



Reproductive System

Feeling Blue

When we begin to age, many changes take place. In women, menopause occurs in their mid-40s to 50s and is marked by the lack of her period for at least one year due to decreased excretion of hormone estrogen (1). Symptoms of menopause include hot flashes, headaches, muscle pain, and mood changes that can sometimes cause depression (1). Men also go through a process called andropause caused by a decrease in the hormone testosterone (4). The decline in testosterone starts for men in their 40s and leads to reduced muscle and bone mass, tiredness, sleeping difficulties, anxiety and sometimes depression (4). However, these symptoms are usually less noticeable than those of menopause. The goal of the simulation “Feeling Blue” is to mimic the symptoms of depression that middle-age males and females experience as the hormones in their bodies change. In this simulation, you will sit in a position where your body language looks closed off. You will also listen to an audio that simulates the depressive thoughts that someone who is aging may think. By completing this simulation, you will better understand the mental struggles that aging men and women face and will be more empathetic to those experiencing this phase of life.

Materials

- A device to play the audio off (computer or phone)
- Headphones (optional)
- Mirror
- Chair

Procedure

1. Complete the precursor simulations if you have not already done so.
2. Open the 2-minute audio clip on a computer or a phone.
3. Find a spot in your home where you can sit undisturbed with your body in a closed-off position (e.g., head facing down, slouching, with arms wrapped up around the stomach).
4. When you are ready, close your eyes and press play on one of the audio clips listed on the web site. Choose the audio that best fits you (male or female voices are available). Listen to the words and imagine yourself in the shoes of the person talking.
5. When the audio ends, reflect on how you feel now compared to before you listened to it.
6. Walk to a closest mirror and spend 2 minutes looking at yourself.
7. Think about how you see yourself now or what thoughts come to mind

Reflection Questions

1. How did listening to the audio clip make you feel?
2. Did you think of yourself differently than you usually do?
3. How do you think these negative emotions would affect your daily activities and social life?