

Managing distress and the menopause

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Why are we here?

- Over a cuppa.....a plan was hatched
- Writing articles in BJGP - James Rebanks books
- Patients as flocks, GP as shepherd, practice staff as sheep dogs
- Back out into community, educating and empowering across several long term conditions: asthma, heart disease, mens health.....
- Start with menopause - because menopausal women are the lynchpin of their families and communities and have loads of symptoms.
- Previous experience x3

And then...

- **Radical Birds:** Group of like minded women with a passion for community and especially for getting women's and girls' voices heard from the cradle to the grave. As people not patients.
- Other working GPs interested especially in terms of **re-wilding General Practice** and thinking differently.
- **CHOC** keen to support it
- **Dr Cath Munro** Kendal - Menopause cafes in South Cumbria
- She wants every GP in Cumbria to know the basics of the menopause, some to develop a special interest and others like her to get the full British Menopause Society training. Menopause friendly practices A menopause clinic supported properly by community groups. Local research for our rural communities.
- RCGP Cumbria faculty
- **Radical Birds** want women's empowerment across Eden: Appleby, Kirkby Stephen, Shap, Alston, Penrith. Awareness, information and learning together. Menopause champions in lots of surprising places. Taking control of our bodies.

Beginning in Communities near you

- Awareness
- Information - resources
- Listening and learning together
- Asking for what you need next

- Post it notes galore

Some radical birds!



Menopause and imaginal cells



The journey of the female body

- First period
- First sex - Contraception: Coils and pills
- 3 babies under 4 for a week. Breastfeeding didn't work as a contraceptive!
- Postnatal depression
- Miscarriage- mid trimester
- Pre menstrual tension PMT
- Floods and perimenopause
- Last period and post-menopausal bleed
- Work and migraine
- Now
- Conversations with friends

Betty 58

- Consulted frequently with headache, back pain, hip pain, indigestion, palpitations, mild asthma and raised BP (but not menopause)
- Frequent attenders audit
- Family tree
- Problem solving, Eden Carers (aromatherapy), explained how stress gets in the body, relaxation technique, breathing
- 'Women Who Love Too Much' by Robin Norwood

Betty's feedback

- There's no room for me in all of this
- So I've been taking pills for all these complaints instead of knowing it was stress and dealing with it
- I will never forget what it is like to be completely relaxed

Charles 72

- Crescendo angina with stent successfully put in coronary arteries
- Presented in surgery as emergency
- Hyperventilation, Panic attack

Management

- Grounding
- Slow breathing 7/11
- Explanation of how his body worked drawing stress flowchart
- “This has to be made into a chart for everyone to see. It’s so important to understand how your body works. Then you can take charge of your emotions.”

Adrenaline and cortisol

STRESS FLOWCHART

Multi Level Solutions – Creating Stress Resilience

Problem Solving

- Options -
- leave it
- change
- accept
- reframe

Consequences

- Tincture of Time
- Choose not to choose
- Structured worry time
- Interpersonal Therapy
- Counselling
- Feelings and Needs
- Solution Finding
- Breathing 7/11
- Yoga, Meditation, Mindfulness
- Alexander Technique
- Tai Chi
- Self Hypnosis
- Positive Mental Training CDs and App
- Writing 3 pages a day
- Diet Sleep
- Massage
- Exercise
- Physiotherapy Breath coaching
- Acupuncture EFT/Tapping
- Medication
- CBT
- Outdoors



Breathing and Women's Health

- Menstrual cycle - progesterone
- Painful periods
- Premenstrual syndrome - over breathing
- Pregnancy - breathe faster, fainting common
- Menopause - frontal lobe oestrogen receptors
- Distress, anxiety, depression: antidepressants and CO₂
- Osteoporosis and anxiety
- Patrick Mckeown and the Breathing Cure (book and youtube)

Stress

Basic physiology of the breath

- Oxygen
- Carbon Dioxide
- Nitric oxide
- Magnesium

Magnesium

- Indigestion (pregnancy)
- Constipation
- Severe asthma
- Angina and arrhythmias
- Epilepsy
- Migraine
- Mental health problems
- Alcohol problems
- Sleep
- Hypertension

Magnesium rich foods

- Dark chocolate
- Avocado
- Nuts (almonds cashews brazils)
- Legumes/beans lentils and chickpeas
- Wholegrain
- Fatty fish - salmon mackerel halibut
- Bananas
- Leafy greens - kale and spinach

Stress - autonomic nervous system

- Fight, fright, freeze response - sympathetic nervous system
- Vagus nerve: heart, breathing, thinking, voice, facial recognition - parasympathetic nervous system
- Heart rate variability demonstration
- Frontal lobes - thinking better

Stress- neuroscience

- Amygdala - early warning system
- Limbic system
- Carbon dioxide monitoring centre
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Better breathing

- Nasal breathing
- Slow
- Long breath out
- Using diaphragm and base of lungs - horizontal
- 5.5 breaths per minute optimum
- Mouth breathing at night - use micropore tape
- Coherent breathing 5.5 breaths per minute

What else does slow breathing help with?

- Worried thinking and problem solving
- Sleep
- Pain
- IBS, migraine and tension headaches, angina, blood pressure, asthma, osteoarthritis, epilepsy, irritable bladder, auto-immune conditions

A pill for every ill?



Specific techniques for distress

- 7/11 (How to Liberate yourself from Pain - Graham Browne)
- Box breathing. 4444 around a picture
- Paired breaths, stepped breaths, small breath holds
- Cupped hands (not a paper bag)
- Coherent breathing
- Patrick Mckeown The Oxygen Advantage and the Breathing Cure

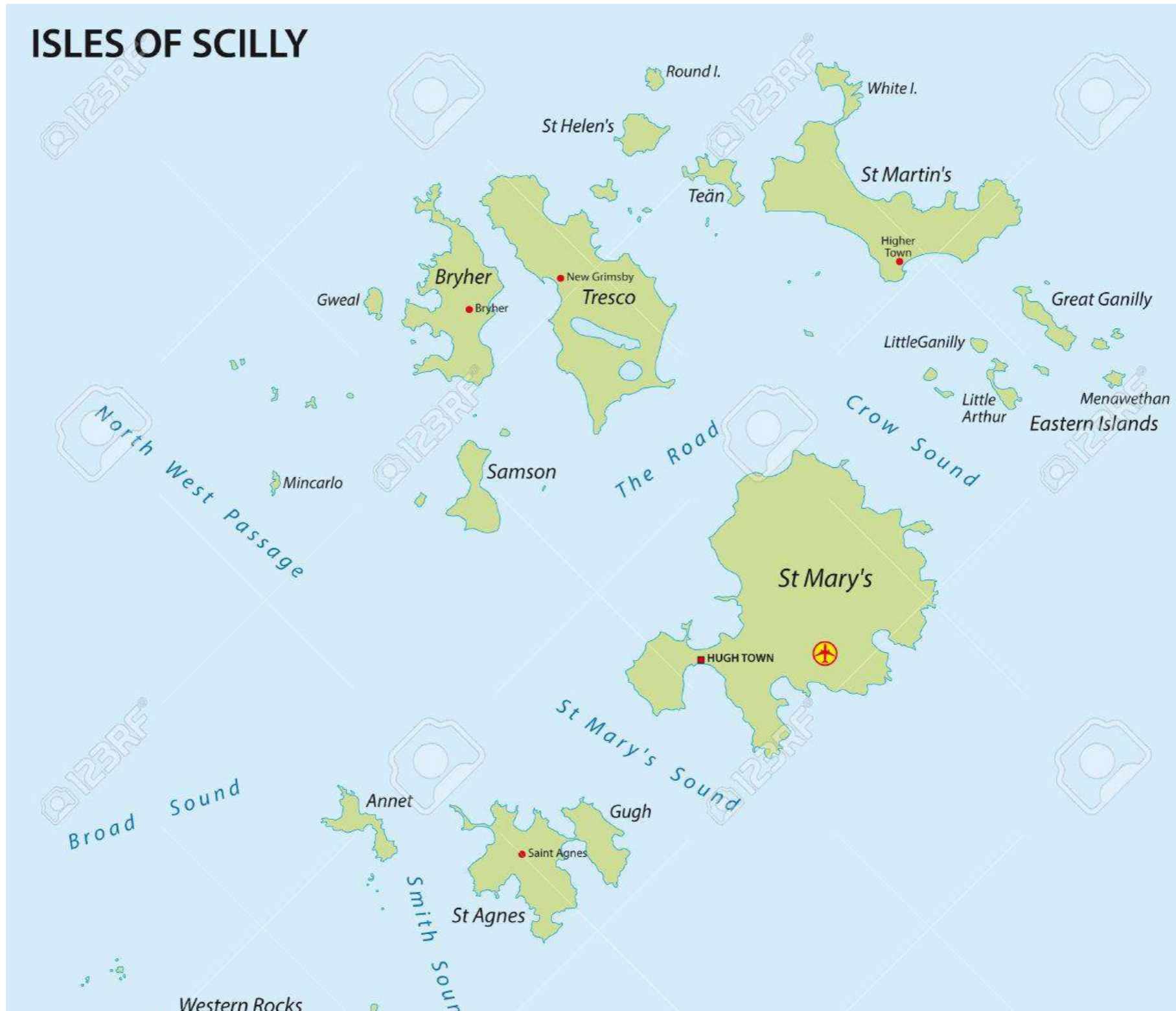
7/11 breathing practice

- In to the count of 7 (think - stretch)
- Slight pause
- Out to the count of 11 (think - relax and let go)
- Using belly/diaphragm
- Shoulders down and jaw relaxed with mouth closed

What do you as women need and want for your physical and mental health?

- GP
- Nurse - contraception and cervical cancer screening
- Midwife and health visitor
- Gynaecologist and obstetrician
- Mammography
- Breast surgeon
- Cancer specialist for women's issues
- Urologist
- Incontinence nurse - bladder and bowel
- Pelvic floor physio
- Psychosexual counsellor
- Psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse, counsellor

Archipelago medicine



Closer to home

- Personal coach
- Doula
- Personal trainer
- Pilates/yoga/tai chi/dance
- Nutritionist/dietician
- Well-being advisor/sign-poster
- Breath coach
- **Well-informed friends/family/community/workplace**

Resources

- James Nestor - Breath
- Patrick Mckeown - Oxygen Advantage and the Breathing Cure
- Louise Newsom Health
- Menopause support uk
- Bloody Amazing Facebook
- Radical Birds Facebook
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1013243170010495/>

Birds of a feather



Time to fly



Thank you

Thank you to surgery and staff and to the tea ladies.

There is no more creative force in the world than the menopausal woman with zest.

— Margaret Mead