

**THE
WORKING WOMEN'S
GUIDE TO
MENOPAUSE**

When the Heat is On, Don't Sweat It!



GAIL GIBSON & RUBY MCGUIRE

When the Heat is On.
Don't Sweat It!

The Working Women's Guide to Menopause

Gail Gibson & Ruby McGuire

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This book is dedicated to all the amazing women across the world, running their own business or working in a corporate role, whilst navigating the journey through menopausal change.

Because we know that life does not stop when the menopause starts.

Table of Contents

Introduction

1. MEET THE AUTHORS

2. PERIMENOPAUSE VS MENOPAUSE

3. GAIL & RUBY'S JOURNEY

Gail's Menopausal Journey

Ruby's Menopausal Journey 12

4. FACTS ABOUT MENOPAUSE

5. MORNING ROUTINES

Gail's Morning Routine

Ruby's Morning Routine

6. MANAGING YOU

Protect Your Time

Setting Boundaries

Practice Saying 'No'

Practice Self-Care

Journalling

7. MANAGE YOUR MINDSET

Imperfectly Perfect

Mind Your Language

8. OWN YOUR TIME

Time Boxing

Manage your Time

Be Accountable

9. MANAGE YOUR TIME

How to Think Yourself into Being More

Productive

Shift the Fog and Get Your Best

Work Done

20 Ways to Beat Procrastination

Radical Focus

Success Habits

10. REAL LIFE STORIES

Debbie's Story

Delia's Story

Jenny's Story

Karen's Story

Lin's Story

Amanda's Story

Mary's Story

Dawn's Story

Angie's Story

Fiona's Story

11. FINAL WORDS

12. BONUS RESOURCES

Reference

What's Next?

The Working Woman's Guide to Menopause: When the Heat is On. Don't Sweat It!

Introduction

Three years and thirty-six 'buzz chat' virtual walks later, we were talking one day, whilst trying to book in our next session, and failing miserably, due to menopausal brain fog. In that moment Gail jokingly said, 'We should write a book on this and do it fast before we forget what we want to say', and so the idea for this book was born.

You are probably wondering what a buzz chat is. A buzz chat as coined by us is a regular call, where we hold each other accountable for mini goals we are working on, to challenge, inspire, motivate, and uplift us, celebrate our successes, and co-coach each other. Our buzz chats have become a strong support mechanism for us, even more so, as we are at opposites in the world, with Ruby in Scotland, and Gail in Malaysia. Our collaborative relationship continues to evolve, and is positive, fun, and progressive, although we do need to keep reminding each other what we said we would work on. Brain fog!

We are both Accredited Master Coaches with the IAPC&M (The International Authority of Professional Coaching and Mentoring). We have both been working with our respective coaching clients, in small business, and corporate, through our own menopause phase, and have experienced different degrees of menopausal symptoms in this time.

We recognise that life does not stop just because we women go through menopause. From sleepless nights to sweats and forgets, and cardigans on and off, repeatedly. Our bodies change, our emotions too, but life and business carry on regardless.

As you read the real-life experiences of women in this book, we imagine you will notice and be able to relate to similar and unique challenges you are facing or have faced, whether you are a small business owner, or in a corporate role.

This brings us to why we decided to write this book. What we wanted to do was to share our experience of menopause and invite other women in business or in the

corporate world to share their experiences. Throughout the book, we share a little on the serious side of menopause to give you a taste of the science behind it. On the flipside, it is the hilarious menopausal moments, such as Ruby's Chicken story, and Gail's Waterfall story, together with more funny stories shared by the women who feature in the book, that we guarantee will bring a smile to your face.

We coach and mentor in different areas of business, Gail with corporate leaders, and Ruby with self-employed business owners. While we have approached the book from different perspectives, based on the work we deliver to our clients, we know that the mindset techniques shared are highly effective during the menopausal journey, no matter which area you work in.

The aim of our book is to help you realise you are not on your own through this journey. We provide practical tips, strategies, and tools (we use daily) to help you, as a working woman, navigate your way through the symptoms, and ultimately to be kind to yourself through the process.

The co-authors recognise and respect gender diversity. As advocates for gender equality, this book is for anyone who identifies as a woman, transgender, non-binary, and/or other gender-diverse person, who has a menstrual cycle, and is likely to experience menopause.

The writing style of the book includes the terms 'woman' and 'women'; however, the co-authors would like to note that these references do not overlook the changes in gender diversity. Being inclusive in approach, the book is practical in nature, and accessible to all.

Whatever your position as a professional woman, we hope *The Working Women's Guide to Menopause: When the Heat it On, Don't Sweat It!* will help you deal with life, and manage your mindset and workload, to thrive through the change and beyond.

Meet the Author. Gail Gibson

Master Performance Coach, Author, Speaker

Known as the Can Do coach, award-winning master performance coach, international speaker, podcast host, and author, Gail Gibson, delivers a unique style of 'Can Do' coaching with proven results in enabling her clients to break through the frustration of stagnant or unfulfilled personal and professional growth.



The simple, yet incredibly effective coaching techniques she has honed and developed, have led to life-changing transformations in mindset, and personal performance for business and corporate leaders in the UK, US, Australia, and Asia.

A published author (*Making Connections: How to Network Effectively to Build Better Business Relationships*, 2009; *The Rise of SEE-19© Leadership: See Beyond and Become the Leader You Are Born to Be*, 2021; *The Working Woman's Guide to Menopause: When the Heat is On. Don't Sweat It*, 2021) and inspirational speaker on mindset, peak personal performance, and SEE-19© Leadership.

Gail hosts an uplifting weekly podcast, *The Can Do Way*, featuring guests from across the globe who share amazing stories of growth, resilience, and success.

A self-confessed book addict and voracious reader, green tea drinker, and a lover of keeping fit in the great outdoors – her 'green' gym.

Gail lives in Malaysia with her husband.

Meet the Author. Ruby McGuire

Business & Mindset Queen, Master Coach, Trainer, Author, Speaker

Ruby McGuire, Business & Mindset Queen helps service-based solopreneurs create a success mindset and step up as Queens (aka CEO's) to grow their business. She loves helping her clients create success by working in 90-day blocks and setting challenges to push through fear.

Following 11 years working corporately in HR and consultancy, Ruby has worked freelance for many years running Rock Your Fabulous Biz.



Her expertise means she is a sought-after trainer, speaker, author, and Master Coach who is trained in NLP, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) and Mind Your Mind Techniques. She is also the Head of CPD for the International Authority for Professional Coaching & Mentoring.

A blogger, podcaster, and writer of several books, including Ruby's Coaching Gems (A plethora of 'bling' to grow your coaching biz) Little Book of Visibility Tips, the IAPC&M book How to Win & Keep Clients 2019, The Working Woman's Guide to Menopause: When the Heat is On. Don't Sweat It, 2021, with more on the way. You will always find her surrounded by books with a cappuccino in her hand (She says, "preferably Whittard Vanilla please").

She is an advocate of having fun outside of your life and business and took the brave decision in 2020 to market her business without social media. A mum of a blended family of three girls, she spends her free time making hand-made cards, exploring her home in Scotland where she has lived since 2018 with her husband Ian and little dog Lulu, and chickens.

Chapter 6: Managing You.

Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are incredibly powerful. They are a way for you to preserve energy, maintain self-respect and honour your time. They are an absolute necessity when you are navigating your way through life.

I started on my path of boundary setting a few years ago, and oh what a journey it has been! As you will find out, your boundaries will be constantly pushed, you will make mistakes and forget about them, only to have to reset them again, but hang in there. They are amazing and have the potential to change your life.

The problem is, we care. We like to help people and we go over and above to make sure people have what they need. I can remember managing a residential home for the elderly years ago and being told to let people have responsibility for their own lives too, you are empowering them. We think we must do it all for everyone, but they do not learn that way, and worse it can be damaging, as they then no longer have the belief, they can do things on their own.

The wonderful world of boundary setting takes you down a path. It can be uncomfortable, as you literally have to re-train people in how you want to be treated, but it is super important. By taking on too much you can end up pushing yourself into overwhelm.

Here are some examples of where you might be having your boundaries pushed but not have even noticed:

- People are overstepping the mark in your working arena, whether that is your own business/corporate.
- You are answering work emails late at night and/or helping more than is required of you.

- You are not switching off and having down time, you say to yourself, 'Just one more little job and then I am done...'
- People keep asking you to do things for them, despite you feeling as though you could not take on another single thing.
- You are getting a bit irritated, or maybe annoyed, when asked to do something else because you feel taken advantage of, or you are panicking about what you already must do and one more thing might push you over the edge.

If you want to stop overwhelm then it is worth working on boundaries.

Boundary setting is like drawing an imaginary line around you and deciding what is and is not right for you.

It is important to set boundaries in our lives. Without boundaries people will take advantage and we are left feeling as though our opinions/feelings do not matter, hence the saying, 'Give them an inch and they'll take a mile'. The thing is, if you have always been someone that does everything everyone else wants to do and you do not say what you want, then setting boundaries is the antidote.

Believe it or not, people use you the way you trained them to. So, to have a better, or different relationship, you need to re-train them. You have to 'train' the people around you to know that things are going to be different around here now and that you want some of your own needs met. This often causes some issues. Conflict may arise. Sadly, some people might not like the new you! You may have arguments, lose friends/potential clients, maybe even clients, and have relapses. People need to re-learn how to be around you.

How do you know when to set a boundary?

- If someone is asserting their rights over yours
- Time stealers
- When people are always getting their own way

- When you feel like a doormat
- One-way toxic relationships

You may have recognised some scenarios where you need to set boundaries. The examples above are just a few of them that you may have already come across.

Drawing a line

Here is a simple exercise for you to figure out what you do/do not want to continue in your life.

Get out two pieces of paper.

Think about all the things that you currently do, and how well they are working for you. On one piece of paper:

- Write down your needs.
- Write down how you spend your time.
- Notice where you are people pleasing.

On the second sheet of paper draw a big circle in the middle of the page and write 'Me' in the middle.

Let us say you are answering emails at night, and it makes you feel irritated, write 'Answering Emails' OUTSIDE of your circle.

It might be that you have a few minutes each day focusing on you, then you might write down 'Me Time' INSIDE your circle.

Once you have brainstormed all the ideas, start to think about how things would be different in your life if you were just dealing with those things INSIDE of your circle.

Now comes the tough bit. What boundaries can you put in place for those things

on the OUTSIDE of your circle?

So, for the answering emails scenario, it might be that you decide one of the following:

You will have a cut off time at night, after which you will not answer emails.

You will not reply to your client for a couple of days and let them figure out a strategy themselves. Often, they will. I know I do that sometimes; I will ask a friend for help and then because they are busy and I do not hear from them, I will figure it out myself anyway. I then wonder why I asked, but it is just about reassurance that you are on the right track. Same with your clients.

Instead of answering their query, you tell them that it is something that would be better explored in a coaching/consultation session/appointment/meeting etc. and book one in.

You MUST learn how to say 'No' or you will burn yourself out!

The next time you say 'yes' to someone else, ask yourself what you are saying 'no' to yourself for (adapted from Paulo Coelho quote) It is not selfish – it is self-care.

Being a people pleaser can impact on both your personal and business life. It can make you feel frustrated, anxious, overwhelmed. It is bad for your health and is draining and exhausting!

When setting boundaries be kind to yourself – allow it to take the time that it needs. You WILL have setbacks, you WILL revert, just keep working on it. The rewards are SO worth the effort.

It is not just about making commitments to yourself to set boundaries and do better though. What about when someone says something to you that you just do not like? Your silence is, in effect, approving what they said, so what should you do differently?

Get Some Clarity Around Your Boundaries

Spend a few minutes journaling around the following questions:

- Who or what do I need to say 'no' to?
- What is the benefit of holding onto this 'you are more important than I am' ethos?
- What needs to happen for me to honour and value myself?
- What is the worst that could happen if I speak up for what I want or believe is right?
- What would be a great way to overcome that?
- What conversation do I need to have to explain how I feel and the way I want my needs met?
- How do I vent my feelings?
- Who do I have in my life that can act as a confidante to express my feelings to?
- Where in life would I like to be more assertive?
- When I say 'yes' to others how am I saying 'no' to myself?
- What difference would that make to me?

Practice Flexing Your 'NO' muscles

Say No... Easy? No - but practice makes perfect.

We are worried about what people might think or say if we ask for what we need. This is because we have been taught to be polite and nice.

Start to say the word no in lots of different areas of your life:

- Say 'no' to people you do not know.
- Say 'no' to people who cross your boundaries.
- Say 'no' to things you don't want to do.
- Say 'no' to friends/family/colleagues/negativity.

- Say 'no' to people who expect too much.

Chapter 8: Own Your Time

Manage your Time: Minimise the Fog.

How often do you find yourself being pulled from pillar to post while aiming to get important things done in your workday?

Picture this. You have an important report to complete. Your boss is pushing you to get it ready for a last-minute meeting in half an hour's time. You start working on the final figures. An urgent email arrives from another department which requires an immediate response. You begin to feel anxious and stressed. Which one takes priority? Suddenly you feel a hot flash coming on. Your mind is under pressure and your body is on fire. HELP!

Recognise this scenario?

Working in a high-pressure environment combined with intermittent perimenopause or menopause symptoms can be challenging for women. At times, the act of being able to think straight, to assess and respond to a situation in a calm manner, can feel out of reach and unachievable. Feeling stressed about deadlines and expectations can be overwhelming. The heat rises, mentally and physically, and the pressure mounts.

One of our interviewees, Delia, shares her personal experience of a boardroom moment:

On occasion, I have been right in the middle of an important meeting, and whoosh in comes a hot flash.

I am amazed at how much these flashes can affect how I feel. Perhaps it is because there is no warning, and you try hard to hide the fact. I wish I had the confidence to say, "Excuse me. I am having my own personal summer here. Do you mind if I step out of the room to cool down a bit?"

More often these days, during a meeting, I find it difficult to hold a thought, and find myself thinking, what was the question, what was I talking about or where was

I going with this? Experiencing bouts of brain fog, means I need to work even harder to keep alert and present. It can be quite tiring doing that.”

Women we say to you, we hear you. We too have experienced these momentary lapses in crystal clear laser-focus together with seriously soggy sweats!

As we are here to help you when the heat is on, to reduce and alleviate the impact of perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms, here is a proven method you can try.

It is called *The Power Hour*.

Did you know up to 80% of the average working day is spent on activities with little or no value? This means that most people only spend 20% of their working day on tasks considered ‘important’. Tasks most responsible for wasted time include repeated phone calls due to missed information, or – specifically for managers – interruptions as much as 3 hours per working day.

(Source: [Cornerstone Dynamics](#))

Let me shed light on the background of the concept.

Through my career as a performance coach, I have learned about and made use of many different types of productivity tools. Looking back, I wish I had knowledge of these helpful techniques when I was employed in the corporate world. Work may have been, let’s say, more streamlined, and easier?

The various tools I have tried and tested have enabled both my work, and the work of my clients, to be focused, distraction free, in flow, and during productive best work hours, which has led to positive and sustainable habits for success.

GOLDEN RULE: To achieve success from the Power Hour, as a solo worker or as a team, it is vital to create boundaries. From client experience, the process works most effectively when you and your team respect the hour set aside, to get focused work completed.

Establish ground rules such as:

- No email response for the next hour.

- All mobile phones switched to silent and stored away from the working area, calls (if possible) diverted to answer service.
- Put up a visible sign on your chair or office door saying 'No interruptions during my Power Hour (time from and to). Please respect my time'.

Let us get started. Here is *my version* of the Power Hour.

My Power Hour is split into 4 blocks of time: 5 + 40 + 5 + 10 = 60 minutes:

1. **PLAN:** The first 5 minutes is your planning time, where you can write down ONE priority/urgent task to complete in the next 40 minutes.
2. **ACTION:** For 40 minutes you work ONLY on your ONE task, distraction, and interruption free (this is where boundaries need to be set – more in a moment).
3. **MOVE:** Once your 40 minutes is finished (use a timer – preferably a physical one to avoid looking at your mobile phone), move away from your desk. Make yourself a coffee but avoid interrupting any colleagues who are on task in a Power Hour – respect their time.
4. **REFLECT:** Spend the last 10 minutes of the hour reviewing and refining your task.

When you set boundaries and embed the Power Hour into your work routine, you not only commit to completing urgent/priority work done, but you also begin a process of change in mindset and habits toward working smarter, not harder.

Embed and repeat this process throughout your productive best/ideal peak work time. Visualise the big personal reward at the end of each day and week. Imagine how much more you will achieve.

Make NOW the time to smash your goals, without breaking a sweat!

Real Life Stories.

Lin's Story

Her Memorable Moment: *You could tap into women in menopause, light up the city and run the country on them. The national grid did well in my world. Lin lights up London!*

How did menopause affect you in your working life?

Basically, I did not feel I was being my most effective self. I was busy working full-time, in an incredibly demanding job with multiple targets, with clients and staff who were all looking to me for direction. At times, I felt like I was in a fog.

On many occasions I felt like I was backpedaling when trying to clarify and communicate my thoughts. In effect, working twice as hard to just to get the same results. It just felt like a major personal challenge, to not feel as effective or be on my 'A' game. Sometimes it was difficult to complete even the simplest task.

Losing thought processes and concentration, and feeling lethargic by the afternoon, was like I had just run out of steam. I discovered I was more productive in the morning, so I focused on completing priority tasks during this time.

What worked for you to manage and cope with your challenges?

Firstly, I allowed myself extra time. Extra time to complete work and arrive earlier at meetings, not as a last-minute rush. Rushing caused bigger problems. When I gave myself extra time, to write notes and prepare, it did lengthen the process. However, by doing so, I felt happier, more in control, and was able to communicate my message with clarity and efficiency.

After meetings I made time to reflect on the discussion and any notes I made, which helped when emailing follow up memos and planning future meetings with my team. Without my post meeting routine, my plans would have been 'stolen' and 'lost' because of moments of brain fog and forgetfulness.

Concentration and attention to detail is something I pride myself on. During menopause, my focus waivered, on occasion. Having a focused To-do list kept me on track. I was more productive because I completed tasks, tracked my progress, and managed to be less overwhelmed when meetings were rescheduled, or changes of task were required.

Having a cool shower helped me relax after a busy day. Especially a day filled with a heavy meeting schedule and client appointments. And a good night's sleep too, if possible, depending on the frequency of night sweats. Keeping myself as well, fit and energized as possible, helped too.

What advice do you have for professional women who are going through menopause?

Be kind to yourself. Your body and hormones are going into overdrive. If you feel like menopause is controlling you, take charge and find a way to be in control. Each woman will experience something different. Begin to take notice of your hormonal routines - when you are most effective, and when you know you are forgetful. Create to-do lists to get your best work done and to reduce the impact of forgetfulness. Buy a small fan to cope with hot flashes. Allow yourself more time to do things, to relieve unnecessary pressure, anxiety, and stress.

In the work environment it is important that people, women, and men, can talk about menopause because there are few discussions taking place. Raising awareness of the topic can start conversations, build an open and inclusive culture, and have a positive and supportive impact on, not only women going through menopause, but across the team and organization as well.

We live in an age of vulnerability where previously 'taboo' topics like menopause are starting to be discussed. During my mother's era no one spoke about the subject, not even with their friends. At the time, women experienced menopause in silence.

Today, we see more women in the workplace, with growing numbers in leadership positions, and running businesses. Being active in the workspace presents a positive and progressive opportunity for open communication, greater awareness, and empathy.

Find self-care activities that work for you. I enjoyed a mix of Body Balance, Tai Chi, Pilates, and aqua aerobics. These exercises gave me a boost of energy. Walking was a solo activity I loved to do, to get outside and clear my thoughts in a different space.

One final piece of advice: Accept the peaks and troughs of your menopausal experience, your thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Fiona's Story

How does menopause affect you in your working life?

For a bit of background - I work in a secondary school, the pastoral department, and I'm also in the process of setting up my own coaching business.

Well, I've gone through a bit of a transition with managing the menopause. Before, I would say that I would wake up feeling tired, I didn't know what day it was, or what I had in my diary. Being a focused and organised person, these changes made me feel totally out of my depth. At one point I didn't even know if I could do my job properly. I was in a bit of a mess.

There were days when I felt like I'd been hit with a sledgehammer. I was just not me. I then had a bit of a wakeup call, and kind of took myself to task as in reminding myself menopause is normal. This happens to every single woman that has come before me and will come after me. I told myself 'You've just got to get on with it, girl'.

What was/is the biggest challenge for you?

I looked at my diet and I looked at the way I exercise, because I believed I was healthy. I felt that I exercised well, but my body was telling me it wasn't happy. I

always looked upon menopause as something I wasn't going to go through, because it just sounded horrendous. When I was younger, I would say that menopause was not for me and if I had to go through it, it would be for just one day, I would be 72 and on the 24th of June. Now I know it was just tongue in cheek but there was an element of belief that I couldn't possibly go through something which could potentially rob me of me and who I was/am.

What worked/works for you to manage/cope?

I realised that, instead of fighting my body, I must look after it. If this were a child or a loved one, we would look after them, we would nurture and cherish them to carry them through it. So, I learned how to talk properly to myself and to my body. I looked at everything that I ate, and I realised that a lot of the foods I ate was not actually good for me, there were an awful lot of chemicals. So now, I've gone completely over to just eating natural products, cooking from scratch, not that I was a microwave dinner person before. I just wanted to eat more healthily. I looked at my exercise routine as well. Instead of running three miles on the treadmill, to which my body was saying, "No, please don't do that", I do more resistance stuff now.

But the main thing for me was to comfort my body through this transition. I talk to it. So, if my skin looks like a crocodile that died three years ago, I'd say to my body 'Oh, you're looking a bit dry. Come on, let's find you some moisturizer.'

Then I developed a health mantra. And my mantra is:

"I take care of my body, my mind, and my soul because that is where I live, and I live where I am nourished, nurtured, cherished and loved."

And so, this is how I am approaching the menopause, I'm nurturing my body through it. And I wish that I had done that when I went through adolescence. Because we're so angry at adolescence, aren't we?

I think my main symptom now is that there are moments when I feel like I've put the central heating on. It really is a rather settling symptom.

I used to suffer a lot from fluid retention, and by adapting this new approach, I don't get it as much now. I drink lots of water now, which is another nourishing thing to do for your body, especially when you're going through all this.

I think the message out there is that menopause is horrendous, and it's awful, and we can become so negative towards our body, that we don't actually nurture it and comfort it through this transition, which I think is what we/I need to do.

Another thing is I always try and do is to work out what triggers my hot flashes. I've found that it's when I'm feeling a bit challenged or slightly anxious. So, then the more I've dealt with that, the less hot flashes I have.

I think my biggest challenge is the state of my face. It looks old half the time. But I am learning that this is more about my perception. And that's what I've got to overcome. I've always had a very young- looking face. And since I was 50, which is now four years ago, it has aged considerably, and I don't like that because it is such a change to what I have been used to. It's the whole concept of ageing and losing your youthfulness. When it's your face, it becomes more of a focus, because you can hide everything else.

The reality is we need to accept our whole body and to look after it. I have facials and I do look after my skin, so I'm doing the right things. The girl looking back at you in the mirror is still the girl. You know, despite the wrinkles and the slight sagging skin, she's still there. You need to love yourself through this, it really is the only way.

I'm very mindful of my mantra that I live inside my body, and I want to feel looked after. I want to feel cherished and loved, so I'm going to love my body. And some days, that's harder than others. But I think if that is in the forefront of your mind, every day, you will come through this, because it's a journey you're going through together, you and your body.

And where I work in a school, I find that I'm one of the oldest ones there now. Teachers look like they are 12, but I am beginning to find that I'm happy now to say, yes, I'm in my 50s. Whereas before, I felt like I was competing, and not very well if I am honest. But now I'm quite happy in my own skin.

With the acceptance of menopause, you are accepting yourself as well.

Sometimes you wish you could start all over again, with the knowledge and wisdom you've got now. Regardless of the menopause, we need to look after ourselves.

If you could share one piece of advice, what would it be?

Top Tip: Be kind to yourself and cherish your body, love your body through this because it's a journey you're going through together. You're not fighting with one another. Love your body through it. Comfort your body, and comfort it healthily.

We hope you enjoyed reading an excerpt from *The Women's Guide to Menopause: When the Heat is On. Don't Sweat It!*

To read the full version you can order a copy on [Amazon](#) and [various online retail bookshops](#).

Thank you.