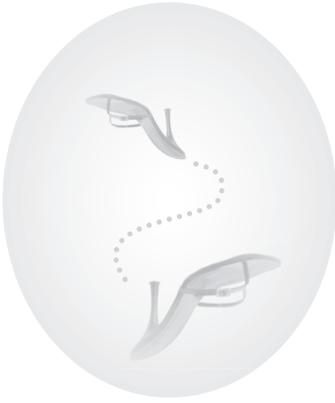


# contents

---

Foreword by Roy Stringfellow, M.D.	7
Letter from Linda Dillow	9
1. Diary of a Hormonally Wacked-Out Woman	11
<b>P: Physical Symptoms</b>	
2. PMS and Perimenopause: The What, When, and Why-oh-Why?	23
3. The Monthly Drama: Riding the Hormone Roller Coaster	37
4. Your Brain on Hormones: Half a Brain Is a Terrible Thing to Waste	53
5. Top Ten Picks for Physical Relief	65
6. Physical “Aha”	75
<b>M: Mental/Mood Symptoms</b>	
7. Jump Off the Hormone Swing	83
8. Perilous Attitudes	93
9. Positive Attitudes	105
10. Seventeen Ways to Soothe Stress	117
11. Mental “Aha”	127
<b>S: Spiritual Symptoms</b>	
12. Reject Spiritual Lies	143
13. Embrace Spiritual Truths	157
14. Top Ten Disciplines for Staying God-Connected	169
15. PMS and Perimenopause: The Benefits	183
16. Spiritual “Aha”	193
The <del>End</del> Beginning: Jump Into His Arms	203
Acknowledgments	205
Appendix—System Tracker	207
Bible Study	209
Notes	231



# diary of a hormonally wacked-out woman



## Diary: age 27

---

I have PMS, but it's not that bad.

I tried to convince myself that I was okay—oh, how I tried—but in the spring of my twenty-eighth year, reality shot denial, and she died a slow death.

I lay on the floor in the bedroom closet, curled in the fetal position, sobbing. Tears from my eyes and snot from my nose dripped onto the carpet. Normally such grossness would have motivated me to get up and grab a tissue, but I was in such agony that I couldn't move. Every cell in my body pulsed in pain. Darkness pressed tangibly around me as if I lay in a collapsing grave.

It was the third day.

Day one hadn't been so bad. I'd been edgy, uncomfortable, but it was nothing I couldn't shake. By day two, my edginess had morphed into anxiety. I paced to and fro, like a dog that senses a storm collecting in the distance, bringing impending doom.

I called a friend. "Pray," I pleaded.

"For what?" she asked.

What could I say? Something dreadful is about to descend on me, and I don't know what it is. Yeah, she'd pray all right—pray for someone to give me a straitjacket for Christmas 'cause I sounded a little crazy! "Just pray," I said, knowing I could give no logical explanation for the panic building inside me.

On day three, a black fog descended. Heavy. Suffocating. My breasts felt like swollen cantaloupes. Cramps spasmed through my abdomen and ripped around my lower back. My head throbbed in pain. My stomach churned. Then, just when I thought I couldn't feel worse, anger and frustration surged through me—twin bullies, taking me down. I crawled into the closet and shut the door where I could cry in private.

I had to purge the pain through my tears . . .

I had to exorcise the poison in my system . . .

I had to expunge the wretchedness in my soul . . .

Then he came, a dark presence. Evil. Destructive. He hovered, breathed his acid breath upon me, and injected me with a vial of self-loathing that quickly spread through my veins.

You're pathetic, he seethed. I had to agree.

You are useless. Lying on the floor like a sniveling baby, I couldn't argue.

The world would be a better place without you. Was he right?

I choked out the words, "God, help me. Please help me." Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the pressure in and around me lessened as the stranglehold of darkness released its grip. Ten minutes later I got up off the floor and forced myself back into the real world. I could not face this thing, whatever it was, on my own. I had to have help.

I scheduled an appointment with my doctor. But the next day my period started, and I felt better. Five days later, on the morning of my appointment, my estrogen was on the rise and I was on top of the world. In fact I felt so good I thought that maybe when I got to Doc Connelly's office, I'd offer to whip his practice into shape, beginning with a new filing system that didn't require a patient to fill out five forms each time she entered the door.

I can't go see Dr. Connelly now, I thought. He'll take one look at me and wonder why I'm here. I'll have no answer. He won't believe how I was last week. I'm not sure I believe it either.

Denial resurrected; I cancelled the appointment. The closet incident was a thing of the past. I just had a few bad moments, I told myself. There's nothing wrong with me.

Looking back on the early years of my PMS, I realize that lying to myself about the severity of my PMS was easy because the really bad times didn't happen *every* month. In fact most months, the symptoms associated with my monthly cycle were fairly manageable, and on the outside, I appeared intelligent and capable, even if I still struggled on the inside. As a public relations manager in a male-dominated Fortune 200 company, I worked with some of the brightest men in the world. Testosterone was the ruling hormone in my work environment (insert masculine chuckle here). If I wanted to succeed in my career, it was essential for me to mask my estrogen issues.

I developed coping strategies. When my strategies worked, I'd tell myself I was okay. But just when I was sure I'd sandbagged my PMS—*slam!*—a tsunami of symptoms crashed down on me with horrendous force and pulled me down in a deadly riptide. No matter how hard I fought against the current, I couldn't make it back to solid footing. No discipline or coping technique brought me back to my rational self, so I ran to my bedroom closet, curled up in the dark next to the stinky tennies, and sobbed my eyes out (which was a coping strategy of sorts, because it kept me from emotionally throwing up on my poor husband).

The uncontrollable episodes happened every five or six months. Horrible! I not only had one cycle each month, but my cycle had cycles! I was also vaguely aware of a larger cycle at work, a rhythm in which I was caught up—something beyond me, some sort of force or concept with an ebb and flow that transcended my own ebb and flow and somehow influenced me.

Did I lose you on that last thought? Don't feel bad. These layers of cycles and their pull are subtle, and women rarely talk about them—in part because they are elusive and difficult to define and in part because health and medical professionals, aside from writing prescriptions for antidepressants, do not forcefully tackle the deeply emotional and spiritual aspects of PMS. Some feel ill-equipped (“This is best left to a clergyman or a psychiatrist”); others are prohibited because of office policy (“Discussing spiritual issues with a patient crosses the professional line”).

But make no mistake, the deeply emotional and spiritual cycles women face are real—very real. It's time that someone talks about them. It's time that the elusive feelings, stirrings, and concepts we intuitively know as women are put into words so that we might better live in full femininity before our Creator. It's time to explore our understanding of hormones on an entirely new level.

### HOW WILL THIS BOOK HELP ME?

*Jump Off the Hormone Swing* is the distillation of my thirty-five-year journey with wildly swinging hormones that started in puberty and ended in

menopause. (Hallelujah!! The symptoms really do vanish before senility arrives.) As I look back, I now realize that in my attempts to alleviate my symptoms, I actually did things to make them worse. It was ignorance on my part—and really on the part of the medical community—because it is only in the last few years that studies have been released and that biochemistry and brain imaging have advanced to the point that we can make educated decisions about what seems to be creating our symptoms.

Most books on PMS are written by health practitioners. I greatly appreciated what I learned from such books. But while the information proved helpful, I often found myself dozing off. How many times did I wade through medical terms such as “elevated androstenedione levels” and “dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB)?” Pardon my yawn! Doctors, physicians, health practitioners, and authors of books on PMS: On behalf of women everywhere, thank you for your anatomy charts that have helped us understand our bodies. Thank you for information about how to manage our headaches and cramps, our outbursts of emotion, and our mental mush. Thank you for acknowledging that PMS is not just something a woman imagines in her head, but that it’s a clinical condition with quantifiable symptoms. Thank you for empirical studies that document how vitamin deficiencies and stress exacerbate PMS. But please hear the cry of our hearts: *The most horrible symptoms of hormonal swings are often not the aches in our bodies, but the assaults on our souls that rip our identity and tear at the fabric of our noble calling as women.*

That day—when I lay on the floor in the bedroom closet, curled in the fetal position, sobbing—I didn’t need medical insight about *why*: “Pituitary glands secrete FSH and LH to stimulate follicles, sometimes resulting in an imbalance of estrogen and progesterone.” I needed spiritual insight about where these thoughts were coming from and how I could stop them from entering my head in the future.<sup>1</sup> And on other days, ones less severe than my “closet day” but troubling nonetheless, other questions nagged me.

- How do I manage the swing between feeling superconfident and energetic one day, and incompetent and listless the next?
- How do I handle my self-hatred after downing an extra large bag of peanut M & M’s the day before my period?
- How is it that I suddenly find my husband so annoying?
- How can God possibly love me when I hate myself?

That last question bothered me most because for me the most painful part of PMS and perimenopause was not the battle in my body but the assault

on my soul. Cramps? Hot flashes? I coped. Mood swings? Teflon brain (nothing sticks)? I found natural supplements and vitamins that took the edge off, but I felt helpless to conquer the horrible pendulum swing between being a Christian and a PMS-crazed woman.

Oh, the inner turmoil when one moment I was on my knees compassionately praying for my neighbor, and the next moment I wanted to strangle her and kick her ugly dog. I joke about it, but truthfully, the tension between my desperate desire to serve God and others, and my utter failure to accomplish this when my hormones went berserk, caused me unending agony. I hated the thoughts and emotions that charged through me. It was as if a week before my period, some wretched, selfish, totally undisciplined woman took over my body.

Or, God forbid, this was the real me!

It was all so confusing. The only thing that seemed clear was that the hormone swing affected my spirit—because after my period ended, the intensity of the inner battle also subsided. Now what's with that? I searched until my eyes dried out, but I couldn't find any book that dealt with the spiritual aspect of hormonal imbalance on a level that was helpful. Of course hormones affect a woman spiritually! To leave out the spiritual component is to give an incomplete picture of the role hormones play in a woman's body.

In this book I'll deal with the spiritual issues that others neglect, but I'll also deal with practical issues—not from the doctor-to-patient perspective but from a heart-to-heart, woman-to-woman perspective, because one of my greatest needs during PMS was for wisdom from other women about how to “do life” when hormone hysteria held me hostage.

How did other wives and mothers get through PMS with dignity instead of disaster? What did they do to keep World War III from breaking out in their homes when hormones went berserk? How did they keep from yelling at their kids or berating their husbands when tension churned inside them like lava bubbling in a ready-to-explode volcano? How did they manage a home, a job, car pool, crazy in-laws, sick pets, and a call from the school principal when what they wanted most was to curl under the covers and sleep—until their kids were grown?

I am not a doctor, and this is not a medical book. I am a Bible teacher, a speaker, and a researcher of women's issues. I do not want to suggest that the information in these pages substitutes for the specialized kind of help your physician can provide. Instead, my goal is to share with you the insights I've gleaned from God's Word, my research, and my own life. I'll also share wisdom from more than 1,500 women I've surveyed about PMS. From our

combined voices you will hear what helped—and what didn't help—as we sought to live wisely amidst wacked-out hormones.

Oh, and you may be wondering, *Will she talk about hormone therapy?* That's a hot topic these days, especially for hot-flashing perimenopausal women, those who suffer from severe PMS, or those who need medical or hormonal therapy (HT) because a medical condition or surgery has prematurely halted their body's production of hormones. One reason I wrote *Jump* was to provide information that would help a woman *before* she began medical or hormonal therapy. An estimated 15 percent of women need medical or hormonal therapy in order to find relief from their symptoms; the other 85 percent find relief through changes in supplements, diet, and lifestyle habits like those recommended in this book.<sup>2</sup> So no, I won't address medical or hormonal therapy in depth, but if you experience severe and persistent symptoms that require medical intervention, the information you'll glean in these pages will provide a helpful framework for your initial meeting with your health practitioner. Likely your health practitioner will drop his or her jaw in utter amazement over your sagacious acumen concerning the basic principles of hormonal function and say, "How'd you get to be so brilliant?"

### SO HERE'S THE PLAN . . .

The letters PMS provide a meaningful structure for the three main sections of the book:

#### •Physical symptoms •Mental/mood symptoms •Spiritual symptoms

I've intentionally separated symptoms into three categories so that we can assess the problems and helps for each group. At the beginning of each section, you will take a symptoms test to help you identify your needs. After we've discussed all three groups, we will look at our discoveries from a holistic perspective—the three in one, a sweet echo of One God who is also three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Jump!* is a *mentoring* book, not a *medical* book (although you'll learn a few medical terms). The focus in these pages is *attitude*, not anatomy; *practical help*, not physician prescriptions; *stories*, not statistics; *life skills*, not life science; *healthy habits*, not hematology. In each of the three sections, I'll share the "aha" that brought about the biggest change in my own life. You will learn

- Strategies to help you feel in control when you feel out of control

- How hormones affect you physically, mentally, and spiritually
- Tips to alleviate your particular symptoms
- Suggestions for living as a godly woman even when PMS makes you feel like the devil
- Ideas that will transform how you view menstruation and how you see yourself as a woman
- Ten benefits of PMS and perimenopause (betcha never thought there was one benefit, let alone ten)

At the end of each chapter you'll find "Change My Heart, O God," thoughts, prayers, or questions designed to personalize the concepts you've just read. In the back of the book is a Bible study, designed to take you deeper still—to move you from a place of information to transformation.

I want you to receive practical, I-can-start-doing-this-today help, but there's something else I hope for you. I hope you'll laugh because hey, when it comes to hormones you've either got to laugh or cry—and laughing is better, right?

### Diary: age 51

---

"If you want to save your tomatoes, cover them now!" I yelled urgently into my cell phone.

"Why?" Sandy asked. "Are they cold?"

I ignored her feeble attempt at humor. "No. A storm is headed in your direction. Golf-ball-sized hail. Torrential rain. High winds."

"Really?" she said doubtfully. "The sky's blue over here."

"Trust me," I said. "Unless you act now, your tomatoes are stewed. You've got five minutes, tops."

Before Sandy hung up the phone to rescue the plants she'd nurtured all summer, I offered a bit of hopeful news. "The storm won't last long. The sun will be back out before you know it."

The forecast I'd given my friend went beyond mere speculation. I knew what Sandy was about to experience because I'd just experienced the same storm myself only a few minutes earlier.

I live high on a plateau on the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. Sandy lives seven hundred feet lower in elevation, fifteen miles east of me on the plains. As I stood on my front porch, I surveyed the area where her home was located from a distance. I clicked off my cell and watched the blackish-green clouds lumber toward her home, dropping sheets of rain and hail. White "marbles" littered my flower beds, and bare stems stood

where hollyhocks had bloomed only moments earlier. Three minutes of devastation, then blue skies and the hint of a rainbow. The storm, small but potent, had not been predicted.

I wished that someone had warned me so I could have saved my hollyhocks, but I took comfort in knowing that my warning had more than likely saved my friend's tomatoes.

Today I stand on the plateau of menopause that overlooks the valley of PMS in which I lived for more than thirty years. From this position, I can look back and see harmful habits that actually made my symptoms worse, ones I'd been blind to in my youth. I know the nature of the storm, the velocity of the winds, the twists and turns of the road in the valley, and the steep uphill climb to the Mount of Menopause. I've discovered truths in God's Word that have completely transformed how I view myself as a woman and how I view God. Only now, from this position, can I see what I did right and where I failed.

Through the words in this book, I am calling you, warning you, in an attempt to help you preserve not your tomatoes but your self-esteem, your health, your relationships, and your connection to God—because PMS impacts all of these.

I've spent many hours praying for you. As I've knelt on my office floor bowed before the Lord, I've asked Him to show me your face, to help me picture you sitting beside me. I've asked Him to give me compassion for the struggles that strangle you, to show me the exact words to write that will seep down into the dry cracks and crevices of your spirit that are in need of soul-soothing.

I know that not every month is bad for you. In fact for the most part, you get by just fine. But other times you go just a little crazy and silently scream, *What is wrong with me? Why do I feel this way?* Helplessly, you watch as others get caught in the tendrils of your own swirling storm, and you hate it. The last thing you want is to hurt those you love. But they *do* get hurt—you know it's true—and you ache because of it.

And there's your own hurt too—the pain in your heart when self-doubts assail your soul just as hurricane winds mercilessly pound coastal shores. You see the decimation, witness the leveled landscape, and wonder, *Can I ever muster the strength to build again?*

Yes, you can. But I must warn you that your own strength will never be enough—you need God's strength. As women, we face impossible challenges,

but nothing is impossible with God—nothing. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do everything *through him who gives me strength*” (italics added).

God is the repairer of broken walls. He is the master builder, the great architect. He can rebuild what has been destroyed. He can restore what has been taken away. God can make all things new. The rebuilding process often requires a divine partnership—God provides the wisdom and the way; we follow His lead and obey.

Yes, life can be better.

Yes, there is help; God is there for you.

Yes, it is possible to live as a godly woman even during hormonal hurricanes.

A paradigm shift, a few tools, and moving in tandem with the living God can make the impossible *possible*.

Before we begin, may I pray for you? Perhaps it seems odd to pray about an issue that conjures up images of swollen breasts, chocolate cravings, and snippy moods. As one woman said, “Lorraine, in the scheme of things, PMS is such a small thing. Surely God has bigger matters to attend to.” To that, I offer the wisdom of a famous Bible teacher who said, “Consider the vastness of our Supreme Exalted King. Then ask yourself,” as Bible teacher G. Gordon says, “Is *anything* big to Him?”

Nothing is big to God. All things matter to Him. You especially matter, so let’s go together before the Holy One, shall we?

*Father*, thank You for Your precious daughter and for the privilege to share my life with her. Please speak personally to her as she reads, and please infuse her heart with hope. Whisper to her the things You want her to change, and then give her the strength to follow through on Your instruction. We love You. We look to You. Amen.