

Living with PMDD: 5 Essential Tips for Better Mental Health

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) significantly affects many women, disrupting their emotional and physical well-being. With symptoms that can feel overwhelming, understanding PMDD is vital not only for those living with it but also for their friends and family. In this post, we will discuss how PMDD influences mental health and offer five effective strategies to help manage its effects.

What is PMDD?

PMDD is a severe form of PMS, impacting approximately 3-8% of menstruating women. This condition manifests during the luteal phase of the menstrual cycle, the period between ovulation and the onset of menstruation. Common symptoms include intense mood swings, irritability, anxiety, and depression, as well as physical symptoms like fatigue and bloating. The emotional consequences of PMDD can lead to profound distress, affecting relationships, job performance, and social interactions. For example, studies show that women with PMDD are more likely to miss work due to PMDD symptoms, compared to those without the condition. Recognising the psychological impact of PMDD is crucial for effective management and support.

The Psychological Impact of PMDD

The mental health effects of PMDD can be profound and lasting. Many women report elevated levels of anxiety and depression, contributing to feelings of isolation. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly 50% of women with PMDD experience significant depressive symptoms. The cyclical nature of the disorder adds to this strain, making it difficult to predict and manage daily activities.

Additionally, stigma surrounding mental health, and in particular women's mental health (e.g. being written off as 'hormonal') can keep women from seeking available support. Feelings of shame or embarrassment about their symptoms can prevent open discussions and emotional support from friends and family. It is essential to acknowledge PMDD as a serious medical condition that deserves empathy and understanding.



5 Ways to Help You Cope

Managing PMDD can be challenging, but there are strategies that can help reduce symptoms and improve mental health. Here are five effective methods to consider.

1. Maintain a Symptom Diary

Keeping a diary of your symptoms can be a helpful management tool for PMDD. By tracking changes daily, you can spot patterns and triggers that may contribute to your symptoms. For instance, you might identify that your anxiety spikes during certain days of your cycle. With this insight, you can better prepare for those difficult times.

2. Prioritise Self-Care

Self-care plays a vital role in enhancing mental health, especially for those dealing with PMDD. Activities like yoga, meditation, or simple deep breathing can promote relaxation. Regular exercise can also help to release endorphins, which improve mood. For example, studies show that women who engage in regular aerobic exercise, even if its just a short walk to the end of the street, experience a noticeable decline in PMDD symptoms.

3. Seek Psychological Support

Talking to a mental health professional can bring significant relief for those impacted by PMDD. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has proven effective in addressing PMDD-related symptoms. A therapist can help you create coping strategies tailored to your situation and offer a supportive space to discuss your feelings.

4. Consider Dietary Changes

Diet plays a key role in managing PMDD symptoms. Eating a balanced diet rich in whole foods, fruits, and lean proteins can help stabilise mood and energy. Additionally, reducing caffeine and sugar can help alleviate anxiety and irritability.

5. Explore Medication Options

Some women may find that medications are an effective way to manage PMDD symptoms. Antidepressants, hormonal treatments, or other medications can provide relief. It is critical to discuss these options with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate treatment for your individual needs.



Moving Forward with Support and Understanding

PMDD is a challenging condition with significant effects on mental health. By understanding its impact and implementing effective coping strategies, women can better manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life. By focusing on self-care, seeking psychological support, and considering dietary and medication options, women can take proactive steps toward better health.

If you or someone you know is struggling with PMDD, remember you are not alone. Resources and support systems are available, and taking the first step to understand and address this condition can lead to a more fulfilling life.



By embracing these strategies and having open conversations about PMDD, we can foster a supportive community that empowers women facing these challenges to thrive.