

Moving into Menopause Facilitator Guide

This facilitator guide accompanies the conversation guide of the same name. It is one output of a research project by Dr Emma Pavey at the Susanna Wesley Foundation.

Based on an interweaving of literature research, action research and ongoing conversation, the project aims to raise the profile and lower the awkwardness of conversation around perimenopause and menopause, reflecting the fact that it is part of the lived experience of a large percentage of people, and possibly even the majority of people in churches and other faith communities. This then opens up opportunities for theological reflection that serves those experiencing it, those supporting them, and the wider community.

Introduction

The 'Moving into Menopause' conversation guide is designed for small groups in faith communities. These could be:

- support groups for those going through perimenopause
- intergenerational groups of women sharing stories
- mixed small groups where men, young people and others can listen in and learn together
- another type of group

The way the group is facilitated may well be different depending on which type of group it is.

The move into menopause can be an emotive subject. In this facilitator guide, we explore suggested **guidelines** for a sense of welcome and belonging, and some possible **activities** to support a fruitful conversation.

As an overall principle, we recommend you **make the most time for hearing from those who are in female-bodied perimenopause.**

Format

The guide is divided into six sections:

Context,
Narratives,
Control & Agency,
Loss,
Grace, and
Justice & Inclusion.

Each topic is broad and there is a lot of flexibility built in to allow the discussion to be shaped by the participants in the group.

You may want to tackle one section for more than one session, and you do not have to tackle them in the order they are presented – they are interconnected. You might also want to create your own further topics for discussion as this guide is only the beginning.

Each section contains some text, some quotes and some questions for discussion that you can choose from. And of course more questions may come up in the group.

The way you facilitate sessions using the conversation guide will depend on the size, goals, and timeframe of your group. We suggest you begin by **working with the group** to decide together what form the conversations will take and how the conversation guide material will be used. As you begin, discuss and agree on conversational **guidelines** such as confidentiality, only offering advice if it is asked for, and so on.

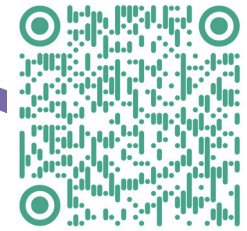
The **facilitator** of the group holds the space, opening and closing the time and paying attention to giving the other group members a chance to participate on their own terms. As facilitator, establish through conversation the scope and limits of your responsibility for the safety, belonging and dignity in the group. We would suggest that the group as a whole agree to take responsibility for this.

Think too about the **physical layout** of the room, if that is flexible. Consider accessibility issues and how to host a hospitable space for all. It is helpful to sit in a circle. Perhaps you might share a meal as part of each conversation session.

Provide the booklet to participants ahead of any gathering. It is good to give everyone time to take in the material ahead of the conversation.

Set-up

Feedback



There are different ways to talk in a group. Here are a few listening exercises that might be useful. We suggest making any activity invitational so that no-one feels compelled to participate.

- ♦ **Talking piece** - consider using a stick, stone or feather, kept by the facilitator. Only the person holding the talking piece can speak. This suggested practice is based on learning from the restorative sharing circle protocols of the First Nations peoples of Canada (see, for example, <https://passthefeather.ca/sharing-circles/>).
- ♦ **Goldfish bowl** - a subset of the group (perhaps those in perimenopause) sit in a circle and talk about a particular topic, while others sit outside that circle and only listen.
- ♦ **Timed listening** - in pairs, listen to each other for a specific amount of time each without interrupting.
- ♦ **Silence** - a lot is conveyed in the space between what is said, and some need time to process. Allow silences where needed.

Talking need not to be the only activity for the group. Role play, for example, could be used. Similarly you might use creative tools like singing, paint, modelling dough, or drums to represent and express ideas and experiences. Permission to play often allows people to see themselves, and others, in a new way.

Activities

We are delighted to provide the Moving into Menopause conversation guide and this facilitator guide free of charge. We would be grateful to hear about your experiences using them and the impact they have made, along with suggestions for improvement.

**Please do contact Emma with your thoughts:
emma.pavey@roehampton.ac.uk**

Contact SWF@roehampton.ac.uk for paper copies of the conversation guide.

Visit susannawesleyfoundation.org to download the pdf of the conversation guide and the facilitator guide.



A resource developed and provided by the Susanna Wesley Foundation.
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