The Potential Role of Sound Healing in Supporting Women During (Peri)Menopause

by Violet Borneman

Introduction

Menopause is often described as a natural stage of life. But for many women, it does not feel natural at all. Sudden hot flashes, sleepless nights, anxiety, emotional swings, and a foggy mind can make daily life feel unfamiliar and overwhelming. These symptoms are not only physical, they affect a woman's sense of identity, control, and connection. Beneath the surface, profound hormonal changes are taking place that impact nearly every system in the body. They affect more than mood or sleep. These changes raise the risk of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, osteoporosis, and clinical depression (Freeman & Sherif, 2007).

And yet, many women move through this phase with little support. Their symptoms often overlap with what we now recognize as burnout: mental fatigue, disrupted sleep, irritability, and emotional exhaustion, especially in women who are used to staying in control. What all of these experiences have in common is a dysregulated nervous system. And this is exactly where sound healing offers something unique: a gentle, non-verbal way to regulate the body from the inside out. Not through talk, but through vibration, rhythm and resonance.

While hormone therapy can be effective, not all women can or wish to use it. Many seek something more holistic and body-based, something that helps them not only feel better, but reconnect with their own rhythm, their own body, and their emotional balance. Sound healing is one such approach. Rooted in ancient traditions and supported by emerging research, sound works gently and directly with the body's internal systems. It helps restore calm, improve sleep, ease emotional tension and support resilience (Koçak & Varişoğlu, 2022).

This paper explores the potential of sound healing as a supportive practice during the menopausal transition. It combines published research with practical insights from therapeutic work with women navigating stress, burnout and hormonal change. The intention is to spark curiosity and open space for further exploration.

Sound Healing and Menopause: What Studies Show

Sound healing is not new. For thousands of years, cultures around the world have used voice, rhythm and resonance as tools for healing. What is new is the growing interest in how these practices may support women in midlife, not only spiritually but also physically and emotionally.

Recent clinical studies are starting to confirm what many traditions have long known. One randomized controlled trial (RCT) found that menopausal women who listened to music twice a day for five weeks experienced significantly improved sleep quality, mood and symptom scores on the Menopause Rating Scale (Ugurlu et al., 2024). Another study using 15-minute music

sessions over 18 meetings showed a notable decrease in depression and anxiety symptoms (Koçak & Varişoğlu, 2022).

Researchers have also begun exploring how these effects occur in the body. Low-frequency vibrational sound appears to stimulate the vagus nerve, a key part of the parasympathetic nervous system. This kind of stimulation has been associated with improved emotional regulation, lower heart rate and greater ability to recover after stress (Laborde et al., 2017).

Two studies suggest that vagal activity decreases significantly during hot flashes, especially at night (de Zambotti et al., 2013), and that lower vagal tone is associated with more severe menopausal symptoms (Martinelli et al., 2020).

Beyond mood and sleep, early evidence suggests that targeted vibration can also benefit bone health. A 2016 systematic review and meta-analysis found that whole-body vibration slowed bone-density loss and produced small but significant gains in lumbar-spine and hip BMD in post-menopausal women (Fratini et al., 2016).

Linking Sound Healing Mechanisms to Menopausal Support

Recent research points to several physiological pathways through which sound may support women during the menopausal transition. These mechanisms help explain how sound influences not only emotional wellbeing, but also sleep, cognitive clarity, and physical resilience.

First, sound can help balance the stress axis.
Relaxing music after a stressor can reduce cortisol levels and modulate the HPA axis, the body's stress system (Khalfa et al., 2003). Disruptions in this system are linked to poor sleep, mood swings, and increased risk of depression and heart disease during perimenopause (Freeman & Sherif, 2007).

Second, it supports neurotransmitter balance.
Animal studies suggest that structured music exposure can increase GABA and reduce glutamate levels, both key players in calming the nervous system (Hao et al., 2020). In humans, emotionally moving music has been shown to trigger dopamine release in the brain's reward system (Salimpoor et al., 2011). This can support emotional resilience and may help ease anxiety, low mood, and brain fog, which are common symptoms during menopause.

Third, sound enhances brain plasticity.
Regular musical engagement promotes neuroplasticity. Studies show that it can increase grey matter in areas for movement and sound, and strengthen the connections between them (Hyde et al., 2009; Schlaug, 2015). This may help explain why some women report improved clarity and less brain fog after consistent sound sessions.

Finally, low-frequency sound resonates through tissue and bone.
Low-frequency vibration has shown promising results in supporting tissue and bone health. Whole-body vibration around 30 Hz has been found to improve bone mineral density in postmenopausal women (Fratini et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2023). This suggests that soft,

rhythmic vibrations, like those in sound healing, can support the body's natural ability to restore and regenerate. This may be especially relevant in preventing osteoporosis.

Together, these mechanisms reveal why sound healing holds potential as a multifaceted tool; calming the nervous system, restoring emotional balance, enhancing cognitive function, and reconnecting women with their physical bodies in a time of profound change.

From Science to Session

The mechanisms above show *why* sound can help. But *how* does that look in a real session, especially when a woman arrives tired, anxious, or disconnected from her body? The following is a trauma-informed, 60-minute outline that I would use today, based on what I have learned so far in my training sound healing and therapy and in yoga-therapy work with menopausal clients. Every step is gentle, adjustable, and meant to meet the nervous system where it is. And even though a sound session does not have to be 60min, I personally would like to combine it with some overlapping yoga therapy tools, such as meditation and yoga Nidra.

Since yoga is out of scope for this paper I will only mention it briefly. Yoga Nidra is a powerful tool that is a kind of guided meditation, but always supine. Research has shown that 1 hour of yoga Nidra is equal to 4 hours of sleep (Pandi-Perumal et al., 2022). Furthermore, yoga Nidra resides in a different brainstate than meditation: in meditational state one resides mostly in the state of alpha-tetha brainwaves (Katyal, S., & Goldin, P.,2021) whilst in yoga Nidra delta brainwaves are addressed (Datta et al., 2022). Some traditional sources suggest that advanced Yoga Nidra may activate gamma brainwaves, associated with heightened awareness or the Turiya state (AryaMarga Yoga, 2021), though this has not yet been confirmed by EEG research.

Example session Outline (≈60 minutes)

1. **Create a safe space (3 min)**
   Welcome, dim lights or candle, and invite the client to settle in the room.
2. **Brief check-in (3 min)**
   A short conversation about energy level, emotions, and physical (dis)comfort to create a personal, safe space and explore possible target to work with.
3. **Grounding with voice-tuning sweep (4 min)**
   Client seated or lying down. I use one pure vocal tone, slowly "scanning" the body to sense areas of tension while the client attunes to my voice.
4. **Sound bath (15–20 min)**
   • 432 Hz crystal bowl, sometimes accompanied by gentle vocal tones.
   • Tibetan bowl at the feet for grounding, or on the lower belly / lower back to release pelvic tension if appropriate. The general intention is deep rest and down-regulation of the nervous system.
5. **Low-frequency tuning forks (3 min)**
   128 Hz and 136.10 Hz forks held near the ears to create a gentle vibrational field that encourages deep relaxation. Skipped or shortened if the client is anxious or sound-sensitive.
6. **Guided meditation or Yoga Nidra (10 min)**
   Spoken guidance without instruments so the body can integrate sensations quietly.

7. **Silent integration (2 min)**
   A pause in stillness for the nervous system to absorb the effects.
8. **Gentle return with Koshi (water element, 1 min)**
   Soft chime to re-orient awareness while maintaining calm.
9. **Closing and homework (3 min)**
   Short debrief, then invite the client to listen nightly to a guided Yoga Nidra, guided meditation or calming music and journal sleep quality, mood shifts and hot flashes.

Note: Every element can be adjusted to the client's needs. Clients with high anxiety often need lower volumes, more voice-only work and additional grounding before sound begins.

Final Reflections

This example is just one way of working, shaped by my current training and experience. Every client brings something different, and the art lies in meeting that uniqueness with presence and care. What sound offers in these sessions is not a rigid protocol but a responsive, intuitive tool. When used with attunement and intention, it becomes a form of listening, not just to sound but to the nervous system, to subtle shifts, to what is ready to release.

Scientific research into sound healing during menopause is still in its early stages. While data is limited, more and more women and practitioners report meaningful shifts in mood, sleep and emotional resilience after sound-based sessions. Menopause is not a condition to be cured, but a transition to be supported. Sound healing offers a gentle, accessible way to do that. Whether through the resonance of a crystal bowl or the quiet rhythm of your own breath, sound can help rewire the stress response, improve sleep and restore emotional balance. For anyone moving through this complex phase of life, sound may offer one of the most grounded and overlooked ways to support healing. It meets the body with presence, works through vibration, and follows the rhythm of recovery that is already within.