

PERRY BIG SISTER

# Tamsen Fadal



## *My perimenopause journey started back in the later half of 2020.*

Like so many other women, I started my perimenopause/menopause journey before I had ever uttered the words. It was a few years ago and I was on the air looking at the teleprompter... filled with some words that I had previously recognized but could not make out. I could see them, but I could not remember how to say them. My brain was not connecting.

It made me super nervous, but I didn't know what was going on and then it happened. I had this heightened anxiety. I think it was a hot flash – my whole body broke out into a complete sweat,

and I couldn't sit up straight. Since I didn't know what was going on and I didn't want to be dramatic, I said jokingly 'If I fall over, somebody catch me.'" This was not the first time I felt that fire from within, but it was the first time I could not tell if I was going to faint, throw-up or collapse.

One of my co-workers in the studio had the foresight to say, "Wait a minute, are you being serious? I think you need to get off the set."

And so I did. And I ended up on the cold floor of the women's restroom outside the studio. I re-

member just lying there with my cheek on the floor trying to calm down my body. I was embarrassed and it was the first time in my career I had walked off the set and didn't finish a newscast. I think the anxiety, hot flash, heart palpitations and everything else that came on top of it just crumpled me to the floor. I remember just staring at the floor thinking I cannot believe my face is next to the toilet on the floor of the women's bathroom at my station.

I had anxiety, my heart was racing. When you think of menopause, you think of a hot flash, those things they call symptoms... but I didn't know that severe anxiety is one of the severe menopause symptoms you get when you have menopause. In time I found out there are dozens of symptoms and I was not alone in my journey.

I scheduled an appointment with my Gyno the following Monday and started researching what was going on. First, my doctor wanted me on antidepressants, later blood tests revealed my levels and that was in menopause at that time (I was 48). In the patient portal, her doctor's comment read: "In menopause. Any questions..."

I had lots of questions and very few answers. As the daughter of a

mother who was diagnosed with breast cancer at 44 and died at 51, I had never had a conversation about "the change" or menopause. My mother had a surgical menopause- which I only realized in the past few years. She would be hot all the time, but I never knew what it was. Now, I do. I remember we used to go in and out of restaurants, because it was too hot for her. I always attributed that to chemotherapy and now I realize, wow, she was going through chemotherapy and menopause at the same time. It makes me want to cry when I think about it.

After several doctors and lots of sleepless nights, mood swings, anxiety about going on the air and not knowing what words I was going to forget, I met a doctor who was focused on women's midlife health. I was petrified of HRT due to the fact my mother had estrogen-based breast cancer. But in time, I learned why I had that fear and about the 2002 health study that had scared so many women. I decided to go on HRT and have been able to regain my confidence at my job and keep some of the symptoms (not all) at bay.

At first, I didn't want to be vocal about it. I felt zero confidence. Today, I can't stop talking about

it. I don't want another woman to grow up wondering "what is wrong with me?" I want them to have a roadmap and solutions so this transition does not give them any reason for pause and any reason to feel afraid.

I am now a menopause advocate and I talk about the intersection of menopause with midlife on my podcast, *Coming Up Next* with Tamsen Fadal. I am also working on a book about the topic.

Women should be thriving during this time, so when I am not on the air I am sharing what works for me on TikTok and Instagram. I created #MenopauseTok this year and I am excited to see so many women speaking out and joining the conversation.

My goal is that we use the word 'menopause' and 'taboo' in the same sentence again. It's time we shatter the silence, and I am proud to have a voice in this movement.

***Xo Tamsen***