Feral Chihuahuas & Fine Lines

A Menopause Field Guide to Skin, Soul & Sanity (with a little added snarling)

THE PAUSE ROOM.
SKIN. SOUL. SANITY.

Copyright & Usage Notice

© 2025 The Pause Room. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form — electronic, mechanical, AI-generated, photocopied, screenshot, or otherwise — without express written permission from the author.

This content was created from lived experience, professional knowledge, and a hell of a lot of hard-won perspective. It reflects the voice, tone, and emotional honesty of its author — and is not to be mimicked, scraped, or replicated by AI tools or other creators.

It's not just information. It's a voice. Don't steal it.

The Pause Room and the Feral Chihuahua Club are creative properties of the author and may not be used without permission.

This book is for informational and support purposes only. It does not constitute or replace medical advice. If you're struggling with physical or mental health concerns, please speak to your GP or qualified health provider.

Dedication

For every woman who lost herself in the noise —
and every one of them who let me witness her return.
You're not lost. You're on your way back.

Introduction

Humour, Honesty & Zero Judgement

(The only three things you really need right now.)

If you've found your way here, chances are things feel… off.
Your skin. Your mood. Your energy.
You might not feel quite like *you* — and that can be unsettling.

As a beauty therapist with nearly 30 years of experience, I've walked alongside hundreds of women through this shift. And now, having gone through it myself, I get it on a whole new level.

Some days, I looked in the mirror and barely recognised the face looking back. Some days, my skin rebelled, and some days, I still cry buckets for no reason.

It's confusing. It's emotional. It's a ride.

This isn't a guide to fix you. This is about calming the chaos.
Holding space for yourself, caring for your skin, your soul *and* your sanity — with a little humour, a lot of honesty, and zero judgement.

And if you've ever felt like a feral chihuahua* in a world demanding Labradors? You're absolutely in the right place.

**I'll explain the feral chihuahua links another time.*

Chapter One

What's Happening to My Skin, Body & Mind?

(Spoiler: everything. But you're not going mad....and you're not alone.)

Perimenopause and menopause don't arrive with a polite knock. They don't ease in gently or give you a heads-up. They sneak in quietly... then throw your entire system into disarray like a toddler wielding a glitter cannon - messy, loud, and impossible to ignore.

One day, you're humming along just fine. The next, your body, your moods, your sleep, your skin, they all start behaving like someone changed the script without telling you. You wonder if it's stress, aging, or some undefined cosmic shift. But actually? It's hormones. And it's happening to more people, more silently, than you might think.

This chapter unpacks what's really going on beneath the surface. Because understanding it, naming it, is the first step in reclaiming your rhythm. There's science, yes, but there's also story. And you're allowed to make sense of both.

Hormones: The Real Instigators

We know the culprit behind all this upheaval. Hormones. Oestrogen and progesterone, once steady background players, begin a chaotic rollercoaster-style exit. And the ripple effect on your body and mind? Well, it's nothing short of theatrical.

Hot flushes come in like heatwaves from the inside out. My mum used to call them "power surges," which is both accurate and slightly heroic-sounding. Night sweats turn bedtime into a 3am sheet-wrestling match. Brain fog has you forgetting words and derailing conversations mid-sentence, like someone's stolen your train of thought and parked it in a field.

Mood swings hit with no warning. One moment you're fine, the next you're sobbing in the freezer aisle or raging at a cupboard handle that dares get in your way. Anxiety and low moods might creep in even if you've never dealt with either before. And sleep? You're tired but wired - stuck somewhere between restless and resigned.

And if all of that doesn't sound fun enough... there's more. Of course there's more.

This is the hormonal transition in motion — messy, unpredictable, and completely normal. But naming the symptoms, and understanding their source, begins to make them feel less personal and more manageable. You're not losing it. You're navigating it.

Skin Changes (A Personal Betrayal)

Among the many ripple effects of hormonal shifts, the changes to your skin can feel particularly cruel. One morning, it's just... different. Dryness creeps in, or sensitivity spikes so suddenly that products you've trusted for years now sting like acid. Firmness begins to quietly slip away, your face subtly reshaping itself while gravity grows bolder. And just when you think you've outgrown acne? It shows up beside fine lines, as if your pores missed the memo that this wasn't supposed to be a two-for-one deal.

Redness, dullness, pigmentation - they all start to appear, adding a tired cast to your complexion even when, by some miracle, you managed a decent night's sleep. (Though we both know how rare that is.)

The impact goes beyond vanity. It's not just about your reflection. These shifts can prompt deeper questions; about your skincare routine, your diet, your sanity. Even your mirror starts to feel like it's gaslighting you.

But let's be clear: it's not just your skin under scrutiny. It's your whole sense of self, recalibrating. And that feels personal.

This Phase Isn't Just Physical

Menopause isn't limited to hot flushes or shifting sleep. It's emotional, psychological, even existential. You may feel disconnected from your body, unsure of how it moves or what it needs. Confidence at work or in relationships might dip, not because you've changed your values, but because something in your foundation has shifted. You look in the mirror, dress for your day, move through familiar routines, and yet quietly wonder, "Who even am I anymore?"

But this isn't failure. It's transition. You are not disappearing, even if it sometimes feels like you've been slowly erased. You're changing. And that change isn't something to correct or cure. It's something to move through with curiosity, kindness, and support.

You'll find that rituals help. Connection helps. Even a few well-chosen words - the right ones, the real ones, can restore your sense of place. And perhaps most important: you're not going through this alone.

This Book Aims to Help You

This isn't about giving you a 12-step skincare sermon. (Honestly, most of us barely make it past step three… and that's on a good day.) What it is about is helping you care for your skin in a way that feels do-able, grounding, and kind.

It's also about calming your nervous system, even when the panic hits mid-car park with your keys somewhere between the backseat and the twilight zone. Through small, practical shifts, you'll learn how to bring your body back to safety.

And maybe most importantly, this book will help you reconnect to yourself. Not through some dramatic life overhaul, but through quiet, powerful moments of presence - one pause, one ritual, one deep breath at a time.

Chapter Two: Home Rituals You Can Start Today

(Zero pressure. Just real ways that helped me and still do.)

Let's be honest: some days, it takes everything just to get dressed, never mind meditating beneath a moonlit tree or sinking into a bubble bath. That's why these rituals aren't rooted in perfection. They're designed for presence. Small moments. Quiet pauses, even in the middle of chaos.

These practices are for when you're overstimulated but still needed. For when you're exhausted and can't slow down. For when you ache to feel human again, not just hormonal, not just functioning, but whole.

You don't need an altar. (Unless you're sacrificing your Spanx, in which case, I salute you.)

You don't need crystals. (Unless they spark joy, then go for it.)

What you need is you. Your breath. And maybe a drop of oil to remind your body it's worth coming home to.

---

1. The One-Minute Reset

(For when you need to exhale before you explode)

- Put your phone face-down and out of reach
- Add 1 drop of lime essential oil to your palm (dilute in carrier oil first!)
- Rub your palms together and then open in line with your nose
- Inhale deeply through your nose, hold, drop your hands, then exhale through your mouth
- Repeat as needed (or until someone yells "What's for dinner?" and the moment's gone)

This one pairs well with the **Lime Palm Ritual** in Chapter Four if you want a full scent-based reset.

---

2. The Bedtime Wind-Down

(No incense needed. Just your nervous system exhaling.)

On nights when your brain won't shut up:

• Lie flat on your bed
• Place one hand on your forehead
• Place the other hand below the base of your sternum, but above your navel
• Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose (you want to feel your tummy rising to 'meet' your hand)
• Exhale gently through your mouth
• Focus on the rise and fall of your breath
• Repeat for 5–10 minutes (or until you drift off)

This helps signal safety to your body and invites your system to settle.

---

3. The Slather & Reflect Moment

(You're already moisturising — might as well make it a vibe.)

Turn your skincare into self-talk:
• Apply your moisturiser or face oil slowly — like it matters (because it does)
• As you massage, reflect on **one thing** you did well today.

Even if it's just:
• "I didn't snap at anyone."
• "I drank water."
• "I made it through."

It all counts.

---

4. Your Little Corner (No One Else Gets to Dump Their Laundry Here)

Create a small, intentional space that reminds you:
That you matter, that you're allowed to pause and you don't always have to be 'on it'. It doesn't need to be Insta-worthy. Just your space.

Ideas:
• A calming roller or essential oil
• A lotion you love the feel of
• An affirmation card that doesn't make you cringe
• A quote that makes you laugh
• A lip balm, worry stone, or tiny chocolate
• A post-it that says: "You don't have to earn your rest."

Where to put it:
• Next to your bed
• On a shelf where it won't get buried
• In your bathroom (if you can claim it)
• In a drawer if space is tight — rituals don't need to be on display to be powerful

You don't have to use it every day, but when you do, it's there.
Like a little wink from your wiser self.

That's your start. Not a list of 'shoulds'. Just a few "this helped me" moments that might land when you need them most.

Chapter Three

Skincare & Body Care Ingredients That Can Help

As we touched on in Chapter One, it's easy to feel like your skin is turning against you. The changes triggered by declining oestrogen - diminished firmness and elasticity, slower cell renewal, increased dryness, and sudden sensitivity, can leave you wondering where the glow went. That serum you swore by at 35? Your skin might now reject it. That post-sleep radiance you could once count on? It starts to feel mythical, especially when deep sleep becomes more elusive.

This chapter is here to help you navigate the shifts. Not with fear or frustration, but with understanding. It's a chance to reassess your skincare and body care ingredients, and to gently evolve your approach. Formulas that used to deliver visible results may now cause irritation or feel ineffective. Others richer, more replenishing, less aggressive, might suddenly feel like a revelation.

Think of this phase not as a retreat, but as a recalibration. Supporting your skin now means getting curious about what it needs, and tuning in to the messages it's sending. With the right ingredients, chosen with care and intention, your routine can become more than maintenance. It becomes nourishment. It becomes respect.

What Your Skin Might Be Dealing with Now

- Dryness or tightness (even if you were oily before)
- Dull or uneven tone
- Redness or increased sensitivity
- Fine lines suddenly not so fine
- Texture and firmness changes, especially on the neck and jawline
- Breakouts and flakiness (because hormones are hilarious)

Ingredients: The Good Guys

(This is not an exhaustive list by any means. I could wax lyrical on this subject, but we'd be here forever!).

Hyaluronic Acid

A hydration magnet that plumps up the skin. Best used on damp skin, followed by a moisturiser or oil to lock it in. Without going all 'science-talk' on your, there are different types of HA, and they are not all created equally. If you aren't sure which type will give you the result you need speak to a professional (no, not your TikTok influencer).

Niacinamide (Vitamin B3)

Calms redness, strengthens the skin barrier, evens out tone, and works beautifully in almost any routine.

Antioxidants

These are like a support squad for your skin - helping to fight off pollution, stress, and that peri/menopause dullness" that shows up uninvited.
Look for ingredients like vitamin C*, green tea, or resveratrol. They help brighten, calm, and protect without picking a fight.

**same as with Hyaluronic Acid, there are several different types of vit C and in the right format and delivery system its amazing.*

Peptides

Think of these as little messengers encouraging your skin to firm up and repair itself. Great for improving elasticity and bounce.

Ceramides

Essential for barrier support. These are like the mortar holding your skin's brick wall together. Good for calming and strengthening.

Rosehip Oil

Rich in vitamins A and C, and essential fatty acids. Great for repairing, smoothing, and brightening. It also blends well with other oils.

Jojoba Oil

Balances oil production, mimics the skin's natural sebum, and sinks in beautifully. Also very well tolerated by most skin types.

Calendula & Chamomile*

Plant-based calming heroes. Perfect for reducing inflammation, especially if your skin is stressed out or reactive.

**used in a base product/carrier oil.*

Good Guys.... with Caveats:

Retinol

It *can* work wonders, but midlife skin can be more sensitive, reactive, and suddenly offended by things it used to tolerate just fine.
Start slow. Or consider alternatives like *bakuchiol*, a plant-based option that's gentler and won't start a chemical war with your face if it's being sensitive.

Acids (the exfoliating kind, not the festival kind)

AHAs, BHAs, (think glycolic, lactic, salicylic, mandelic etc, etc) - they're everywhere now, even in your supermarket skincare aisle.
They can make skin feel smoother, hydrated and glowing....or suddenly make it red, stingy, and furious. Introduce with caution and speak to your skin professional if you're unsure. Most will be happy to advise you even if you aren't buying from them - just don't necessarily expect them to recommend a high street brand.

Oh, and if you're layering acids with retinol because TikTok said so, take a breath. Midlife skin doesn't always love surprises.

Essential Oils in Skincare

Essential oils can do wonders, but if used undiluted or in dodgy blends, they may irritate your skin, especially during hormonal shifts. That dreamy-smelling facial oil might contain lavender, tea tree, or citrus that does more

harm than good. It's all about smart formulation, not fear. Stick to expert-crafted blends meant for skin and go easy. Less is more.

AVOID!

Foaming cleansers or alcohol-heavy toners
These can strip your skin's natural oils - the very ones it's already losing. Opt for cream or balm cleansers instead. If you love a gel cleanser, look for one that uses plant extracts to create a gentle lather - not SLS (sodium laureth sulphate). Instead of your alcohol based toner look at serum/toner hybrids or facial mists. I love a Hydrolat (also known as floral water or hydrosol) when my skin is feeling like a sensitive baby – it gives it a refreshing hit and the scent hits my limbic system – oh, and keep it in the fridge for when those hot flushes hit. A quick spritz has certainly helped me in the past).

Simplify — But Stay Smart

You don't need:
• An exfoliating toner, retinol, serum, mask, and peel all in one night (you may laugh, but I've come across it)
• Five different moisturisers
• A 12-step routine you saw on social media (who has the time anyway?)

But you might benefit from:
• A solid professional product with active ingredients (if your skin tolerates them)
• A few essentials that actually support your skin barrier and hydration
• Something that gives you a *feeling* as well as a result — a metaphorical hug if you will, not just a molecule

Let me be really clear here:
I believe in professional-grade skincare. I've recommended it for years, I've used it, I still use it. I've seen what a targeted active ingredient can do

when used properly, especially in clinical conditions like pigmentation, acne, and so on.

But I also believe this: not every skin can handle the same approach. Hormonal shifts, stress, HRT, life upheaval? These things can make skin more reactive, more sensitive, more confused. For some, a break from the actives is exactly what their face needs to calm the chaos.

And honestly? Some nights, it's not about results. It's about ritual. That comforting scent, the gentle application, the sense of "I did something special for me today." That matters too.

So no, essential oil-based products don't replace clinical skincare. But they absolutely have a place. Especially when they're blended with purpose, not just perfume.

Chapter Four

Essential Oils for Mood, Skin & Sleep

(Not a miracle cure, but definitely a useful tool.)

Essential oils aren't just for woo-woo (not that there's anything wrong with that!).
When used properly, they can anchor you, uplift you, ground you, or help you let go of a day that's been... a lot. (And let's be honest, most days are.)

This chapter is about your connection to scent. That instant shift when you breathe something in and your whole body just...exhales.

Essential oils can help you feel a little more like yourself, or at least less like someone who might cry in a queue.

Why Essential Oils Work

Scent is powerful. It bypasses the thinking brain and hits your limbic system — the emotional centre. That's why:
• One smell can transport you
• Another can trigger tears or memories
• And the right blend can soothe a spiralling mood faster than any pep talk

Used safely and with intention, essential oils can:
• Support sleep
• Calm anxiety
• Uplift low moods
• Help you feel your body again (in a good way)

"Scent doesn't ask you to think your way calm, it helps you feel it."

My Signature Blend

(….and why it's amazing, even if I do say so myself).

This is one of the blends I created for use in my treatments, and it's been in my tool-kit for years.

It's light, layered, and beautifully effective for mood swings, overwhelm, anxiety, and re-centring during peri/menopause.

- **Jasmine** — Emotionally balancing, sensual, confidence-boosting
- **Neroli** — Soothes anxiety, supports skin, smells like heaven
- **Bergamot** — Uplifting yet calming, great for emotional reset
- **Lime or Sweet Orange** — Bright, fresh, clears mental fog and softens heaviness

Note: This blend is used in treatment and may be available for purchase in future as a safe, ready-to-use home ritual oil.

Simple, Practical Ways to Use Essential Oils

1. Diffuser Blend (Evening Wind-Down)

Perfect for shifting the mood of a room — and your nervous system.

- 2 drops neroli
- 1 drop sweet orange (*better than lime at night*)

Types of diffusers:

- **Ultrasonic (water-based).** Uses water and vibrations to disperse scent

Clean every few uses to prevent bacteria or mould buildup

- **Nebulising (oil-only).** Disperses pure essential oil without water; more intense so check the blend isn't too heady for you and diffuse for less time

Safety & etiquette:

- Use in 30–60 minute intervals
- Ventilate the room if it feels too heady or overwhelming

• Keep diffusers away from pets, especially cats, birds, or small mammals
• Avoid diffusing around babies and toddlers unless professionally advised

---

2. Roller Blend (On-the-Go Rebalance)

Perfect for your bag, desk drawer, or glove box — this is for when you need to smile but feel like swearing.

• 10 ml jojoba oil (carrier)
• 1 drop neroli
• 1 drop jasmine
• 1 drop lime or sweet orange
• 1 drop bergamot

This gives you a fraction over a **1% dilution** so if you have slightly sensitive skin, you should be fine – patch test if you're.

Important safety reminders:
• Always patch test before use
• Avoid direct sunlight on areas where citrus oils have been applied — they can cause photosensitivity
• Do not apply to broken, irritated, or inflamed skin
• Store out of reach of children and pets

Apply to pulse points like wrists or inner elbows.
Take a deep breath. Regroup.

---

3. The One-Minute Reset

First introduced in Chapter Two, and still worth repeating.

• 1 drop of lime in 1 tsp carrier oil
• Rub into palms
• Close your eyes
• Inhale as you open them

• Exhale slowly
• Repeat 2–3 times

Use it when you feel heavy, emotionally full, or like you're carrying everyone else's stuff.

---

4. Scented Flannel Reset

Not a fan of head-in-a-bowl facial steaming? Same.

Try this method instead:
• Run a **soft cloth or flannel** under **lukewarm (or cool)** water — whatever your body can handle comfortably
• Wring it out fully
• Add **1 drop** of your chosen essential oil to a corner of the cloth **that won't come into contact with your skin**
• Hold the cloth gently over your face for a few deep breaths
• Avoid the eye area and any direct contact with undiluted oil
• Inhale. Soften. Ground.

You'll still get the aroma, even from a single drop, and none of the hot-flush triggers or skin risks that can come with steaming.

Note: This is about the experience, not a treatment. If it helps you reconnect with yourself for 30 seconds, it's done its job.

Ritual Moments: Bringing Scent into Your Space

I mentioned this in Chapter Two already, and like my favourite yummy lime One-Minute Reset, it's worth mentioning again. Try setting up a little space to just sit and *be*; a corner that quietly says: *this is for you*. Sorry, typing that made me chuckle, it reminded me of the signs we used to put on bedroom doors saying *"keep out"*.

You don’t need a long routine or perfect setting.
Sometimes just seeing a bottle of oil or a kind message in your space is enough to shift your state.

Include:
• Your oil blend or roller (store-bought or one you love)
• A soft cloth or flannel
• A face mist or balm
• A calming quote or affirmation
• A reminder note: “I’m awesome”

Keep it by your bed, in your bathroom, or even on your desk.
Use it daily or when you need a reset.

No pressure. Just presence.

And Because I’m a Cautious Bird I’m Going to Repeat it Again:
Safety First:

• Always **dilute** essential oils before applying to skin
• **Patch test** new blends
• Avoid **citrus oils** before sun exposure
• Keep away from anyone around you who may be **pregnant -** unless professionally advised
• Be cautious if you’re **asthmatic**, prone to **migraines**, or **sensitive to scent**
• Do **not ingest** essential oils
• Keep essential oils and oil blends **away from pets, young children and exercise caution around the elderly.**

Chapter Five

Self-Kindness & Identity in Midlife

(The bit no serum, spreadsheet, or smoothie can fix.)

There's a moment in midlife when you realise self-care isn't just a candlelit bath or an expensive face mask. It's learning how to stop criticising yourself for not being "on top of things" when everything feels out of control.

This chapter is about something real: the kind of kindness that actually makes a difference. It's about the shift in identity no one prepares you for.

And how, even when everything feels unfamiliar, you can find your way through, with compassion, support, and the right tools beside you.

The Loss You Can't Quite Name

Some changes are obvious—your kids move out, your body starts behaving in ways you didn't expect, maybe your career stalls or pivots into something unfamiliar. But often, the loss feels less clear. You wake up feeling slightly off. Confidence that used to feel natural starts to wobble. You still laugh, but your humour's buried under layers of fatigue and mental clutter. Even your reflection doesn't seem quite right.... like someone adjusted the brightness or contrast without telling you.

You try to explain it, but the words don't come. Because nothing dramatic has happened. Yet somehow, everything feels different.

You're Not Failing - You're Reframing

Midlife has a way of shaking things loose. You're no longer who you were, and not quite sure who you're becoming. It's uncomfortable, yes, but that messy, uncertain in-between space is where real change begins.

You don’t need a new title or a perfectly mapped-out plan. What you need is kindness. The kindness you offer your friends without hesitation but rarely give yourself. That starts with letting go of the inner critic, ditching the “shoulds,” and naming your needs with honesty and zero apology.

Self-Kindness Isn’t Fluffy

Let’s be clear—this isn’t about toxic positivity or pretending everything's fine when it’s not. It’s about recognising that the strategies that used to work might not fit anymore. And that shift doesn't mean you’ve failed, or that you’re suddenly lazy, unmotivated, or broken. It means your body and brain are adapting—to a new hormone landscape, a recalibrated nervous system, a life stage that’s rewriting the rules.

So yes, you’re overwhelmed. You’re exhausted. You might even feel a bit ragey.... or like a feral chihuahua, if we’re being honest. And no, what you need isn’t another motivational speech or more discipline. You need softness. You need space to breathe. You need someone (most importantly, you) to say, “You don’t need fixing. You need a safe place to land.”

Make It Tangible

Here’s what real self-kindness might look like:

- Cancel plans without guilt
- Say “no” without a full PowerPoint of justification
- Eat what makes you feel good, not what an influencer told you to
- Buy the skincare that *feels* like a ritual, not a chore
- Have a cry in the car and not judge yourself for it
- Laugh at the chaos - because what else can you do?

You can be a work in progress and still be worthy of kindness.

Identity: It’s OK to Feel Lost

So many women reach this point and quietly admit, “I don’t know who I am anymore.” And the truth is, you're not starting over. You’re not lost. You’re finding your way back to a version of yourself that’s been buried under years of people-pleasing, fixing, juggling, managing, and all the other roles you’ve had to play. This isn’t about reinventing yourself from scratch. It’s about reconnecting with the parts of you that have been waiting patiently in the background. More you than you’ve ever been allowed to be.

Yes, it might feel unsettling. You may disappoint people. You might look at your wardrobe, your career, your relationships and start asking different questions. That’s all part of it. Because on the other side of this hormonal storm is someone stronger, clearer, and far more rooted. A woman who not only knows herself but backs herself without apology.

Try This: A Tiny Identity Reclaim

Think back to something you used to love, before life got busy and noisy and full. Maybe it was painting, dancing, walking in absolute silence - whatever lit you up in the margins. Ask yourself: do I still love it? Could I try it again, just once, without turning it into a project or another item on a list? And if it no longer fits, is there something else I’ve always wanted to try?

It isn’t about chasing who you were in your twenties. It’s about gently tugging on the thread that still connects you to yourself and seeing where it leads.

And Finally — Remember This

You’re not expected to rebuild everything overnight. You’re allowed to fumble, to feel stuck, to swear under your breath or cry into your coffee. There’s no perfect version of this. What matters is how you treat yourself in the process.

So please - don’t speak to yourself like someone who doesn’t deserve kindness. You’re still here. You’re changing. And truthfully? You’re doing better than you think.

Chapter Six

Working Through It: Support for Professional Women and Beyond.

(The Burnout You Didn't See Coming)

There's a particular kind of burnout that creeps in during peri/menopause and it often hits the women who've spent decades showing up, holding things together, keeping plates spinning. You know the type (you might be the type): dependable to a fault, rarely asking for help, somehow both overqualified and constantly overlooked… all while secretly running on empty.

Then perimenopause arrives, dragging along mood swings, sleepless nights, brain fog, and a nervous system stretched thin. Suddenly, work, whatever shape it takes, becomes the tipping point.

And this isn't just about boardrooms and corporate deadlines. Whether you're managing a team, working shifts, running your own business, squeezing part-time hours around family life, or showing up in unpaid roles for your community, it's still real. The pressure doesn't care about your job title.

Even if you've stepped away from paid work, whether by choice, circumstance, or exhaustion, your workload hasn't vanished. Emotional labour, mental juggling, the invisible effort it takes to keep a life afloat… it all counts. And it's valid.

You still deserve rest. You still need support. You're allowed space to exhale.

This Isn't Weakness. It's Biology + Life + Too Much Noise

Let's talk about what happens when hormonal chaos meets everyday life. Midlife doesn't arrive quietly. It collides with bigger work demands,

teenagers testing boundaries, parents needing support, and a confidence dip that can feel like it came out of nowhere. And yet, you're still expected to look polished, sound sharp in meetings, and keep smiling at Karen in accounts, who's already planning the Christmas party.

One client summed it up perfectly: "I started putting things in the fridge that belonged in the bathroom. Then walked into it because I forgot the door was open. That's when I knew I wasn't just tired. I was drowning." She's thriving now, but only after we got real about the load she was carrying.

Workplaces Aren't Built for This (Although They Are Getting Better)

There's still a massive gap in how menopause is understood at work. Some sectors, like healthcare and education, are starting to do better, but many employers still treat it as a private issue to quietly endure. What women really need is open conversation, flexible support when symptoms hit, and managers who understand (or want to learn) what's happening behind the scenes.

And if you're in a position to shape culture, please use that influence. Women deserve more than silent suffering and white-knuckling their way through.

Practical Ways to Support Yourself at Work

Even with the most understanding colleagues, you need tools to protect your energy. Try this:

Start meetings with your Lime Palm Reset; three deep breaths in through the nose, out through the mouth. No one even needs to know you're doing it. It's a quiet way to reset your nervous system.

Keep a scent anchor at your desk. A roller blend, a calming balm, whatever works, just having a grounding scent nearby can shift your whole state during stressful moments.

Use the Notes app when brain fog hits. Don't worry about the perfect planner. Just dump what's swirling in your head into one note and sort it later.

Speak up about your capacity. If focus is off, say so - kindly and without apology: "I'll need a bit more time on this. My focus is a bit off today, but I've got a plan." That's not weakness, that's self-awareness.

And carve out your own version of a break room. Whether it's the car, the loo, or a quiet walk around the block, you're allowed to pause. You don't need permission. You need space to breathe.

Women have pushed through for so long, we forgot that rest isn't a luxury, it's part of resilience.

If You Run a Business

Midlife can be both a turning point and a spark. Some women pivot, some scale down, and others build something bold and new. Some crash first, then rise, with stronger boundaries and upgraded bras.

Whatever stage you're in, listen to what your body's telling you. Get support, from mentors to therapists, whatever helps you feel less alone. Build recovery time into your work week. And remember: your worth isn't tied to output. Especially not when your hormones are throwing tantrums.

You're Not Lazy, Broken, or Dramatic

You're navigating something profoundly physical, emotional, and psychological - all at once. And you're still showing up, still holding life

together. Let's make sure you're holding *yourself* too.

Journal Prompt

If you were gentler with yourself, just for today - what would shift? How would you speak to yourself, move your body, or support your mind differently?
You'll find more guided prompts in the free download section at thepauseroom.co.uk

Chapter 7

Facial Treatments, Massage & Reflexology

(When you're not ready for injectables, but you do want to feel held)

The beauty industry loves a fix.

Fill it. Freeze it. Tighten it.

But you don't need fixing. You need support and someone to walk alongside you.

This isn't a debate about injectables, they're personal. For many women, they help them feel more like themselves, and there's absolutely no shame in that. But they're not the only path.

There's something less spoken about, something quieter and more profound:

The power of touch. Not clinical contact. Not tick-box "relaxation."

But intentional, grounded, skilled touch that whispers: You're safe. You can soften now. Drop those guards. Peri/menopausal skin, and midlife souls, respond differently.

As we've established, oestrogen drops, and it's not just collagen and hydration that suffer. Your nervous system, sleep, emotional stability, and self-image all take a hit. Skin thins. You bruise easily. You flush, puff, and feel like you're ageing in fast-forward.

Sometimes the answer isn't a tweak. It's a moment.

Why Touch Still Matters (Maybe More Than Ever)

A great facial can brighten your skin, but a truly therapeutic one goes deeper. It helps release fluid retention caused by inflammation and hormonal shifts, sculpting areas that feel heavy or forgotten. It works with

fascia and lymph, easing tension held quietly in places like your jaw, temples, or chest. But more than any technique, it offers something rare: permission.

Permission to pause. To lie still and to breathe.

It's the kind of touch that asks for nothing in return, only that you soften. And that's not vanity. It's recovery. Because stillness, when offered with care, becomes medicine for the soul.

When hands move across your face with intention, not just expertise, but quiet understanding - it can feel like they're holding your story. Every chapter. Every mood swing. Every moment of overwhelm. Without judgment.

That's the heart of The Pause Room rituals. Yes, the skill is there. But it's the intuition behind each movement that lets you exhale - maybe for the first time in weeks.

You don't just see your face. You *feel* it again.

And in that stillness, something shifts.

You start to find yourself.

Body Massage: More Than Muscles

When was the last time you felt relaxed? We're wired, tired, and carrying tension in places we didn't even realise. Throw hormonal shifts into the mix, and it can feel like your whole system is short-circuiting. That's where massage comes in - not the light "tickle your back" kind, but intuitive, hormone-aware touch that helps your body finally exhale.

Massage can lower cortisol, the stress hormone that keeps you jittery and awake. It supports better sleep, reduces puffiness and bloating through lymphatic drainage, and boosts circulation, especially to cold hands, feet,

and sluggish areas. Just as important, it provides emotional grounding through nurturing contact.

Done well, massage doesn't just relax you. It rebalances you. Your breath deepens. Your thoughts slow down. You begin to feel yourself again. Per/menopause doesn't ask for more discipline, it asks for softness. And the right kind of massage isn't a luxury. It's repair. It's a reset. It's something you don't need to earn or explain.

Reflexology: It's Not Just Foot Massage

If you've dismissed reflexology as just "a nice foot massage," you're missing something quietly profound. With over 7,000 nerve endings in each foot, reflexology taps into your entire body - connecting with organs, systems, and stress zones via meridians and the nervous system. It gently restores balance, or homeostasis, allowing the body to return to its natural rhythm without force or strain.

Benefits can include deeper sleep, calmer digestion, eased anxiety, and hormonal regulation - even those god-awful hot flushes. It can also offer emotional release when it's needed most. Many women can't quite explain why it helps only that, afterwards, they feel whole again. Reflexology doesn't just treat what's visible. It reminds your body how to find equilibrium, something many of us lost along the way.

You Don't Need to Choose a Side

You can believe in clinical skincare, in high-performance actives, in doing what works for your skin. I certainly do. You can also believe in the grounding, sculpting, rebalancing power of therapeutic touch.

They're not rivals, but allies.

Your nervous system is just as important as your epidermis. Your face isn't just a canvas for product. It's a communicator, a tension holder, a storyteller. What you choose to put into or onto it is yours.

But the chance to lie down, exhale, and be touched with care? That's not fluff. That's transformational.

This Is Not Second Best.

This is not second best. It's often the first thing we actually need before the tweakments, the skincare overhauls, the endless "fixes." Because you're not here to be corrected. You're here to be reconnected....to your breath, your body, your sense of *self*. And if someone's hands can guide you back to that place of stillness and presence...let them.

Every ritual in The Pause Room draws from this blend of intuitive touch, hormone-aware support, and therapeutic intention. It's care that listens to your nervous system, nourishes your skin, and supports your inner balance - because healing doesn't always start with doing more. Sometimes, it starts with allowing.

Chapter Eight

When the Kids Move Out and You're Left With... You

(And it's quieter than you expected, but somehow louder in your head)

There's a particular kind of silence that settles in when the door closes behind them for the last time. Maybe they've gone to uni, started a job, moved into their own place (or left the country like mine did) - or simply stopped needing you in the same way. The details differ, but the shift feels universal. You've done your job. And suddenly, your home, *and* your mind, feel unfamiliar.

For years, your days were powered by logistics, pickups, endless "Mum, where's my..." requests, and a mental workload that would make Olympic multitasking a legitimate sport. You probably imagined this moment now and then: the peace, the space, the uninterrupted coffee. And now it's here...and it's strange. Unsettling. Who are you when you're no longer the default fixer, finder, feeder, emotional buffer?

The Identity Vacuum

This isn't just empty nest syndrome, it's a full-blown identity shake-up. And when it arrives alongside perimenopause or menopause, the edges blur even more. It's not just the loss of daily parenting. You might also be navigating hormonal chaos, unexpected body changes, and deep, lingering grief, not only for what's gone, but for the versions of you that never got time to grow.

Relationships may shift - your role with your kids, your dynamic with a partner, even how you relate to yourself. And while the world expects you to feel proud or free, the truth is... things are not quite fine. You're not a robot. You're a woman who has given a huge part of herself. Now you need space, time, and kindness to rediscover who you are outside of all that

giving.

What Now?

There's no single formula. But here are a few gentle places to begin.

Start by letting yourself grieve. You've lost a role, a rhythm, a connection. That matters and you're allowed to feel it before rushing into gratitude. Then, turn inward slowly. Reconnect with your body - not because it needs fixing, but because it's still yours. Massage, stretching, slow walks, grounding baths; these aren't luxuries, they're invitations.

Get curious. What did you used to love before time got swallowed? What would it look like to try something again, or finally give space to what you've always wanted to explore? There's no deadline. And don't race to fill the silence. Stillness isn't laziness. Let the quiet stretch. Let it speak.

And if that ache of "I miss being needed" bubbles up, say it out loud to someone who gets it. Because you're not alone and naming it is not weakness, it's release.

When the People Closest to You Feel Furthest Away

Midlife doesn't just change your body, it reshapes your connections. You might feel more distant from people you once leaned on. Irritable. Frustrated. Resentful, even. Especially if your partner seems immune to the shift or your friendships feel out of sync. You may crave space and closeness at the same time and not know how to ask for either.

This isn't relationship failure. It's recalibration. Hormonal changes affect mood, tolerance, emotional availability. Life transitions shift priorities and redefine your sense of self. When both hit together, even steady relationships can feel wobbly.

Give yourself permission to start awkwardly. Say, “I don’t know exactly what I need, but I feel untethered.” Let that be enough. Offer yourself grace for being in motion. And let the people around you show up and if they don’t know how, give them a chance to learn.

You’re Not Done

You’re not past your prime. You’re in a powerful in-between. And while the world might celebrate young beginnings - new mothers, fresh ambition, there’s something luminous about a woman who’s lived through it and is now choosing her next chapter.

This isn’t about reinventing yourself. It’s about reclaiming yourself. Beneath the roles, the routines, and the noise, you’re still here. There’s more of you to discover. And it’s not too late. Not even close.

Chapter Nine

Closing Thoughts

(The book might be ending, but this phase maybe hasn't just yet. And that's OK.)

You've just made it through an entire book about menopause without being told to smile more, work out harder, or add flaxseed to every meal. That alone deserves a medal. More importantly, you made space. For your thoughts. Your experiences. Your truth. And that's no small thing.

If You're Still in the Mess of It

You're not behind. You haven't missed the magic fix. There is no tidy ending, no final form, just shifting tides, softer edges, and new ways of being that take time to settle. Some days you'll light the candle, sink into the ritual, and feel beautifully held. Other days? You'll forget the candle exists. That's not failure, it's life. And it's still yours.

What You've Hopefully Found in These Pages

Maybe you found a few answers. Or maybe just better questions. A little calm, a touch of permission, and some solid reminders that you're not the only one Googling "why do I hate everyone today?"

What Comes Next?

This is where The Pause Room keeps going. Through treatments, through scent, through rituals that don't require perfection or a six-step spreadsheet. It's also home to the Feral Chihuahua Club (coming soon) - a quietly supportive (and occasionally ranty) online space for women like us.

If you've signed up to the mailing list (it might be ready by the time you've read this?), I'll be popping in from time to time with journal prompts, blog

snippets, bite-sized resources, and updates on what's coming next—including Book Two. You'll also get first dibs on free ritual cards, a journal prompt library, and exclusive previews of any new downloads. There may be paid offerings later, because time and energy are valuable, but this book is yours, freely, as a thank you for being part of this.

Final Thought

You haven't lost yourself. She's still there… probably wearing joggers, muttering under her breath, and quietly holding life together in ways no one sees. So, take the rituals that work. Ignore what doesn't. And on the days when it all unravels, place your hand on your heart. Breathe.

And whisper the most radical thing of all: *Still here – and not asking permission anymore.*

Before You Go

And if you've reached the end without being interrupted by laundry, low battery, or the sudden urge to deep-clean the cutlery drawer - congratulations. You've just completed a midlife marathon without leaving the couch.

This book wasn't written to fix you. It was written to walk beside you - maybe wearing mismatched socks (my personal favourite) and quietly cursing the patriarchy under its breath. Life's messy. Bras are optional. And sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is pause - unapologetically, and preferably with a lukewarm compress involved.

If your version of pausing involves someone else soothing your nervous system while you lie very still and pretend to be meditating… well, The Pause Room is here for that. Rituals help. Connection helps. And let's be honest: so does surrendering for 60 minutes while someone gently convinces your fight-or-flight response it's not needed today.

You’re still here. You’re still brilliant. And no, you don’t need anyone’s permission to feel good.