MODULE 2

- The difference between men and women.
- The effects of postnatal depletion.
- The transition into perimenopause.

The difference between men and women is something to be celebrated.

Holistic health views the body as a whole, every system, every organ, every gland and cell of the body is intimately connected to the other, resulting in the whole.

In times gone by, woman treated their reproductive centers with grace, and reverence, for all the magnificent abilities they can create. Sadly however, our generation has seen many women reject their reproductive abilities, perhaps out of naivety, perhaps out of pain or hormonal dysfunction, causing them to eliminate their menses, and ultimately affect and inhibit their fertility and health.

The over prescription and overuse of hormonal contraception, poor nutrition, and lifestyle habits, has led to a myriad of hormonal and metabolic illness within women.

What many women fail to understand is that their fertility health, is the direct proportion to their overall health. To be fertile, requires hormonal homeostasis, a strong immune system, a body that is operating at its maximum potential in terms of digestion and detoxification.

Once we understand the importance of honoring our unique feminine requirements, we can begin the journey toward robust health and healing.

"What if women learned how to meet their body's needs, in order to maximize their energetic potential and truly thrive in their bodies"?

In this module we will explore the foundations to creating a lifestyle that supports your feminine physiology.

FEMALES PERFORM 3 VITALLY IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS COMPLETELY SEPARATE FROM MEN.

1. Menstruation
2. Pregnancy
3. Lactation

MALE PHYSIOLOGY:	FEMALE PHYSIOLOGY
Circadian Rhythm	Infradian Rhythm
(24 hour cycle)	28 day cycle
Testosterone is the primary HORMONE	Estrogen and Progesterone are primary HORMONES
Nutrients support an OUT PUT of ENERGY	Nutrients support INTERNAL ENERGY
High Resilience to stress	Low resilience to stress
Energy is stable	Energy is dynamic and changes according to dominating hormones (CYCLICAL)
Fast digestive system	Slower digestive system
Shorter colon	Longer colon
Abdominal organs have more space	Abdominal organs share space with Genito-urinary and reproductive organs
Burn fat as energy	Hold and store fat for protection
Logical, analytical, rational	Intuitive, creative, nurturing
Energy is focused on protection and provision	Energy is focused on creation and expansion

When we understand the differences between male and female physiology, we can understand ourselves better.

We can have a deeper sense of compassion for ourselves and our dynamic and changing requirements- it's also easier to see where we may have hurt ourselves, deprived, restricted, or expected too much from ourselves – because we have been operating according to the male physiology and societal expectations.

The male physiology is centered around protection, provision, and an output of energy.

Their metabolism is driven by testosterone operating on a 24 hour cycle only – and so they have a far greater resilience to stress.

Female physiology is centered around creation, nurturing, surrendering, and healing. Our physical bodies are meant to be soft, to be able to receive. On a biological level, we use an incredible amount of internal energy to take something tiny (embryo) and create something very big (full grown fetus). Our biology and anatomy allows for great expansion to create a new human life.

Female physiology follows an infradian rhythm, which is reflected in the ebb and the flow of the moon cycle, this is a 28 day cycle that moves through different phases.

Each phase, requires different energy needs- we can see this is the imbalance of the world we live in today. Female physiology is not meant to live within the same daily challenges as a male. We require periods of rest, recouperation and space to allow for reception and surrender.

These are just some of the ways in which men and women are different.

Yet we are living in a world that is pushing masculine diets, lifestyles, protocols.

A females health is about feeling safe and nourished and contained.

Without feeling safe, your body will not ovulate and produce progesterone (our feminine essence and healing hormone).

Males have an internal desire to be challenged, driven and to expend and give their energy.

True feminine healing is gentle and slow.

You are not lazy for wanting to seek rest, be less social or productive, have periods of recuperation and time out.

Societies 9-5 workday culture was not designed to accommodate a women- no 2 days of our cycle is the same.

We need space to listen to our bodies, and to flow with our cycles, to truly thrive.

Everything works smoother when you go with the flow. It's when we resist our bodies natural needs- that we feel resistance, struggle, and pain.

The question here is: are you living in a way that feels disconnected from your body?

It may be that you are living out of accordance with your feminine physiological needs.

> Once you start shifting your life, nourishing in accordance with your physiology and stepping into your feminine power: your life starts to shift. You begin to nurture the seeds for your expansion, growth, and ability to BLOOM.
>
> Everything becomes clearer, the fog lifts, your symptoms subside, you have the energy to set boundaries and feel your emotions. - you move out of a space of chronic stress and dysregulation, into a space of peace and healing.

Biomarkers for a healthy woman:

≈ A healthy woman should wake up with an appetite for food and for the demands of the day. (most adults should be eating 2000 calories a day, pregnant and nursing mums should be eating more).

≈ She has a regular, non-painful, non-event menstrual cycle.

≈ Her libido is alive and in balance with her cycle: higher around ovulation,

≈ lower around period.

≈ She has energy for her family, her work, her partner.

≈ Her digestion is regular: 1 to 3 stools a day (easy to pass, no pain, no

≈ blood, no mucous, brown, semi solid log shape).

≈ Her skin is clear of acne, eczema, psoriasis.

≈ Her mood is stable, calm, regulated.

≈ She should find joy in her day.

≈ Her weight should remain steady, not fluctuating.

≈ She should be sleeping through the night.

≈ She has flesh on her cheeks / forehead: no need for Botox fillers.

≈ She has hair on her eyebrows and head.

≈ Her nails are strong and grow with ease.

The basis of all female physiologic health is Nervous system regulation and safety.

What creates safety:

≈ balanced blood sugar

≈ adequate periods of rest and deep sleep

≈ adequate minerals

≈ FAT soluble vitamins

≈ Working with the natural flow of our hormones

© Dr Megan Medina

Postnatal depletion and the impact it has on our health:

Over the last 12 years I have focused on supporting women heal and understand their hormonal health: fertility, pregnancy, birth and postpartum in my practice. My own mothering experience inspired me to take a deep dive into maternal mental wellness and the effects of postnatal depletion. This condition has such a profound impact on the quality of a mother's life, spanning 4-10 years after the birth of her children.

As mothers we need to take charge of our health, it's time to take radical responsibility to care for our bodies (because the reality is that no one else is going to do it for you).

The health of the mother will set the foundations for the health of her children.

It is impossible for a stressed out, under nourished, depleted or over burdened mum, to tap into her energetic potential if she doesn't have the resources to go there.

Great health requires you to step out of survival mode.

These are the goals I want you to aim for:

≈ Well resourced.

≈ Well nourished.

≈ Balanced.

≈ Supported.

≈ Living your life in flow.

Matrescence:
The shift from maiden to mother.

This is the most radical shift any human could ever go through.

Like our babies, we are now anchored in our emotional and instinctual state; our subtle perceptions greatly heightened so that we can read our babies with ease and be aware of all the subtle nuances needed to care for this vulnerable human. In other words, we are functioning from our limbic brain rather than our prefrontal cortex for the first time since we were children (known as Theory of Mind). This is exactly where we are supposed to be, but it may feel very strange, vulnerable and precarious. We easily ask the question, ***"Is there something wrong with me?"***, instead of realizing that there's nothing wrong with you, you are just feeling what is missing in the western world.

It's not set up to support motherhood and its mechanical structured can feel harsh and overwhelming to new mother. The western world is missing the feminine strengths of emotion, intuition, connectivity, and nourishment. The world needs to invite the mother-sense and wisdom into all sectors to create a healthy environment for everyone.

There's nothing wrong with you, it's our society that is broken.

What is postnatal depeletion?

Postnatal depletion is a term coined by the Australian functional medical doctor Oscar Serrallach, founder of the Mother Care project, functional medicine doctor, postnatal specialist, and author of book The Postnatal Depletion Cure; a wonderful resource for any mama to read.

> ***Postnatal depletion is defined as a syndrome of insufficient resources resulting in a constellation of symptoms that affect the mother's life.***

Insufficiency means that the levels of minerals, vitamins, or nutrients are not in a disease-producing range, but they are in a sub-optimal range. Insufficiency is hard to diagnose in terms of western medicine, but it does mean that your cells, and organs are not able to run properly, which leaves you feeling terrible.

A disease process typically deals with deficiency. Modern medicine describes this as sub-clinical, meaning there is nothing they can do to help you, but a functional medicine practitioner can provide a whole range of options to support your journey to replenishment.

Postnatal depletion results in a spectrum of neuro-inflammation.

Let's clarify the difference between:

Depletion: Overall has a sense that everything is ok, may have anxiety or fatigue, and is able to connect with baby.

And...

Depression: A constant feeling of sadness, no hope, things are not ok, may have difficulty bonding with baby.

DO YOU HAVE POSTNATAL DEPLETION?

The following questionnaire is designed to help you identify the symptoms in your life that might be pointing toward postnatal depletion.

	NO 0	SOMETIMES 1	FREQUENTLY 2	ALL THE TIME 3
1. Have you had a medical condition start during or after pregnancy?				
2. Do you feel you have digestive issues that have worsened since the birth of your child? Symptoms include constipation, diarrhoea, flatulence, abdominal pain, and or lethargy associated with meals.				
3. Do you experience extreme fatigue?				
4. Do you feel exhausted on waking?				
5. Do you fall asleep unintentionally when putting kids to sleep?				
6. Do you have sensitivity to bright lights, or repetitive sounds, and are you easily startled?				
7. Do you feel you are light sleeper and are overly aware while you are sleeping?				
8. Are you experiencing levels of anxiety that are way above your norm?				
9. Do you have any sex drive or a healthy libido?				
10. Do you experience severe brain fog?				
11. Are you struggling to keep up with basic self-care such as showering, grooming, and preparing meals for yourself?				
12. Are you experiencing a significant loss of confidence and self-esteem?				
13. Do you have a sense of isolation and lack of support?				
14. Do you feel overwhelmed and unable to cope?				
15. Do you feel a sense of guilt/shame or failure around your role as a mother?				

Score 20 or more: postnatal depletion very likely.

Score 15-19: postnatal depletion likely.

Score below 15: postnatal depletion unlikely.

With the right support and help, it is possible to resolve these symptoms and begin to reclaim yourself.

© Dr Megan Medina

We have three major factors at play when looking into postnatal depletion:

1. **Nutrients:** The nutrients, minerals, and vitamins that are required to build, incubate, birth, and breastfeed a baby is enormous; more than most women are aware of, which is why so many women end up chronically under nourished as a result. No nutrients = no spark = no energy.
2. **Exhaustion:** The deep exhaustion that occurs from sleep deprivation and round the clock caring for a baby, with little to no time for the mother to replenish her sleep tank. Fatigue is hands down the number one complaint for new mamas.
3. **New Self:** The drastic change in a woman's life that comes with her new role as mother. A change in identity, mourning the loss of her old ways of life, social isolation, and the weight of the responsibility in needing to care for this helpless being all on her own.

WHY IS POSTNATAL DEPLETION SO PREVALENT IN THE WORLD WE LIVE IN:

≈ Feeling abandoned, and the Poor enrolment into motherhood

≈ Society doesn't have your back- the system we live in, the culture we live in- it's not personal. It just is what it is.

≈ Mothers are operating from the masculine-pushing, going it alone, alpha females, having to have it all figured out, if it doesn't work- pushing harder, working harder.

≈ Absence of other motivated caregivers.

Your depletetion levels will be greater if:

≈ If you have a pre-existing condition such as an auto-immune disease or leaky gut- replacing these micro-nutrients will be even harder.

≈ If you have had multiples- twin pregnancies

≈ IVF – fertility meds

≈ Back-to-back pregnancies

≈ Tandem feeding- or nursing through your pregnancy

All these factors can leave mothers feeling lost, unsettled, unsupported and forced to do too much, too much multi-tasking, running the home, rushing back to work, keeping the children alive, bouncing back to a pre-pregnant body.

The demands all add up- and wear us all down.

All these factors can leave mothers feeling lost, unsettled, unsupported and forced to do too much, too much multi-tasking, running the home, rushing back to work, keeping the children alive, bouncing back to a pre-pregnant body.

The demands all add up- and wear us all down.

DISCOVERY IS THE ROAD TO RECOVERY: THIS IS HOW WE HEAL

3 points of awareness:

1. Acknowledgement
2. Communication and sharing: Stories need to be shared.
3. Move out of comparison into connection.

Lets look at some of the ways in which we can heal and replenish the body:

100 DAYS OF REPLETION: REBUILDING PHYSICAL WELLNESS.

Our bodies have this magnificent ability to heal. And will always choose healing- given the correct tolls and resources.

Our bodies are intricately connected: cells, organs, tissues, systems, hormones, - one-part effects the next.

If one part is unwell, undernourished, under resourced it has a knock-on effect to the others: like a domino.

The flip side – is that once you start to repair, and replenish specific nutrients that have become depleted, the entire body start to move toward healing.

When you start to improve one part of your body, you improve every other part as well.

TACKLE BIOLOGICAL DEPLETION FIRST:

Rebuild micro-nutrients:

The idea is to create a strong new foundation to build from and let the body take it from there. Once the depletion is on its way to being cured- you can get your micro- nutrients from nutrient dense foods. But to start with you need to build back- and supplements offer a deep support.

Micronutrients are the vitamins and minerals that help regulate our metabolism. They are needed for healthy growth and development and are found in the foods we eat.

Some vitamins are water soluble- excrete them in your urine and need to replace them regularly.

Others are fat soluble and are stored in your fat cells when you don't need them.

Your micro- nutrients get depleted in the process of making, birthing, feeding, and caring for your baby. If they are not replaced, depletion will worsen.

To rebuild, repair and replace – we need these micro-nutrients in adequate amounts and in good balance in relation to each other.

The essential micro-nutrients:

1. Iron
2. Zinc
3. Vit B12
4. Vit D
5. Copper
6. Magnesium
7. Trace elements: iodine, selenium, molybdenum, manganese
8. Other B-vits
9. Vit C
10. Fat soluble vitamins: A, E, K2

BREASTFEEDING

Pregnancy and nursing cause nutritional stress on the body. The production and release of milk is governed by a complex interaction of hormones, involving the hypothalamus, pituitary glands and the thyroid. Research shows that what a woman eats, has a direct impact on the quality and supply of her milk. Breastfeeding increases the body's needs for all the critical nutrients, this means that breastfeeding mums require even more calories than the average woman.

TRADITIONAL POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

Every culture across the globe had specific postpartum care practices, which we sadly lost in the west. But we can still see them practiced in countries like Nigeria, Jordan, Korea, Morocco, Eastern India, Polynesia, China, Central and South American, Japan, Cambodia and Vietnam.

1. **Support** is organized before the birth by the family. This includes chores, taking care of older children and food prep, as well as wisdom shared with the mother on how to take care of herself and her baby. It is normal in many indigenous cultures for a relative to travel and move in with the mother from the third trimester till 8 weeks postpartum.
2. **Rest** after birth is essential and the period varies between 3 to 6 weeks to allow for recovery and loose bones to return to pre pregnancy position.
3. **Warmth** is essential during the postpartum period as the woman loses a lot of heat/lifeforce energy during birth It's important to keep her warm and feed her warming foods to increase her chi.
4. **Nourishment** is vital. Warm foods, warming spices such as ginger, ghee, organ meats, chicken and rice, chicken soup, salty foods, fish, eggs, stewed fruit, yogurt, and mineral rich foods such as seaweed are all given to new mothers.
5. **Herbal teas** are commonly used to warm the mother, help uterine contraction and release of lochia, calm the nervous system and support breastfeeding.
6. **Massage** and various forms of bodywork are practiced in every culture to help the mother release the stress of the birth, help realign the soft tissue and generally provide nurturing for the the mother.
7. **Yoni steaming** is a common practice but many cultures around the world to help encourage the release of lochia and heal the vaginal tissue as well as return the integrity of the pelvic floor structure.
8. **Closing of the Bones** is a common ritual found in Morocco, Central and South America, and is focused on bringing closure to the newborn mother phase. It focuses on encouraging the bones of the mother to settle into the correct place and anchor in the intuition of her new path as a mother. The women wrap her up in a cocoon of sarongs and welcome her into her new life as she emerges.

PERI MENOPAUSE:

35 and onwards is a time to start taking exquisite care of your hormonal health.

The peri- menopausal transition is a great report card for your general health.

If you are feeling more anxious, your sleep is less than optimal, your periods are becoming a little bit heavier, painful or clotty, your breasts are tender, and your libido is low. it's time to start increasing your support and care for this transitional experience of womanhood.

These are signs that the body is shifting from a place of regular ovulation and strong progesterone production, and your hormones are transitioning to a slightly more estrogen dominant space.

Now is the time to start prioritising metabolic health- before you move into full blown menopause.

Top tips:

≈ Nourishment: protein rich foods

≈ Minerals: magnesium, sodium, potassium, iodine

≈ Detoxification: take care of your liver

≈ Stress support: sleep, rest, time in nature:

≈ Exercise: Weight training and yoga

≈ Supplements and herbs: reishi, ashwaganda, milk thistle, shizandra.

≈ Homeopathic remedies can be so powerful in helping to restore ovulation and encourage strong progesterone production.

≈ the use of bio- identical progesterone is a beautiful add on too.