



Menopause in the Workplace: The Cognitive Shift

Tara Woodall, APRN, WHNP-BC



Halle Berry

“I am challenging everything I thought I knew about menopause. Things like: Your life is over. You are disposable. Society no longer has a place for you. You should retire. You should pack it up.”

Learning Objectives

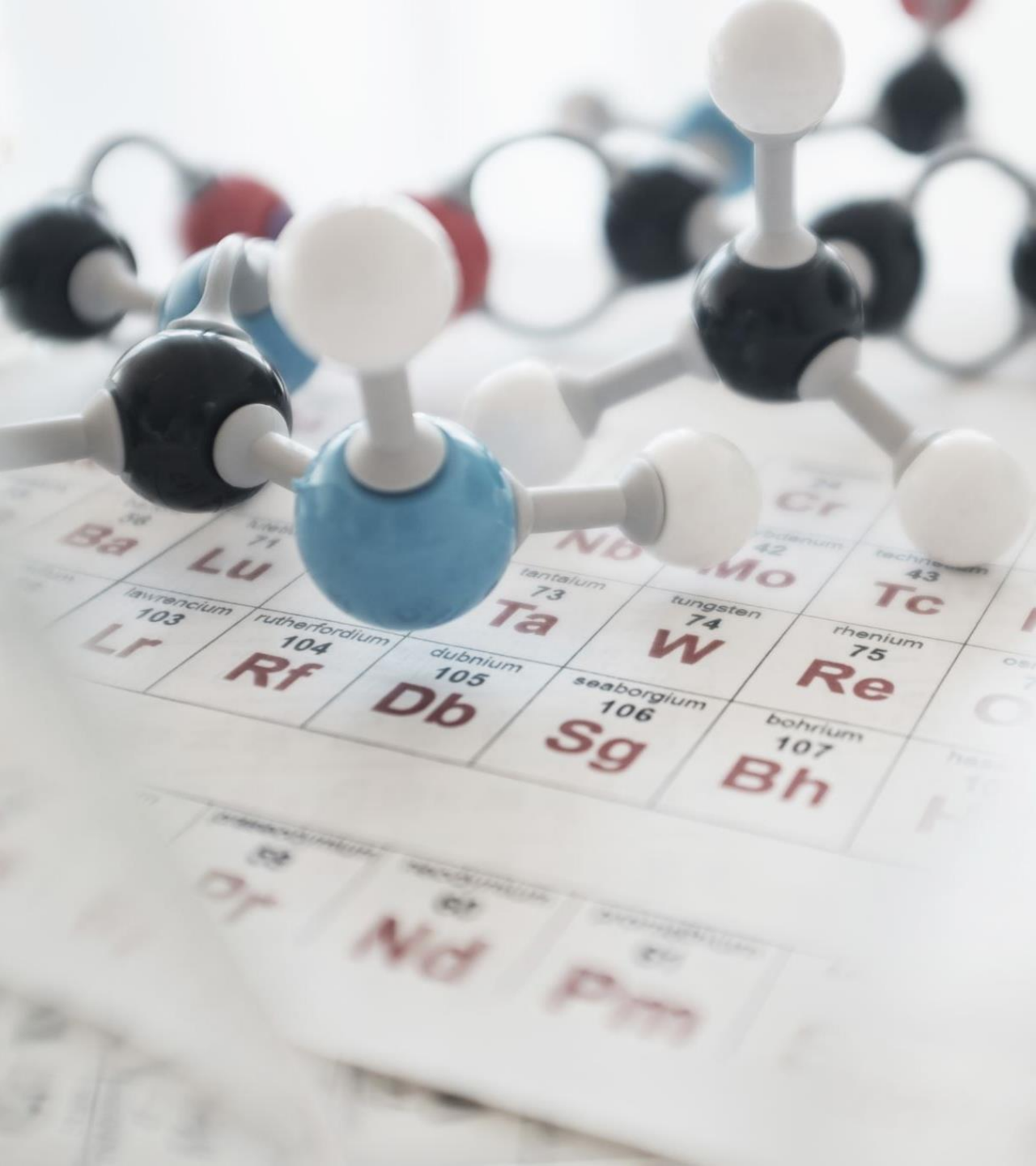
- 1. Understand common cognitive changes during menopause—such as memory challenges and difficulty focusing—and how they may affect work performance.
- 2. Recognize the connection between hormonal shifts and cognitive symptoms to foster empathy and reduce stigma in the workplace.
- 3. Explore practical strategies and workplace accommodations to support employees experiencing cognitive changes during menopause.





True or False

Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 60-70.



True or False

Cognitive changes during menopause, such as memory challenges and difficulty focusing, do not affect work performance.



True or False

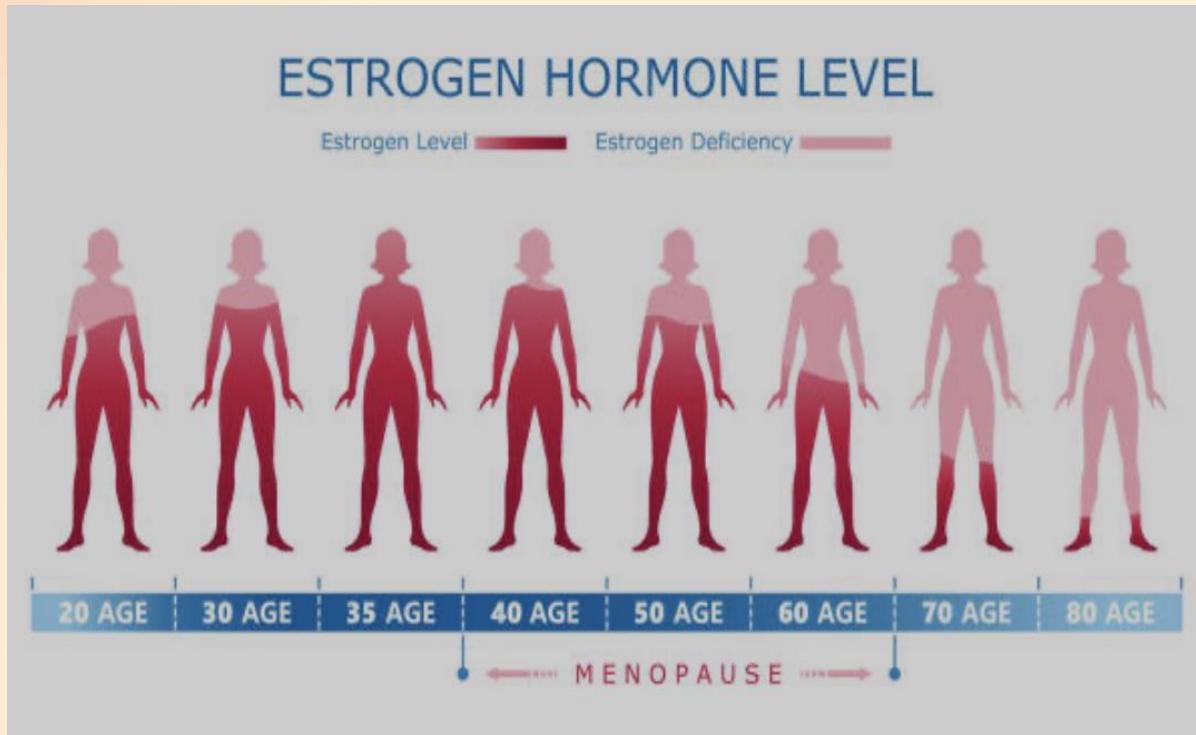
Declining estrogen levels during menopause increases brain function.



Katherine Heigl

"Whoever designed it so that women would be going through perimenopause while raising teenagers should be sent a strongly worded letter," she joked. "It's really difficult. Their hormones are all over the place, they're trying to adapt and get used to their new bodies and their new ways of thinking, and I am too. So the only thing I can do is look at them and go, 'Well, at least we're in it together.'"

Introduction



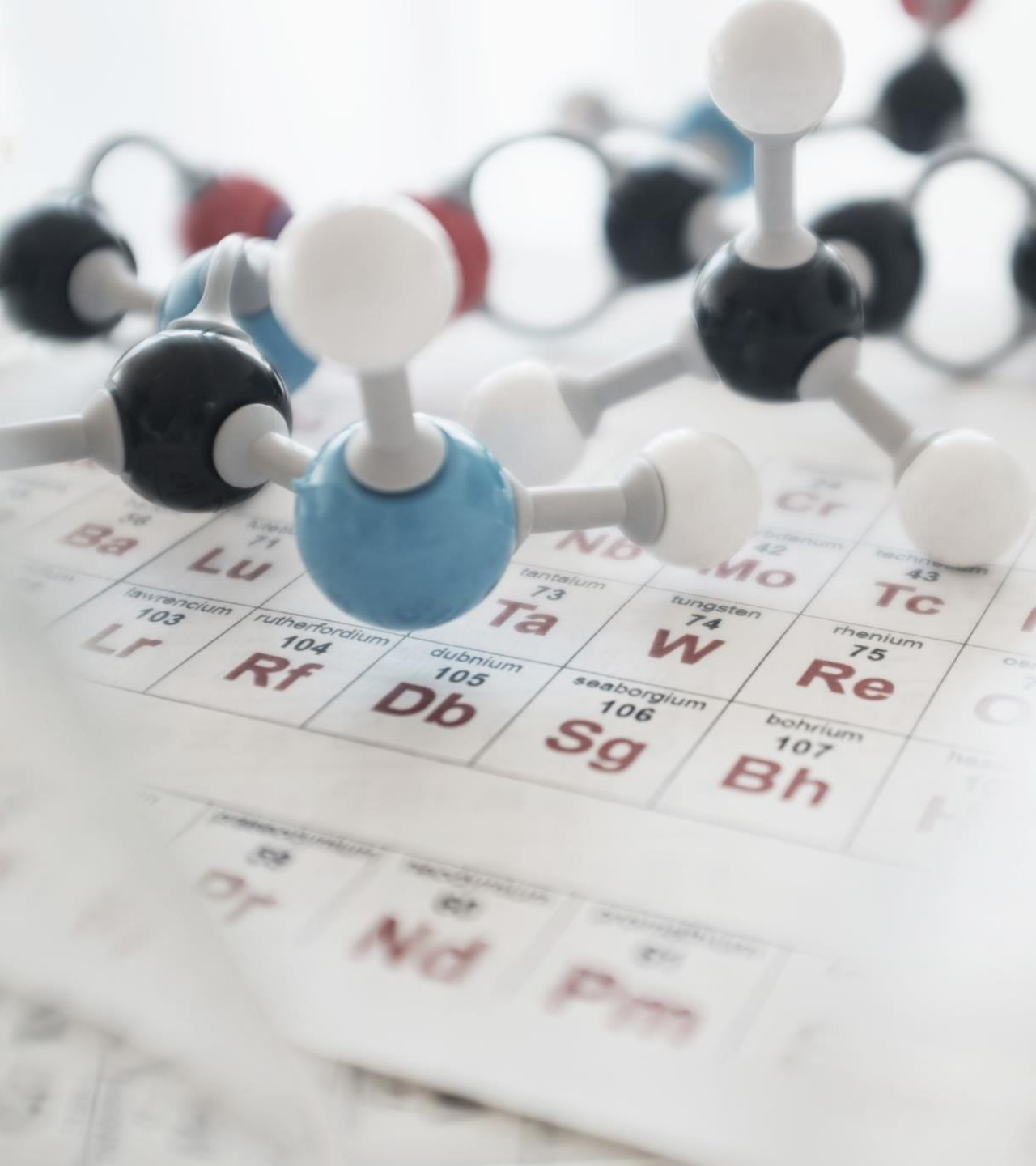
- Brief overview of menopause: natural transition between ages 45-55
- Why cognitive changes matter at work
 - Can have a significant impact on job performance
- Importance of awareness and support



Tracee Ellis Ross

“I’m going through perimenopause at the moment. It’s really frying my brain.”

“It is really bizarre, but it is the most glorious invitation into a new season and chapter in my life. There’s no information about it. There’s shame talking about it.”

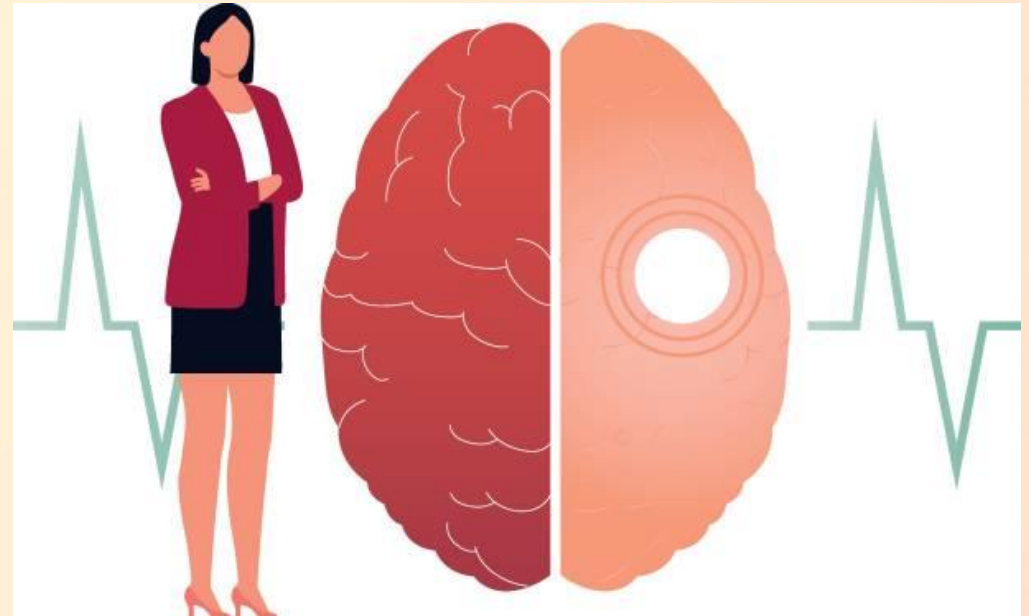


True or False

Approximately 60% of women experience cognitive changes during menopause.

Prevalence of cognitive changes

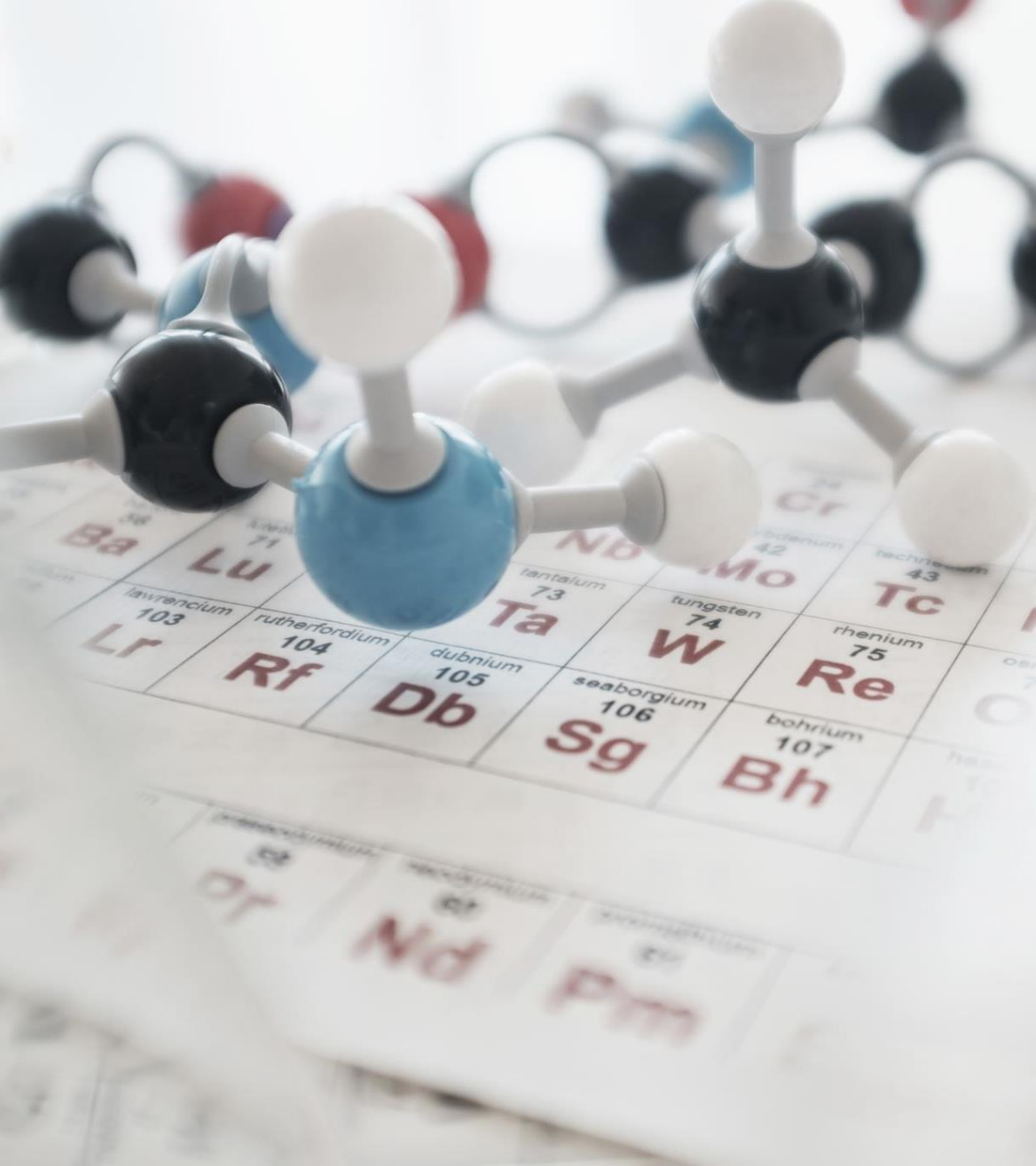
- ~60% of women experience cognitive changes during menopause
- Increasing due to awareness and recognition of menopause-related cognitive changes
- Modern-lifestyle with constant barrage of emails, texts and notifications





Oprah Winfrey

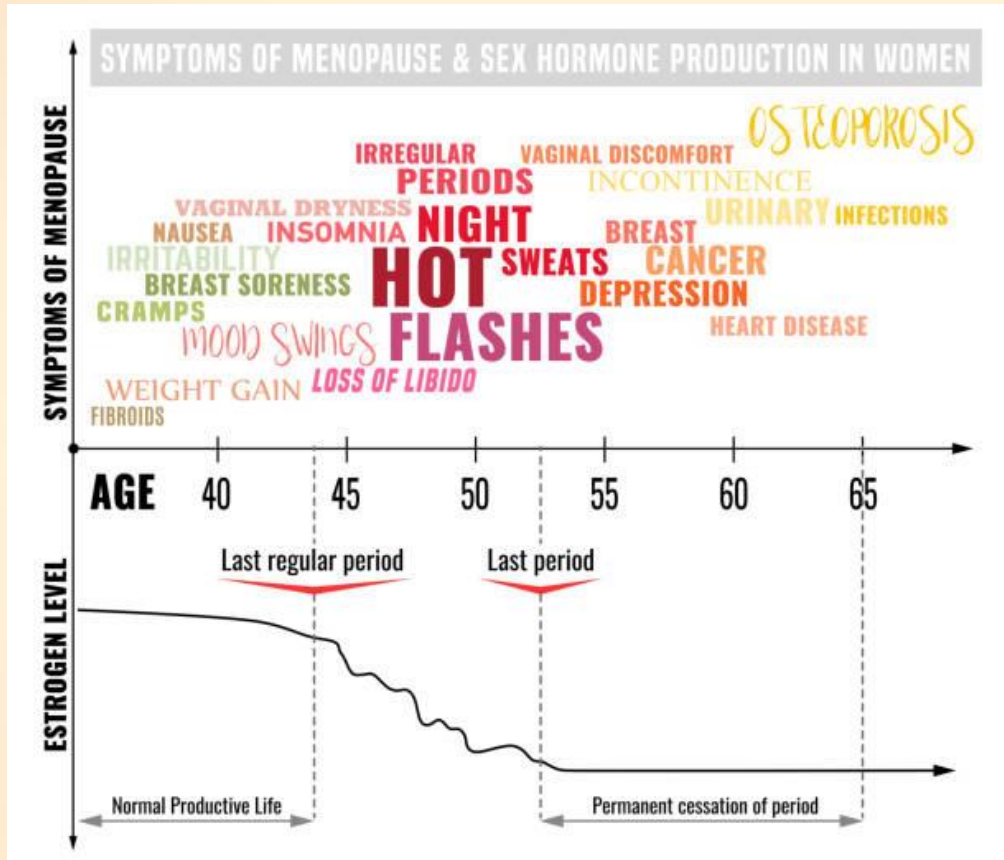
“So many women I’ve talked to see menopause as an ending. I’ve discovered that this is your moment to reinvent yourself after years of focusing on the needs of everyone else.”



True or False

Cognitive symptoms of menopause are the same for every woman

What is the Cognitive Shift in Menopause?

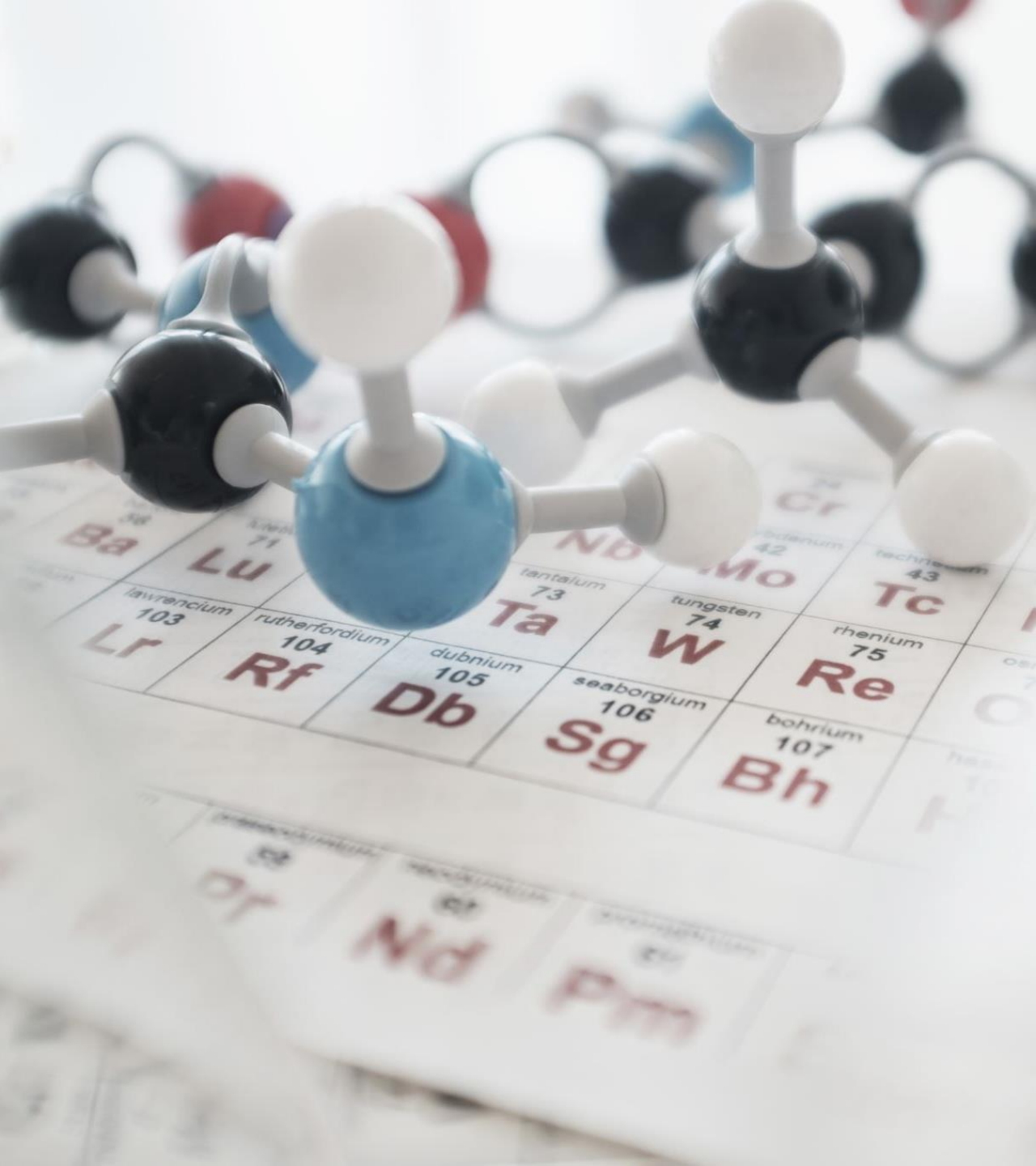


- Common symptoms: forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, slower processing
- Hormonal basis: declining estrogen's effect on brain function
- How symptoms vary person to person

Impact on Work Performance

- • Examples: trouble multi-tasking, remembering details, decision fatigue
- • Emotional effects: frustration, anxiety about “losing focus”
- • Potential risks in high-stakes jobs or clinical settings





True or False

Open conversations and awareness in the workplace can help reduce the stigma associated with menopause.



Cameron Diaz

“Make connections, make friends, join communities, and really honor yourself. You're getting ready to make that transition to menopause, so pay attention to where you're at emotionally, physically, and mentally.”

Reducing Stigma & Building Empathy

- • Menopause as a natural biological process, not a weakness
- • Importance of open conversations and awareness in the workplace
- • Normalizing cognitive changes for better support



64% of women openly discuss menopause with friends and family (12% increase from prior year)

67% of respondents have talked to a healthcare provider about their menopause symptoms (14% increase from prior year) credit

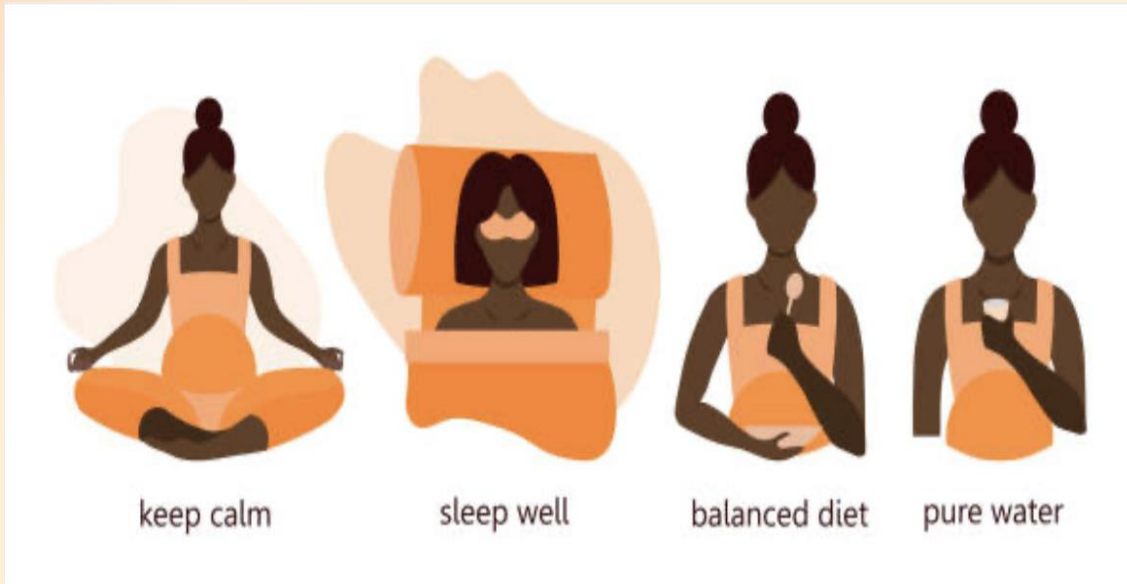
Credit: 2024 Bonafide State of Menopause Survey



Michelle Obama

“Half of us (in the population) are going through this(menopause) but we’re living like it’s not happening.”

Practical Strategies for Employees



- • Self-care: stress management, sleep hygiene, healthy lifestyle
- • Cognitive aids: notes, reminders, time management tools
- • Seeking medical advice when needed

Self-Care Practices

- Practice relaxation techniques: deep breathing, meditation, yoga
- Stay physically active- exercise reduces stress hormones
- Maintain a balanced diet and stay hydrated
- Prioritize good sleep habits
- Talk openly with friends, family, support groups
- Try journaling or mindfulness practices
- Seek professional help if stress feels overwhelming

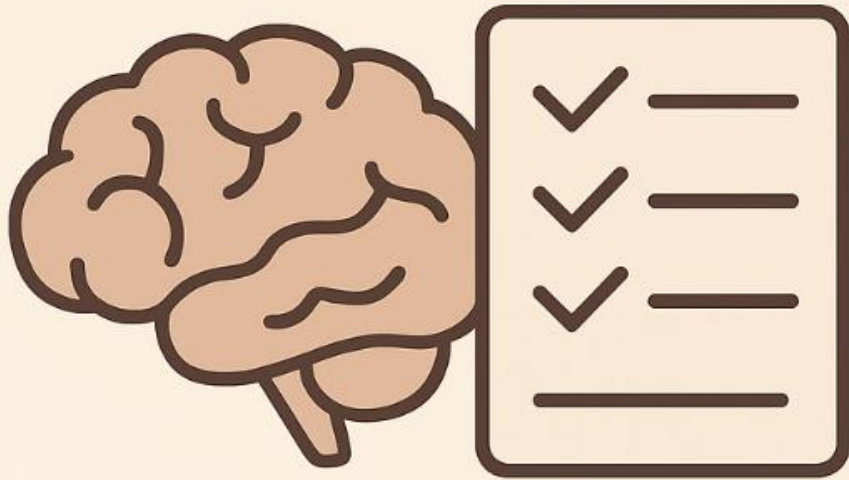


Sleep Hygiene

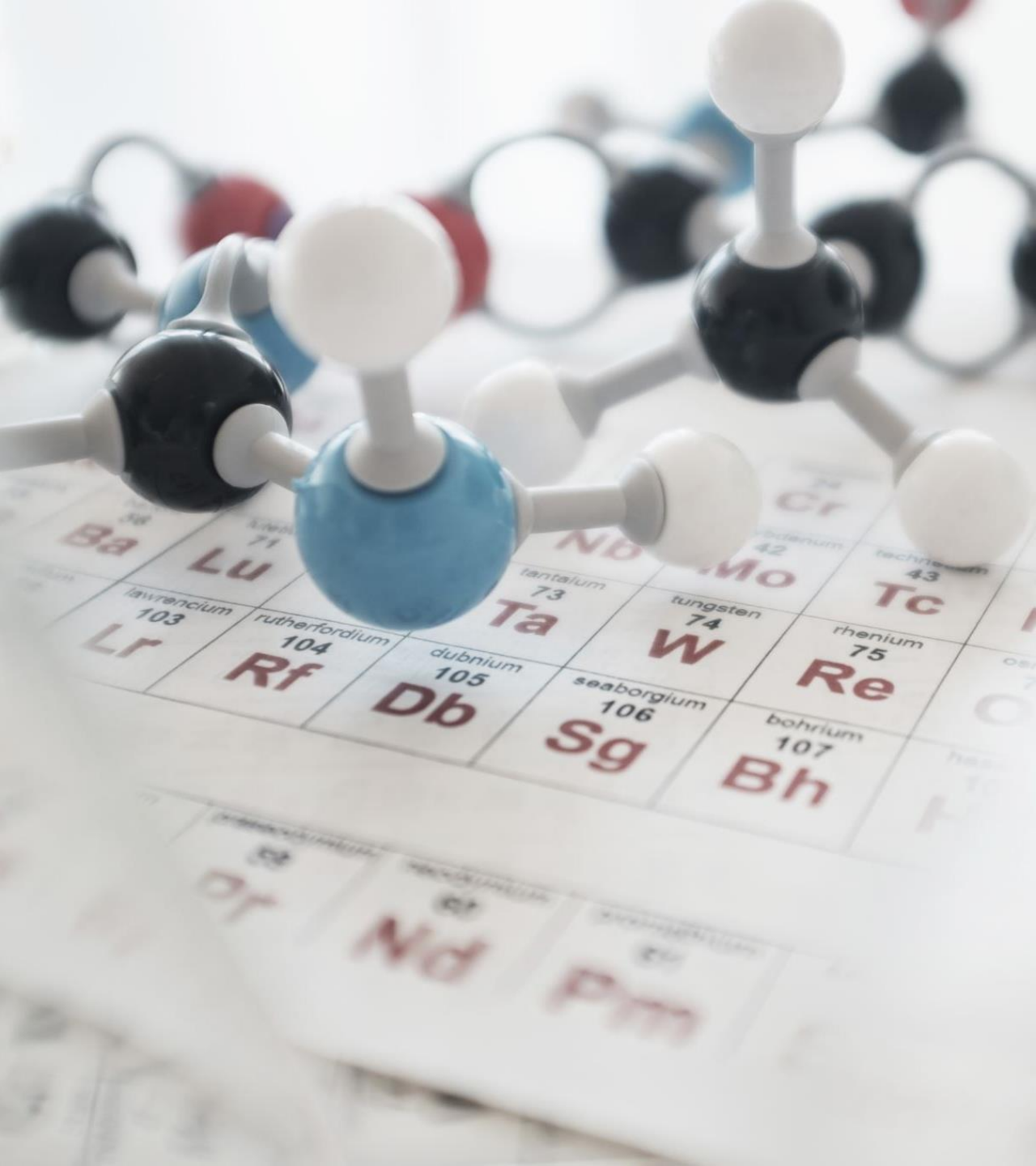


- Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- Create a relaxing pre-sleep routine(reading, warm bath, meditation)
- Limit screen time at least 1 hour before bed
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and heavy meals close to bedtime
- Keep room cool, dark and quiet
- Engage in regular physical activity(not before bedtime)
- Use the bed only for what it is intended to train your body's cues

Cognitive Aids



- Use planners, calendars, or reminder apps
- Make to-do lists and break tasks into smaller steps
- Set digital reminders or phone alarms
- Establish consistent routines to reduce memory strain
- Engage in brain-stimulating activities: puzzles, reading, learning
- Ask family or friends to help reinforce reminders
- Take supplements that can support brain health (always discuss with your healthcare provider before starting supplements)



True or False

Providing a paper fan is an example of workplace accommodations that can support employees experiencing cognitive changes during menopause.

Workplace Accommodations

- • Flexible scheduling or breaks to manage brain fog
- • Quiet workspaces or reduced distractions
- • Access to health resources and employee support programs





Gwyneth Paltrow

“Menopause gets a really bad rap and needs a bit of rebranding.”

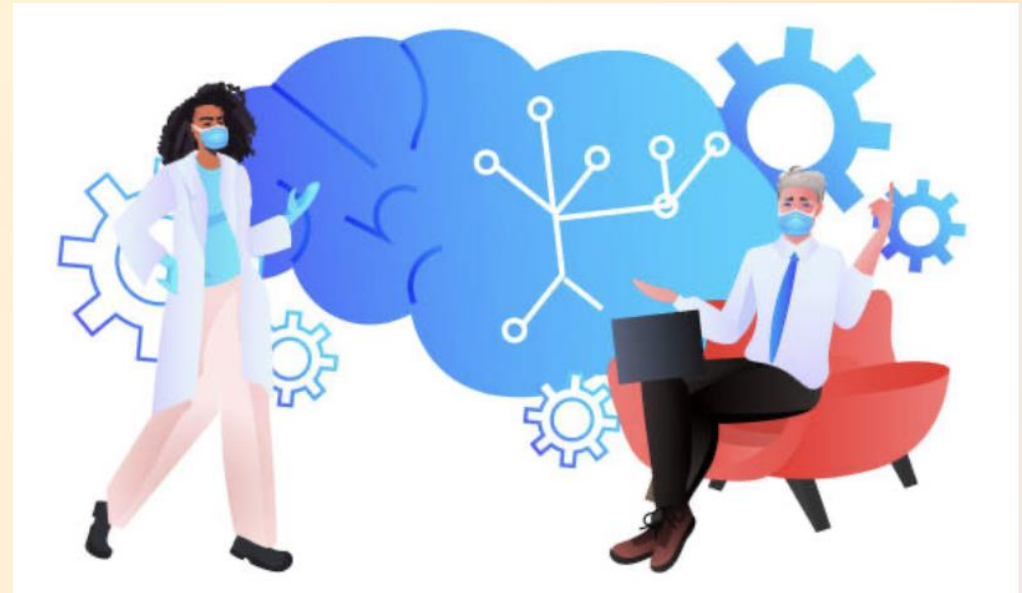
Summary & Key Takeaways



- • Menopause-related cognitive changes are common and manageable
- • Empathy and accommodations improve well-being and productivity
- • Everyone benefits from an inclusive, understanding workplace culture

Resources

- HR Department
- Employee Assistance Program
- State Wellness Center
- Gynecologist/WHNP
- North American Menopause Society
- Healthgrades





Angelina Jolie

“But I feel at ease with whatever will come, not because I am strong but because this is a part of life. It is nothing to be feared.”



Tara Woodall, WHNP-BC

Thank you for your time and
attention.

Any questions?