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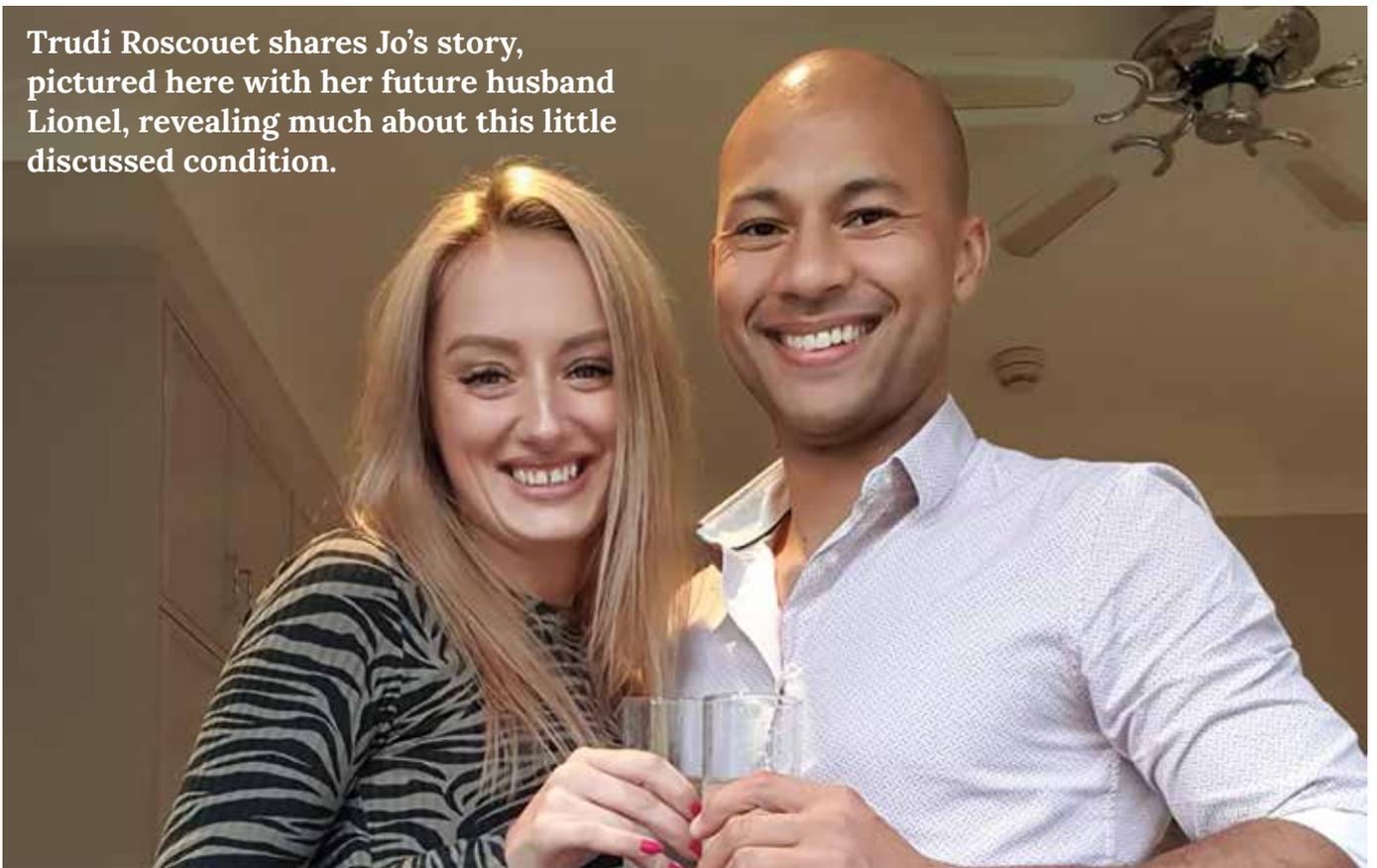


PMDD

and

menopause

Trudi Roscouet shares Jo's story, pictured here with her future husband Lionel, revealing much about this little discussed condition.



Up until June 2022 I had never even heard of PMDD. In fact, I am assuming many of you reading this may not have also heard about it. So, lets start from the beginning.

PMDD stands for Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder - a severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Upon investigation I discovered that it can cause severe emotional, professional, and personal harm to those who have it.

Sufferers of PMDD report damaging and impulsive behaviours that may include suddenly leaving a job or a relationship. Others report sudden and increased thoughts about suicide and self-harm. PMDD can feel like a 'half-life.'

I'm going to park this now as I tell the story of one of my clients, who at the age of 34, has entered elective menopause and how she came to this extreme decision.



• **Trudi (right) and Jo start the process of telling her story, which was clearly tough for Jo at times (right).**

Jo came to my attention through our local support menopause Facebook page. Her first post read like this:

"Morning all. I've finally had my checkup with my specialist and he's put me on this HRT liquid. Now, I'm never putting anything into my body without reading and questioning things and I'm quite worried about being on this HRT. It looks dangerous - risks after risks and increased cancers etc. I don't want a single pump of this near me. Anyone else worried about HRT prescriptions?"

I then contacted her directly and our friendship began.

The first thing that obviously surprised me was that she was 33 and had obviously been given no information as to what she should be taking. I soon found out that she had had her ovaries removed but not her womb. She had also not been prescribed progesterone.

It was at the very beginning of the conversation that she said: "I don't have any condition wanting me to end my life anymore so that's a huge bonus." It was then that I asked her if she had suffered with PMDD. This had only come to my attention by podcasting a lady in USA who had told me about it – but again pre-2022 I had never even heard about this life debilitating condition.

The messages continued. Some were by voice mail where she was crying uncontrollably about not being able to deal with thoughts that entered her head and some as written messages. At this stage, Jo felt that she

could not speak about this condition publicly as she was not in the 'right place.' Now six months on, and after a rollercoaster of symptoms, we are there!

She sat with me to write this article and I cannot tell her enough about how proud I am to be able to tell her story, albeit it summarised, and hope that it helps someone somewhere.

Jo's story

Jo was born in 1988 and was adopted at just nine months. She never knew her medical history. Her period started at 12 years old and ever since her earliest memories she would have unexplained emotional 'blow outs.' Continually branded as 'naughty' she initially received therapy once she hit secondary school. Her mum was a rock but could not get to the bottom of these horrific rages.

A therapist could not draw any conclusions, a story that followed Jo around over the years. She was bullied at school for being 'special,' often being labelled a 'cry baby' as her anger would turn into uncontrollable crying.

Around this time, she started self-harming. Her arms are still covered with scars. This continued for years to help ease the mental anguish that she felt. She couldn't understand what made her feel like this and hurt the people she loved most.

At 14 years old she suffered two traumatic and serious psychiatric events, which only increased her paranoia and psychotic behaviour to the point of Jo blacking out on some occasions. Her self-harming became even →



more constant and her mum and family were devastated. Jo then decided to put herself into a children's home as she: "Felt I couldn't be controlled." She stayed there for a year and felt that she had become a better person as she had removed toxic people that had come into her life due to her erratic behaviour.

Although her adopted family were amazing, Jo then decided she had to find her birth mum as she really believed this would be the key. For years and years she searched, and it was her adopted mum that told her the only facts that she knows now. Her mum had been 19, had suffered with serious bouts of depression and kept "changing her mind" as to whether she wanted to keep Jo or not. Could this be the genetic key?

I should add that Jo had been seeing doctors all this time – and no one had picked up or realised the hormonal link between her periods and these outbursts. Eventually having attended CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), she was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder.

Jo could only sustain part-time work; alcohol became an issue, but at this point she was starting to notice that her behaviour was becoming more erratic during or before her period. Counselling continued but of course, during her 'sane' weeks she was fine and was often asked 'why are you here?' She started a new relationship with Lionel who is now set to be her future husband.

He was kind and started to see links in when she was very explosive. There were times when she was on suicide

watch; where she should get so angry with him she would be shaking with rage. In Jo's head all she could say to him that she was "damaged" and that he should walk away, but he used to tell her to go outside and have a cigarette and calm down.

In 2015 she fell pregnant with her son. This was not planned. Her obsessive compulsive disorder got worse and she suffered with acute post-natal depression.

In 2017, she fell pregnant with her daughter. This also led to her having horrendous thoughts about passing

"She [Jo] attends the Menopause Forum regularly, which helps her to understand that other women are going through the same symptoms."



on some 'condition' and she felt she could not protect her from this illness. Her post-natal depression took hold; she was then put on anti-depressants and her PMDD got even worse.

During the latter years, the anti-depressants only made her suicidal and irritable thoughts worse. Physical symptoms, like heart palpitations and headaches she describes as being unbearable. She was given antispasmodic drugs to try to ease some of these issues but it wasn't until a visit in 2019 to her same doctor, that the diagnosis of PMDD was concluded. Jo went away



• Jo's bad days are still hard but she is learning to recognise triggers for her anxiety and puts measures in place to stop full blown panic attacks. Trudi continues to support her wherever and however she can.





and read the leaflet and researched the condition to suddenly feel like a weight had been lifted.

Game changer

Her appointment with a gynaecologist followed whom, even after an initial consultation, agreed with the diagnosis and he then set her on a journey which was to change her life.

She had to keep a mood diary for six months so she could track dates between periods. She was then put on Zoladex, which would create a medical early menopause. This depended upon regular monthly injections; if they were inserted in the right place, they worked. If slightly out her symptoms reared their head again.

In November 2021 Jo wrote a letter consenting to removal of her ovaries as she did not want to have her womb taken away. This was actually contra to the advice of her gynaecologist, but in her own words, she felt that it would cause ageing. Now she wishes she had had everything removed.

In March 2022 she underwent surgery and we now come back to the start of our journey.

She had not taken any HRT, even though she had been prescribed Oestrogel, because she had not been given any information and was, as she said: "scared" of what it would do to her and understandably concerned about mental health issues.

My involvement

The first thing I did was to send her the *Bookmark*, a symptom tracker. Within four months of her oophorectomy, she was showing 15 symptoms. She took this back to her doctor so they could understand and track her symptoms together. Of course, at this time, we were then undergoing an HRT shortage.

However, it was only during August that she had realised she was not on progesterone –now with her being more informed she was able to go back and request that she be given utrogestan. Her doctor had believed that her womb had been removed.

Today

Jo's journey has been volatile. There are times when I see her post on social media about panic attacks and anxiety or out-of-office doctors. I will call her and calm her by saying these symptoms are normal; to go outside and breathe.

She has also decided to quit smoking and medical cannabis. I am so proud of her tenacity and her mental strength, something which she doesn't believe she has.



• Life with her fiancé is on the up and Jo and Trudi are working on her nutrition to improve her appetite.

Her employer who was in the hospitality trade, during this time, had decided he couldn't support her anymore but culturally had never had to deal with such issues. Jo explained to him about the menopause and how over the next few months she would feel better. He then reinstated her job and apologised for his 'ignorance' about the issue.

So, now, here we are in January.

Jo is talking about learning to drive, looks after her 100 year-old neighbour and runs about after her two children. Her anxiety is still there but she is learning to recognise this and tries to put in place measures to stop it from becoming an overriding panic attack.

We are working on her nutrition as her appetite is still limited. She attends the Menopause Forum regularly, which helps her to understand that other women are going through the same symptoms.

I suppose the conclusion to this story is to say that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. If Jo's experience helps someone not to have to endure this condition for so many years, then our job is done.

Trudi Roseouet

Trudi travels to different jurisdictions to spread the "M" word; talking to companies and businesses alike. She continues her work with women who wish to have one to one counselling or groups. Her next 'Mission' is ready to go.

www.Vitality40Plus.com