SESSION TRANSCRIPT · THE MISSING PIECES OF PERIMENOPAUSE

Still Tired After a Full Night's Sleep? Why Rest Alone Isn't the Answer in Perimenopause

with Amy Joy · Day 2, Tuesday, October 27 · The Unnamed Losses

Hi, everyone. Good to see you. Thank you for joining me today. I'm really glad you're here. And I'm so happy to be part of the summit.

Okay, I'm going to describe something, and I want you to notice if it sounds familiar. You're tired, but not the ordinary kind that's sorted after a good night's sleep. Even when you've slept, you wake up feeling like you can't recover. Things that used to feel easy now feel hard. You don't quite feel like yourself anymore. Some days you're flat, going through the motions, not really feeling much of anything, while other days the smallest things can set you off. You're snapping at people you love or feeling completely overwhelmed trying to decide what to make for dinner. You swing between the two and neither one feels like the woman you know yourself to be. You've always been fairly steady. Capable. The one who people rely on. And lately you catch yourself thinking, who is this? Because it doesn't feel like me.

You're still functioning. You're getting through work, taking care of the house, showing up for the people who depend on you. But there's nothing left after that. No creativity, no enthusiasm, no energy for the things that you actually enjoy. And layered over all of this is a feeling of guilt, because on paper, your life is good and you feel like you should be handling it better.

If any of that sounds familiar, ongoing stress and burnout may be part of what you're experiencing. And if you're in perimenopause, hormonal changes may be adding another layer. Ordinary tiredness often improves with adequate rest, but when you've been under a lot of stress or your sleep is disrupted night after night, getting a little extra sleep may not be enough to help you feel like yourself again. And that's what we're going to talk about today. Here's what we'll cover today: first, why rest alone isn't enough; the perimenopause and mood connection; your four-step recovery plan; and how to get started tonight.

In case we haven't met yet, I'm Amy Joy, a health and energy coach based in Chicago. I help women get their energy back when their bodies stop cooperating the way they used to. We work on the foundations that make such a difference to how you feel. Things like food, movement, stress, and sleep. The things you know you probably need to work on but aren't always sure where to start. Or maybe you're unsure how to make them fit into your life.

Before we dive in, I want you to grab your free Energy Recovery Plan. It includes the four steps we'll be covering today, a seven-day tracker, and some meal ideas for those weeks when you're too exhausted to think about cooking. We're going to use it throughout the presentation so you can start making your own plan as we go, and keep it close by throughout the week as you're tracking and making adjustments. You can download it using the link below the presentation.

First, let's talk about why getting more rest doesn't always seem to help when you're under ongoing physical, mental, or emotional stress. Ongoing stress can affect several things at once. Your energy suffers. You may find yourself feeling tired throughout the day, even when you haven't done anything particularly demanding. Your sleep can suffer too. Stress can make it harder to fall asleep, stay asleep, or get the quality of sleep your body needs. Your eating habits may change when you're exhausted. It's easier to skip meals, rely on caffeine, or reach for something quick or sweet to get through the afternoon. And then there's your mood. You may experience less patience. You may feel more irritable, or find yourself overwhelmed by things that you would normally be able to handle without much trouble.

And these things can start feeding into each other. Poor sleep makes it harder to manage stress. Stress makes it harder to sleep. And when you're exhausted, eating well and taking care of yourself can feel like more work than you have the energy for. So while rest is important, we also need to look at the everyday habits and pressures that may be contributing to how you feel.

And for women in perimenopause, there's another piece to consider. Estrogen and progesterone affect more than your menstrual cycle. They also influence your mood, your sleep, and how you respond to stress. Estrogen interacts with brain chemicals involved in mood regulation, including serotonin. Progesterone has calming effects that can help support sleep. During perimenopause, progesterone levels start to decline, while estrogen can fluctuate quite a bit from month to month, and these changes affect how you feel. So the stress you've always handled may suddenly feel overwhelming. You may feel more irritable, more emotional, or have days when you just feel flat. And if you're sleeping poorly, these symptoms can feel even more intense. If you've been wondering why you don't quite feel like yourself lately, hormonal changes may be part of it. Of course, not every mood change is caused by perimenopause. And while we can't control these hormonal fluctuations through lifestyle habits alone, we can support our health through nutrition, sleep, and how we manage stress.

One important note before we move on. If your exhaustion, mood changes, or other symptoms are severe, persistent or worrying you, please talk with your doctor or a mental health professional. What we're covering today is about supporting the foundations of health through nutritional and lifestyle habits, and it can work alongside any medical care you may receive.

So what can you actually do? Your recovery plan has four steps. Step one: subtract. Protect your energy by taking something away before you add anything new. Step two: feed. Give your body regular, nourishing food that helps support steady energy. Step three: sleep. Make sleep a priority and give yourself the best chance of getting restorative rest. Step four: refill. Add something back that brings you joy. Nothing complicated, and you don't need to tackle everything at once. Your recovery plan has space for each step so you can choose what you're going to work on this week. So get out your plan and let's start with the first one.

Step one is subtract. When most women realize they're running on empty. The first instinct is to add something. We add a supplement, a new workout, a 5am routine somebody swears by on Instagram, or a 30-day challenge. And I understand the impulse. It's not that those things are bad. You want to feel

better, so you look for something you can do. But when you're already exhausted, adding more demands to your day may be the last thing you need. So the first step is to subtract. Look at your week and find two or three things you can remove, hand off to someone else, or simply dial back. Maybe it's a committee meeting you dread every week. Plans you've said yes to out of obligation. Housework that could wait or be done by someone else. Or maybe it's just lowering your standards a little bit on something that doesn't actually need to be perfect.

I know this can be hard. If you're used to being the person who gets everything done, saying no or asking for help may feel uncomfortable at first, but the point isn't to stop doing everything. It's to make a little more room for yourself so you're not using every bit of energy you have just to get through the day.

So let's make this practical. Pull out your recovery plan and write down two or three things you could subtract, reduce, or hand off this week. Be specific. So instead of just writing "do less," you might write "skip Thursday's committee meeting," "ask my partner to handle school pickup twice this week," or "let the house be messy until Saturday." If you need a little more time, go ahead and pause the presentation and come back when you're ready. And you don't have to do everything. Just start brainstorming and then choose one that you can follow through on this week. So that's step one. Subtract before you add.

Now let's talk about food. When you're running on empty, food is often one of the first things to fall apart. You skip breakfast because you're not hungry first thing. Or you run on coffee until mid-afternoon. Then the crash hits and you're searching for something sweet. By dinnertime, you're exhausted so you eat whatever takes the least effort. And when you're already struggling with energy, that pattern can make things harder. So we're going to keep the food side of recovery really simple. I've included some easy meal ideas in your recovery plan for those days when you just don't have the energy to cook. For now, I want you to focus on three things.

First is breakfast. Try to eat something with protein within about 90 minutes of waking up. After going all night without eating, breakfast gives your body some fuel to start the day. Including protein can help you feel satisfied and support steadier energy. Your body is also dehydrated when you first get up, so make sure you're drinking plenty of water before any coffee or tea. And it doesn't have to be complicated. A couple of eggs, Greek yogurt, a protein smoothie, almond butter on toast, or some nuts with a piece of fruit. Whatever's realistic for you, try to make sure that it's real food with protein.

Second is lunch. Have a proper meal. Sit down away from your desk with no phone. Include some protein, vegetables, and carbohydrates. Again, keep it simple. You can try rotisserie chicken with a bag of washed salad and some bread. A bowl of soup with something on the side or leftovers from last night's dinner. The point is to give your body some nourishment in the middle of the day, rather than trying to get through on coffee and snacks until dinner.

And third is caffeine. If you're relying on several cups of coffee to get through the day, try gradually cutting back and pay attention to when you're drinking it. If you're having coffee at two or three in the afternoon, try moving your last cup back to noon or 1pm. Caffeine blocks the signals that normally help

you feel sleepy, so even when you're tired, it can make falling asleep much harder. I sometimes think of caffeine as borrowing energy from later in the day and handing it to you now. There's a finite amount available. You'll feel the crash later, and you'll be wired again when you're trying to fall asleep. Excess caffeine can also increase feelings of anxiety. And remember, caffeine isn't just in coffee. It's also found in black tea, some sodas, chocolate, and even decaf coffee. And you don't necessarily need to give it up completely. Just pay attention to how much you're having, when you're having it and how it's affecting your sleep. That's step two. Give your body some consistent nourishment without making food another complicated project.

Now let's talk about sleep. Sleep is one of the most important things you can do to support your recovery. It's when your body does much of its repair and restoration work. If you're choosing between finishing one more task and getting to bed on time, sometimes the best thing you can do is leave the task until tomorrow. Sleep is that important for your recovery, and sleep is especially important when we're talking about mood. When you're short on sleep, those emotional ups and downs we talked about can get worse. The reactivity gets sharper, your patience gets shorter, and things that normally wouldn't bother you suddenly feel like too much. So protecting your sleep is about having more energy the next day. But even more importantly, it can help you manage your emotions and cope with stressors.

I want to give you three simple things to focus on. First, set a consistent bedtime and wake time. Try to keep them fairly consistent throughout the week, including weekends. Your body has an internal clock that helps regulate when you feel alert and when you feel sleepy. Keeping a regular schedule helps support that rhythm. Aim to give yourself enough time for roughly seven and a half to eight hours of sleep, or a little more if that's what you need.

Second, turn off your screens 45 minutes to an hour before bed. You've probably heard this recommendation before, but there's a good reason for it. Light from your phone, tablet, or computer can signal to your brain that it's still daytime. That can delay the release of melatonin, which is the hormone that helps prepare your body for sleep. If you're already having trouble winding down, spending that last hour scrolling through your phone is going to make things harder. So try giving yourself some screen-free time before bed. Read a book, take a bath, do some gentle stretching or whatever helps you relax.

Third, keep a notepad by your bed. If you lie there at night with your brain running through everything you need to do tomorrow, try writing it all down before you go to sleep. The appointments, the emails you need to send, or the thing that you forgot to do today. Just get it all out of your head and onto paper. It can help you stop going over everything while you're trying to fall asleep.

So those are your three sleep actions: a consistent sleep schedule. Screens off before bed and a notepad for those racing thoughts. And you don't have to do all these perfectly. Choose the one that would make the biggest difference for you right now and start there. So that's step three: protect your sleep.

This last step might sound like a contradiction. First I told you to subtract and now I'm asking you to add something back. But there's a difference. The subtracting was about making room by taking away some of the things that drain you. This step is about putting something back into your life that you actually enjoy. When you're tired and overwhelmed, the first things to disappear are often the things you do just because you like them. Your hobbies, time with friends, getting outside or reading a book. Whatever it is that makes you feel more like yourself. And after a while, your whole week can start to feel like one long list of to-dos and responsibilities. You're working, taking care of everyone else, and getting things done. But there's very little time left for anything that you actually want to do.

So I want you to think of one small thing you enjoy that you could put back into your week. I'm not talking about an ambitious new habit or something you think you should do because it's healthy or productive. But make it something that genuinely brings you joy. Maybe it's reading for 20-minutes before bed, taking a walk by yourself without a phone, sitting outside with your morning coffee, calling a friend you haven't talked to in a while. Spending a little time on a hobby you've neglected, or watching something you actually want to watch, rather than whatever happens to be on or getting sucked into a stream of TikTok videos. It doesn't have to be useful or even accomplish anything. You just have to enjoy it. I want you to actually make time for it, because if you leave it until everything else is done, there's a good chance it won't happen. So take a look at your calendar and find a place for it this week. That's step four. Put something back into your life that's just for you.

And now you've got all four steps. So let's bring it all together. Subtract: choose two or three things you can stop doing, you can reduce, or you can hand off. Feed: have some protein with breakfast. Eat a proper lunch and pay attention to your caffeine intake and cut-off time. Sleep: keep a consistent bedtime and wake time. Turn off your screens about an hour before bed and write down those thoughts that keep you awake. And finally, refill: choose one thing you genuinely enjoy and make time for it this week.

That's your plan, and I want to emphasize that you don't have to do everything, and you don't have to do it all perfectly. If you're really tired, the last thing you need is another long list of things you're supposed to get right. Start with what's manageable. A few small changes that you can actually stick with are much more powerful than an ambitious plan that leaves you feeling even more overwhelmed.

So before you go to bed tonight, I want you to do three things. First, look at your subtract list. Choose one thing you're going to take off your plate this week. Maybe you need to send a text, make a phone call, or remove something from your calendar. Do that today if you can. Second, decide what time you're going to bed tonight. Give yourself enough time for a good night's sleep, and try charging your phone somewhere other than right next to your bed so you're not tempted to keep scrolling. Third, decide what you're having for breakfast tomorrow. Nothing complicated. Just choose something with protein so that you don't have to think about it or make any decisions when you wake up. And then sometime this week, make time for that one thing you enjoy, something that fills you up and brings you joy. That's where I'd like you to start. Your recovery plan has a seven-day tracker so you can keep track of what you're doing

and see how you're getting on. And remember, you don't need to make all the changes at once. The goal is to start making your days a little more supportive of how you want to feel.

Thank you so much for being here today, and thank you to Tracey for bringing everyone together and giving us the opportunity to have these amazing conversations. I hope you've come away with a better understanding of why you may be feeling so exhausted or moody, and a few practical things you can start doing to support yourself. Small changes can make a meaningful difference to how you feel in any season of life, and you don't have to figure it out all on your own.

If you'd like some help deciding where to start, I'd love to invite you to book a free 20-minute consultation with me. We can look at your recovery plan together, talk about what's been most challenging for you, and identify your top priority so you know what to focus on first. You'll find the booking link here on the slide and it's also in your handout. Go to amyjoyhealth.com. And before you go, two quick reminders: if you haven't downloaded your free Energy Recovery Plan yet, make sure you grab it using the link below. And if you have the All Treats, No Tricks Pass, you can also get access to my Rest & Recharge program, where you'll be able to start improving your sleep and creating routines that work for your body and your life. Thanks again for spending this time with me. I've really enjoyed it. And remember, you don't have to change everything this week. Just pick one thing that you can subtract. Give yourself some good food and sleep and make a little time for something you enjoy. That's a great place to start. I'll see you soon.