

MALE MENOPAUSE: FACT OR FANTASY?

Adapted from an article written by Miriam Webber, A/Regional Consultant, Pacific Region, Public Service Health, Health and Welfare Canada.

For quite a while now there has been a debate about whether or not men go through a fairly severe identity crisis in mid-life which is very similar in its consequences to the female menopause.

DEFINITION:

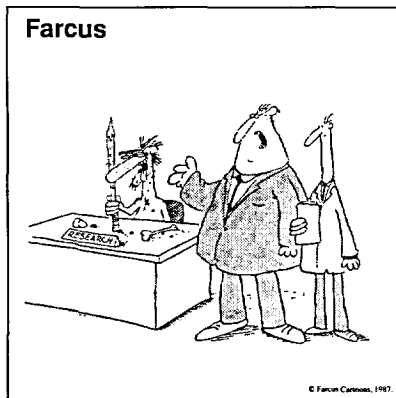
The "Climacteric" is derived from the Greek word KLIMAKTER, meaning a major change. It seems for most men the changes are emotional and psychological, not so much physical: there can be considerable inner turmoil while experiencing serious doubts about the very foundations of one's life.

WHAT HAPPENS?

In a nutshell, psychologically, this is a period of stock-taking. After what has usually been a busy and competitive pre-middle age period, in the sense of "making it" as an adult, establishing a family and working out a set of values, all this is questioned. That "What the hell" feeling, "Was it all worth it?" and "Is this what I really want?" are quite pronounced. For many men the earlier busy period was entered into more on the basis of doing what was expected, while the current self-evaluation often takes the form of searching for goals which are closer to their inner self.

SYMPTOMS:

Many men may experience depression, anxiety, develop aches and pains, drink heavily and abuse drugs.



We're getting back to basics.

They may demonstrate behaviour which is considered out of character for them, otherwise known as "acting crazy".

Often relationship are scrutinized at this point. If they have been disappointing and lacking, there can follow a crushing sense of loneliness, isolation and disequilibrium.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

While men in the 35-45 age bracket are identified as likely candidates, it should be said that some men experience severe reactions, while many others experience no symptoms whatsoever.

The "Mid-Life Crisis" can occur regardless of whether a man has achieved his goals or whether his love life is happy. There is usually a discrepancy, however, between what he thought he wanted from his life and what he actually wants. This crisis can take two or three years to unfold. A man is experiencing a crisis to the extent that he questions his life structure and feels the stirring of powerful forces within himself that lead him to modify or drastically change that structure.

SOME BENEFITS

All is not gloom and doom during this phase. As a result of his soul-searching, a man can generate new energies and commitments which will make his relationships and work much more meaningful. Inherent in the mid-life crisis is the opportunity for emotional growth leading to a more stable personality. As with all crises, this is an "opportunity blowing on an ill wind".

This crisis should be temporary. N.B. If problems of depression and anxiety are persistent and serious, seek professional counselling.

For further information, please contact Brenda Abud-Lapierre, EAP Coordinator/Counselor (613) 992-6167, or Marjorie Caverly, EAP Counsellor (613) 992-1641, Room B1-106/108, behind the Crush Lobby, Lester B. Pearson Bldg.