for working from home professionals.

I've put together a list resources to help you think through how to plan your career next steps, the impact that COVID-19 will have on your profession, sector and industry. I believe it's essential for job hunters and professionals - who are feeling challenged by the disruption and uncertainty caused by COVID-19 - to keep a finger on the pulse on how the economy is adjusting, recovering and adapting to a new world of work. To access this resource, all you need to do is go to [renatabernarde.com/covid-19](https://renatabernarde.com/covid-19)

Or you can go now to the episode show notes and there will be a link there really easy for you. This link will also be on the podcast blog on my website, on YouTube, on my Twitter bio, Instagram bio and Facebook Page. If you have any trouble finding it, DM me, and I'll get it to you. You know what, if you were a subscriber to my newsletter, you wouldn't have to go through this trouble, because I'd already have sent it to you. So consider that as well: [renatabernarde/join](https://renatabernarde.com/join)

Hi, I'm Renata Bernarde, the Host of The Job Hunting Podcast, a virtual career coach, job hunting expert and career strategist. I teach professionals in the corporate, non-profit and public sectors the steps and frameworks to help them find great jobs, change and advance their careers with confidence and less stress. If you are an ambitious professional who is ready to find your next job and build solid career plans, or you want to keep a finger on the pulse of the job market, so you are always ready when an opportunity arises, you are in the right place. I created The Job Hunting Podcast to help you nail your next job and have the career you want. If you are currently on the market looking for a new job or if you want tips on how to advance or change careers, make sure you go to my website where you will find not only the podcast audios, but sometimes also videos of the podcast interviews, blogs, recordings of my Live career coaching sessions on YouTube and free resources to help you prepare your career plans and move forward with your job hunting with confidence and less stress. Check out my services and online programs as well, and remember that investing in your career is not only important, it has become necessary as we all adjust to a new world of work post COVID-19 and need to reset our career plans. There are challenges ahead, and also opportunities. So when you are visiting my website, or checking the episode show notes, don't forget to subscribe to my Reset Your Career community, and I'll send you the new episode by email every week and keep you up to date and accountable to follow your career dreams: <https://www.renatabernarde.com/join> You can also follow this podcast on iTunes, YouTube, Spotify or Google Podcasts.

Men who are listening to this podcast, well done you! I'm delighted that despite the title you are sticking around. This interview will be invaluable if you have a wife, daughter, mother, best friend, work colleague and so on. It will help you understand and support the women in your life. I'm sending you a virtual "high five"!

This is part 1 or a 2-part interview with Dr. Fatima Khan, a highly skilled Menopause Specialist with a holistic approach to women's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Fatima is passionate about women's health. She completed a Diploma at the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists in the UK; she has an Advanced Menopause Certification accredited from the British Menopausal Society and Faculty of Reproductive and Sexual Health. Her specializations were achieved after her

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

extensive training as a doctor at Kings College London, which is well recognized as a referral center for menopausal women with complex medical problems. But that's not all, Fatima has also undertaken further training in the USA on optimizing hormonal health for anti-ageing and longevity.

She has recently moved to Australia, and is now a member of the AGORA Medical Specialist Centre and Medical Education team, based in Melbourne. There, she sees patients and teaches GPs and Registrars in range of women's issues.

At the time this episode goes live, as we are in lockdown mode due to COVID-19, the Australian Government has enabled doctors to see patients remotely via telehealth. I myself did that yesterday, I had my regular specialist appointment via telehealth and it went really smoothly. So this is a great opportunity, if you are based in Australia and would like to consult with Fatima, to book an appointment with her. I will list the contact details for Fatima, and other Agora Medical Clinic in the episode show notes. Agora has a strong focus on women, including obstetrics, gynecology, fertility and cosmetic medicine.

After quite a few weeks of podcasts focusing squarely on COVID-19, this episode may sound very different indeed. Until I noticed an interesting trend. You see, I follow several private female blogs and private Facebook groups, and over the past few weeks as the anxiety over COVID-19 and its economic, social and health impact started unfolding, so did many very common issues women face: breakouts, hormonal imbalances, hot flushes, waking up at 3am. Some tweets from women asking "who else is waking up at 3am" had hundreds and hundreds of comments.

I really like how Fatima addressed the hormonal as well as the stress levels we currently have in our day to day lives. She touches on both, weaves them together as well as addresses them separately, which for me was really educational.

Like many women, as I aged, I felt more anxious and fatigued, perhaps due to the many things we worry about and things we have to do. I experienced lack of concentration, sleeplessness and mild bouts of depression every now and then, perhaps due to the many roles in life that I've had to juggle from being mother, a leader in the work place, a wife and all the responsibilities that come with it all. In hindsight, I am 100% certain that my hormones have at times helped me pull through, and at times got in the way and really negatively impacted my career, possibly since my late 30s.

All the topics Fatima will describe in her interview, I can mark a tick next to all of them: forgetfulness, extreme headaches, weight gain, mood swings. Fatima biggest concern and goal is to support ambitious corporate women to continue to pursue their careers and not feel like they need to give up on anything because they can't control their peri-menopausal symptoms, or any hormonal fluctuations they may be experiencing. Her goal is to treat and empower women, so they can fully embrace their career.

Renata:            So let's start from the beginning for you. What led you to have a career that you have today?

Fatima:            Okay. So, it's, it's a long story as I'm sure you're familiar with it.

Renata:            That's okay. We like stories here.

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

Fatima: In a nutshell, I've done my training in London, UK at Imperial College and I graduated and did a range of surgical medical, rotations and doing obstetrics and gynaecology. That was my true love. But then I actually went on to go and do general practise, where I saw 80% of my patients are women. And out of those 80%, I think another 80% were related to menstrual cycle, menstrual pain, direct and indirect mental health related to their menstruation. The impact on their relationship, work life, home life.

Fatima: And so this impacts not just women going through the menopause. I mean, you start seeing it from puberty in their 20s and their 30s and their forties and 50s. So our hormones, fertility periods, this is something we are faced with and challenged with since, since puberty all the way till in your mid-fifties until you end your menstruation. And so, for me it was, I found that there was a lot of help for people doing the premenstrual syndromes and a general fertility and ovulation. There's a lot of help on the internet. There's lots of apps. But it's the woman in her early forties going onwards there isn't much recognition of the symptoms, much awareness and how to deal with it. And the focus really is in the UK now there's a big movement towards these women are highly experienced, very dynamic and they need to stay in the workforce into their sixties, and a lot of them now are giving up their work in their late forties because they're finding they can't cope. They can't cope with the demands of the work, home life and something has to compromise.

Fatima: And so a lot of them get early retirement, some get unfortunately made redundant and a lot of them will not go for that job. A lot of them will come to me at 48, it will be given this job just below, below the executive level. And then they will step down. They wouldn't take up because they can't cope. And primarily is, is to do with not just the disturbance in their menstruation. There's a huge disturbance in their mental health. Anxiety, depression, mood, cognitive function, focus, concentration, memory, decision-making. So I found that I wasn't able to help them because there was a lot of misinformation about how to manage them, what, whether to give them HRT, what should we do? So in the UK they've got a, the British menopause society with the faculty of reproductive sexual health society. They've got a, it's almost like a certification and diploma where you sit in every week and you do a menopause clinic in which you would see the perimenopause premenstrual syndromes, you see kind of all the hormone related disorders.

Fatima: But you essentially sit in, for an advanced certificate, which is what I have for a year. And you sit in every week and you see these women who got complex backgrounds and how you manage them essentially with a gynaecologist. So I would have an independent clinic and I've seen, you know, hundreds if not thousands of women and these got complex needs. So these women aren't just destroyed. They've got strokes, they've got heart disease, they've got family history of breast cancer, family history of endometriosis, heart disease, all the things that the average doctor can't treat, I can treat and manage them because of this multidisciplinary team we had. With an obstetrician, a gynaecologist, a haematologist, and breast cancer specialist. So the training that they give you and at the end you get a certification, the advanced menopause management, which allows me to set up a clinic and also

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

accept referrals and manage these patients because the problem is the average GP, it's beyond their scope to manage these women. And so women that end up Googling, seeing naturopaths, seeing different people, spending hundreds of dollars on lots of supplements and they still don't feel good.

Renata: Yes. I want to ask you a couple of things, as you know, I'm a career coach Fatima and I see a lot of clients, female clients and they come to me in their early, mid-thirties all the way to their mid-fifties. And, and in, especially in their mid-thirties, I have been getting clients and prospect clients that say, I have changed in my, my leadership style have changed or my confidence levels have changed and I don't know why something has, is happening to me. I also have friends and clients in their forties who are saying that they are getting, they feel depressed. I'm not, wouldn't say that it's clinical or just say that, you know, they feel like they're not themselves anymore. They don't feel as confident and they feel depressed. Do you think that we have all these issues that are going undiagnosed and it would kind of, putting a lot of, sort of weight in ourselves and our self-development when we should be seeing people to help us with those things?

Fatima: Yes. So essentially if you go back to the basics again and why did the changes start, mid-thirties is a common time to see it, because mid-thirties is when everyone knows it's when your fertility goes down. And so what tends to happen in your menstrual cycle, which is 30 days, mid cycle, you release the egg and then 10 days or two weeks before you have your period, you would have something called progesterone, which is a hormone that gets released. Now, progesterone is your fertility hormone, but it's also your calming hormone. So what tends to happen is mid 30 onwards, that hormone starts to decline in its level.

Fatima: So women tend to experience a lot more anxiety related symptoms. They might get emotional, they might get teary, they might get angry, might lash out. And what I get them to do is, but they know they're not depressed because they're not like this all the time. You know, they do have good days because the true definition of depression is low mood for six weeks. So waking up every day with low mood changes in your appetite, change in your sleep, but it has to be a symptom that's there majority of the time in the last six weeks. That's a screening question we ask for depression. If you ask 10 women who are experiencing these changes, a lot of them would say these are not consistent symptoms. So giving them an antidepressant is not the solution. What the solution is, I get them all to write a journal in which what they need to do is write their thoughts, their feelings, what they're grateful for that day, what are the winds of the day, what would they like to improve in terms of self-development and then set the intention for next day, but in relation to their menstrual cycle.

Fatima: So they do it in relation to, because interestingly enough, when you get women to do this, when they're having their periods and the first two weeks of their cycle they're actually really good. And then when you look at these diaries 10 days before their periods is when these thoughts and feelings and the dark cloud hanging over you starts. But you can only realise that when you track it. And so I normally get them to not just do journaling, I want them to do a journal and then you see the

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

shifts and then women themselves become empowered that actually this is not in my head. There is a physiological change that happens in my body seven to 10 days before my period.

Fatima: And the problem these days is people have the same routine every single day. That's great if you're a guy because you've got just stressor levels which are completely straight. But for a woman you have to change. You have to listen to your body seven to 10 days before and alter what you're eating. It's not uncommon to crave a lot more comfort food and to allow yourself to eat a bit more because your body is actually think preparing for possible pregnancy. Because you've ovulated and you kind of go into this kind of a mode of probably slight, not paranoia is a strong word, but you might be cautious of making decisions. And we know that if you have a major decision to make in life or at work, your decision that you would make seven days prior to your period and after your period would be very different. And if you speak to these women, they'd be like, I was so rational. And then they'll have their bleed. And then after seven, eight days, they'd be like, Oh, I don't know what I was thinking. That wasn't me. That's not likely.

Renata: Fatima I get that all the time. Clients, female clients that come to me and say exactly that. You know, I don't know why I said what I said, or I did what I did. I look back and I cringe. And it's that, volatility in, I'm assuming your hormone levels, right? That is making people have come ebbs and flows of hormones affecting their ability to perform as a leader in the corporate sector. And as time goes by, their confidence in their leadership skills diminishes because they don't know how they're going to react the next day, you know? Okay.

Fatima: And so what happens is this is just the beginning and most women can compensate. But what happens is when you get to your early forties, mid-forties, your estrogen starts to go down as well, not just the progesterone. So it starts with PMS, which is premenstrual syndrome, which is symptoms that occur 7 to 10 days before your period. And that you can kind of get in your twenties as well. They become more pronounced mid-thirties when you're trying to manage home life, relationships, children running around. And that progesterone beforehand, sometimes an imbalance or some woman might get lots of breast tenderness and migraines and get heavy periods. That's not enough progesterone. And they'll suffer a lot with anxiety and irritability. And then the minute the period happens, they feel a lot more relieved. When we go into your late thirties, early forties, all of these get exaggerated.

Fatima: But what happens is the lack of estrogen, if you're looking at women in leadership roles, a lot of them are getting to the peak of their creative mid-forties when they've got the three kids at home, they're rushing around, but then their estrogen starts to decline. So their period might become shorter, longer. They might have three days instead of four days or five days. And the thing is they're so busy, because we don't track our periods. And this is when I get them to do a diary, a lot of them do journaling, but they don't journal with their menstrual cycle. And we have to accept that that is a main difference between the men and us and accept it and accept that vulnerability.

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

- Fatima: But once you acknowledge it, you can do something about it and feel more empowered about it. Because then you say, you know what, this is seven days before my cycle. I'm going to keep my schedule slightly lighter. I'm not going to do that crazy 30 minute high intensity workout, which is going to wear me out. I'm going to do something like yoga, something more calming. I might do more breathing exercises. I might be not over commit until I get really exhausted, and then I go home and lash out on my kids and my partner then feel guilty about it because we suffer with lots of guilt because we want to perform at work.
- Fatima: And then having one coffee after another coffee just to get through the day. And then the excessive caffeine feeds into our stress, and our ability to get more overwhelmed. Then it interferes with our sugar levels, so then we want to crave those sweets more. So the hormones, menstrual hormones don't just stop at our periods, they interact with cortisol, which is our stress hormone. And they interact with insulin, which is a hormone of, to digest the food, but also it dictates our appetite. So progesterone might be low at 10 days before your periods, but it interacts with insulin, which is your appetite, which interacts with cortisol, which is your kind of your stress hormone, which indirectly and directly interacts melatonin, which is a sleep hormone. Now you can see why it's really important to pay attention to where you are in your menstrual cycle to address your mind, body and heart and your soul.
- Renata: Yes, when we were on the phone getting ready for this interview, we discussed the lack of sleep for women from generation X that has been documented, researched, there are lots of books about it, lots of people write about it. And I have always, spoken about it publicly and in with my clients, about the clash of the social structures between, family life and schools, for example, going from in Australia nine to three and work going from 8:30 to 5 and all of that and how that impacts, a woman's life, a family's life, not just women, but, but we feel that for now we can say mostly women are impacted by, by this mostly. That's how I feel with my clients. You know, they have this, the weight on their shoulders to be the one that is, if not the one that picks up the kids, the one that is the organiser of the family affairs, even if it's the husband who is actually going to do the chores, the women feel like they have to be the administrators of that. And just by overthinking all of those, tasks and chores both at work and at home leads to them feeling like they, they have trouble sleeping at home at night and, and, and you know, it's one of the biggest problems that I have found with my, my friends and also my clients. What this, what do you say to your patients when you see them? Do they come to you with problems? Like lack of sleep?
- Fatima: So I mean everyone is suffering from sleep problems. So other thing, it's just, as you said, it affects people in their twenties, thirties, forties, 50s, 40 plus. It will be due to a decline in the estrogen and progesterone. So a lot of them might get the stub with feeling hot at night, temperature change, and hot flashes. And that's the biggest reason for their lack of sleep and we have to fix it by giving them the correct hormones to replace the deficiency. However, that's not just to do with the hormone decline. Majority of people suffer from sleep disturbance because we

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

don't have a good sleep hygiene. So the average person will have dinner and then go straight onto putting on television or watching something on their screen or watching their favourite Netflix show, which is great because physically you might feel you're relaxed on the couch, but mentally that is stimulating your cortisol.

Fatima: So when you watch something on a screen, it's got blue light in it and that will stimulate your cortisol. So at sunset your cortisol level is meant to go down, which is your stress hormone. It's the hormone that makes you get out of bed, wake up and do the things that we do during the day. And then in the evening after sunset, you will get an increase in melatonin, which is a sleeper. And that's the reason why we sleep at night and wake up during the day is because of these hormones that play a role. But what happens is, because we're all watching screens or watching some form of stimulant programming, we are the, the cortisol is the overriding hormone that would take over melatonin. So we're going into bed where cortisol is at its peak. And so we can't sleep because physically we're exhausted but we're wired but tired.

Fatima: So mentally we are still awake where we are kind of rehearsing all the day's events, we're rehearsing all the things we've seen in the show. So your brain's just not ready to switch off. So people would sleep and wake up the next day and say, I felt like I didn't sleep at all because their mind hasn't switched off. So the way we deal with that, and I give this to everyone, is to have a sleep hygiene from 9:00 PM onwards, at least 90 minutes before bedtime. You have no blue light of any source and no screens, TV, Instagram, telephones, iPads, all technology switched off. And that 90 minutes is really to do something to send your body the message that I'm ready to wind down. In this modern world. We have so much stimulus, we don't realise, screens and noise and the surroundings we have, all stimulate our body and send messages to stay awake or whether to sleep.

Fatima: So I normally get them to no screens. Put some relaxing music on, the auditory signalling tells your body it's, it's something, it's time to kind of wind down, calm down, put a nice aromatherapy candle on. So that's a sensory input, which again relaxes your muscles, and your mind, and then read, do something that's relaxing. So either read a book, spend that time connecting to your partner. Try and do your journaling. I find that's a really effective time to reflect on your day's events. Just a bit of gratitude, reflection of what you did well that day, what you could improve and just set your intentions for the next day. And it just kind of recalibrating back to yourself and just balancing out this kind of high hormones and we're kind of running on this just run, run, run, rush, rush, rush, and just bringing it back to kind of ramping it down to getting you ready for bed.

Fatima: And most people find this quite beneficial. You need to also add in a bit of meditation or some breathing exercise or some stretches or something for 15, 20 minutes that will, or mindfulness or something that will really get you ready for bed. And I practise this every day religiously. Maybe not if there's a big party or we're going out or eating out on the weekends, but five out of seven days I'm sleeping by 10:30 and I'm strictly after 9:00 PM I follow this and sleep is really important. So, and I think it has an impact on everything you do because if you sleep well your next day will be great.

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

- Renata: Yes. Yeah, no, you can definitely manage your hormonal fluctuations better as well if you had a good night's sleep the night before. Now, Fatima, let's go back to the life of a corporate executive, female corporate executive in her forties who is keen to continue to advance her career, is probably now having more time than ever before with the kids a bit more grown up, and a little bit more opportunity to advance, in her career, but now finding herself juggling hormonal changes and perimenopause symptoms. What would you recommend a woman like that should do to make sure that she continues to progress in her career?
- Fatima: So the early forties I would probably say is the most challenging time because not only they've got young kids, they're also at a point in their career where they need to perform, so they need to be full time executive, full time mummy. And then on top of that, in terms of their hormones, they can start fluctuating, but they're not necessarily ready to have any hormone replacement. So it's the lifestyle. This is very important. The first thing I say to them is, in this case it's what they're eating is very important. So when we're tired we tend to, we might eat a lot more, maybe fast food or make more carbohydrate dense food, which are energy rich but nutrient poor. So lots of processed foods will just end up making you get more sugar slumps and also give you fatigue and the brain fog.
- Fatima: So the diet's really important. So lots of green vegetables are really important. Replacing the caffeine with green tea, cutting down to one cup of caffeine a day if they can. So those little things help, keeping small snacks so they don't have big sugar slumps. Because what's happening is you're just rushing from one place to another to one place and keeping your energy levels really important. But through nutrient rich food, not energy dense food, with processed foods. The second thing is I always prescribe them some supplements because I find they help you. So magnesium in a powdered form is fantastic because not only is it muscle relaxant, but it also calms you down. What you see is your blood pressure makes you feel a lot more relaxed, that's fantastic. You can get some really good ones now that mixed magnesium with a B complex. .
- Fatima: So it's essentially the engine of a car. So when the engine is running, running out of gas or oil, you'll find it's not going to be as effective. You can go in fifth gear. It doesn't matter if the engine is not keeping up, you just can't run as fast or drive as fast. Same thing in our body. We need to nourish our mitochondria, which is our energy hub. And to nourish them is essentially B vitamins is really important. And sleep, sleep is essential because when we go to sleep, we need at least 90 there's a 90 minutes cycle, and we need about four of those cycles. If you go to bed at 10:30, you should be waking up at 6:00 AM. And when we sleep, that's when our body's cells generate because it's not trying to keep you safe to make sure you don't, you know, walk onto the street and or burn your hand when you're cooking.
- Fatima: So that's the time when you're sleeping. The body's like, okay, I'm going to go around and I'm going to recharge yourself and mop up any things that's going out of order. And so we know when we optimise mitochondrial function, we improve, we improve energy levels, but we also prevent against disease. So there's a lot of shift

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

towards sleep, optimising mitochondria function with B vitamins and eating the right foods.

Renata: Okay. That's early forties?

Fatima: Early forties. The other things I add to the early forties in particular is their periods tend to become a bit heavier, but they're just putting up with it. And when you become, and that's just a sign again of your progesterone declining, which means you will have more anxiety, you will lash out more at your kids and your partner, you are just exhausted. And so by the time you get home, you just don't necessarily have the same reserve that you would have normally had.

Fatima: So two things I need to do managing that, there are few herbs that they can take like Vitex is one of the herbs that you can get, which helps produce more progesterone and it helps with the bleeding, but more particularly just balance of progesterone and your mood. And then all should also be taking an iron supplement because when you have heavy bleeding, they tend to become, they might not be anaemic, but that ferritin level, which is the iron level drops. And so it might be in a normal range, but the lower range still makes them quite fatigued and exhausted. So I get them to have iron, to give them the energy and get them to make sure they're taking herbs as well. So in the perimenopause, essentially B vitamins, magnesium, herbs, and also fish oil. Fish oil is fantastic. Like an Omega three is fantastic to balance our hormones because our hormones are made out of steroids.

Fatima: It also helps with brain function and joints and other anti-inflammatory processes. So those are kind of my herbs and supplements I give them. Then sleep iron supplements on top. But I also get them seven to 10 days before their period to really cut out any excessive exercise because you will find that they exercise is a form of stress. So when I go for a run on the tunnel or a jogging track, you getting a stress response, cortisol is released. But when you already burnt out from all the things you're going through in life, that reserve you, if you go out for that run, you've taken all that reserves. So by the time you want that bit of coping mechanism at home, you don't have that energy. So I'm finding that already you're burnt out and then you're going and running every single day. It's not helping your stress levels.

Fatima: So you need to do what we like, call, fine I know some people love their running great, but at least 7 to 10 days before their period, I actually tell them, you are not allowed to go running. They don't thank me for that, but they need to really be strict and not do anything that pushes them up and get them really overwhelmed because we already know you're going to have disturbance in your mood with a lack of progesterone and heavy periods. So you need to do daily 30 minutes either yoga, change it to reform Pilates a great way to tone your body. Turn your pelvic floor. They can do 15, 20 minute hit workouts. That's fine because they tend to be more repetitive exercises, but just long distance running, can be exhausting for your body.

Renata: Interesting you mentioned that because I was talking to a friend this weekend. She said every time I try to do heavy gym work I get sick.

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

- Fatima: They're not getting nauseous? You find that there might get nauseous or they might get headaches?
- Renata: No, she said she physically gets unwell. I think she will get a cold. I think probably she probably tries too hard during that, periods. Menstrual periods that you said you, you know, before the, the, uh, the periods, seven to 10 days. I'll make sure that she watches and she listens to this podcast and understands a little bit better how to manage her exercise routine. Now, Fatima, what about women in their late forties, usually women in their late forties, if they are in the corporate sector, they might have a leadership role. They might, you know, be, you know, fully employed or working as consultants. Some of them might be moving into board positions, which means making important decisions that affect not only their careers but others. Right? Managing large projects. What would you recommend to them in addition to what you just said or some changes to what you just said?
- Fatima: So this is the main cohort of women that I see now. And it's because, no, I'm a feminist, but the amount of women I see in their late forties who end up giving up their careers is astonishing. It's a taboo that we don't talk about. Because we think it's a sign of weakness and, it's not openly spoken about because it's because of all the stigma attached to it. So I get two cohorts of women. I get the one cohort of woman take, for example, could be a barrister and say, hang on, I'm forgetting my lines and I can't afford to do this because I need to perform. They're very aware, very pragmatic. They'll go see someone like me, I'll give them their hormones and address all the other issues to balance them and they'll continue performing and working.
- Fatima: Then you'll see the other cohort of women who aren't necessarily as aware of the symptoms. They don't recognise the symptoms. That's what's happening. So they'll fall victim to this, impression that they are not performing well. And that's the problem because what tends to happen is 45, age 45 onwards you might not get your hot flushes, you might get regular periods, but what you're going to start noticing is changes in your mood, depression, anxiety and cognitive function. So difficulty making decision, focus, concentration, self-doubt. And those women will go see the GP in 50% of perimenopause women get put on antidepressants. So you're already starting off on a wrong foot because the real fundamental problem is it's the, it's the decline in hormones, but they're not fluctuating yet. And because the estrogen is still there to give you your periods and not to give you hot flashes, but you're still getting all the other symptoms and mood and cognitive function.
- Fatima: No one puts two and two together and says, hang on, this is perimenopause. So they get labelled as depressed or anxiety or adjustment disorder. They start having relationship issues. So they blame the relationship they're going through. They have demanding roles as a mother. So that's, you know, blame that. So this is the fundamental, 70% of women fall into this trap. And then what happens is you get into 48, 49 when they could have that CEO job or top executive, but they will step down. They will come and say to me, I'm deciding to go part time because I cannot cope until they get given HRT. And they go back to feeling like they were in their

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## Transcript 26. Menopause and Work: How menopause affects your career- part 1

thirties but I would say if I see 10 women in a clinic, only about three or four would seek help at the right age because there is no awareness.

Fatima: We've accepted at 45 to feel essentially crap and at 50 we accepted that we feel old, so we're not going to moan about it, we're not going to whinge about it. And so when I get women coming and seeing me, I'm like, Oh, I've just got hot flushes and that's it. And I asked him 15 other questions, which is, do you have joint aches? Do you have headaches? Are you forgetful? Are you feeling lack of confidence? And they're like, well yeah, that's just age. I'm like, well no, you're only 51 you're not supposed to be getting these. Then they put two and two together because the message is still in perimenopause is still hot flushes and regular periods. But if you go on to any information site, and we have information in our website as well, there is about 15 questions I asked them and they all look at me shocked thinking, hang on, is this part of menopause? Is this part of my hormone change? And then when we, when we help them, these women can go onto, I've got women in their eighties who are much sharper than me in certain things because they feel like, they can function cognitively and emotionally and physically they're balanced.

Renata: Yeah, that's, that's really amazing.

I hope you enjoyed this first half of the interview. In Part 2 we are going to look at actions: what can we actually do to improve our wellbeing? Step by step tips and advice from Fatima for women of different ages. So, don't forget to subscribe to my Reset Your Career Community and I will send Part 2 to you next week.