



Menopause

“There is no more creative force in the world than the menopausal woman with zest.”
Margaret Mead

“The heyday of [a] woman’s life is the shady side of fifty.” Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Most readers will recognize the names of these two famous women. Mead lived from 1901 to 1978 and Stanton from 1815 to 1902. Readers of our monthly column know that we enjoy highlighting women from our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Yes, Mead and Stanton are two of the more than 850 women we profile. And even more to the point in this month’s column, many of their most significant achievements occurred after their fiftieth birthday (around the beginning of menopause for most of us).

The opinions expressed by these two amazing women hold true today: many women contribute to our lives and to society as a whole in many significant ways after they reach menopause. With the physical concerns of hot flashes, night sweats and memory lapses—to name just a few of the most annoying symptoms—also comes a recognition that menopause is only the end of one phase of life; many years of productive and creative living remain.

Margaret Mead and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are certainly two zestful women! Let’s look at their accomplishments and legacy.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead's immortal quote is so powerful for us that we used it to start the introduction to our beautiful book. Her quote captures the essence that all change begins with one person, who then convinces another and still another, until a small group convinces the world and the change is then implemented.



A famous anthropologist, Mead is credited with having founded the field of visual anthropology for the work she did on the Indonesian Island of Bali with Gregory Bateson. She also gained fame with the publication of her book of adolescent sexuality, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. She restudied the Manus society (a South Pacific tribal indigenous society) numerous times after she was 50 and began writing a popular column in *Redbook* magazine when she was in her sixties. Many

awards and recognitions came after she turned fifty – she became president of the American Anthropological Association and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In her seventies, Mead was elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Another example of a woman who organized a group of thoughtful, committed citizens who changed the world is **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**.

Stanton met a contemporary of hers, whose name is now familiar to us as well: Lucretia Mott. Mott was at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in



1840 where she was a delegate to that Convention. Stanton was attending the Convention on her honeymoon; her husband was a delegate. The two women bonded when Mott was denied a seat as she was a woman. Together, they vowed to work for both women's rights and the abolition of slavery. It would be eight years before their vow manifested itself in the 1848 Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Prior to that convention, Stanton drafted the **Declaration of Sentiments**.

Three hundred women and men met in Seneca Falls on July 19, 1848, where they debated and refined the Declaration of Sentiments. This document, listing eighteen

grievances" (including that women were denied the right to vote, the right to an education, the right to own property, the right to control their own wages, and the right to have custody of their children in the case of a divorce), was issued after the Convention was concluded.



THE
SENECA FALLS
CONVENTION
July 19—20, 1848

Another momentous event occurred in 1851 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton met **Susan B. Anthony**. This was the beginning of another historic friendship in the suffrage movement that would last for many years – and would change the world.

At 54 years of age, Stanton began 21 year tenure as the president of the **National Woman Suffrage Association**. After the two national suffrage organizations merged in 1890, she served as president of the merged organization for two years. She was a popular lecturer and author, speaking around the country on issues related to women's rights and related topics. In her sixties, Stanton was instrumental in the introduction of the federal suffrage amendment, first proposed in 1876 and then reintroduced every year until it finally was passed by Congress and ratified by the states to become the **Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution** (in 1920). For many years, Stanton was the preeminent outstanding speaker at the Congressional hearings in support of the amendment. Well into her eighties, Stanton was actively writing and speaking. At a gathering in her honor on the occasion of her eightieth birthday, Stanton advocated for women's equality. She remained a torchbearer for women's rights and equality throughout her life.

Many more women who we highlighted in our book have demonstrated zest in their postmenopausal accomplishments. Here are samples of just a few:



Madeleine Albright is named the first female Secretary of State when she is 59 years old.

Malvina Reynolds begins her career as a songwriter and performer at age 50 after years as a newspaperwoman.

Grandma Moses takes up painting in her late seventies.

At age 55, **Rachel Carson** publishes *Silent Spring*, the book credited with reinvigorating the environmental movement – which leads to Earth Day in 1970.

Set lofty goals for YOURSELF! What do you want to accomplish? What is still undone that speaks to your heart's passions? Do you have friends or acquaintances with whom you might work to make a difference in your

chosen field? Are there younger women to mentor and to coach? Examine how you spend your time and what you want to do in this new, exciting phase of your existence. There is so much to life – in every phase. Women do amazing things – no matter what their age. We celebrate all of their accomplishments!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

Charlotte S. Waisman, PhD, is a national champion and advocate for women as a professor and keynote speaker. As an executive coach, Waisman coauthored *50 Activities for Developing Leaders* and *The Leadership Training Activity Book*. She is a principal with a consulting company specializing in leadership and workforce excellence initiatives.



Charlotte S. Waisman

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