

# SUMMARY MOODY BITCHES

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# **Summary of Moody Bitches by Julie Holland**

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If you've ever wanted a roadmap to the inner workings of the female brain, *Moody Bitches* (2015) is your new travel guide!

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# Introduction

The argument that women are “too emotional” is everywhere; chances are, if you’re a woman, you’ve had this accusation lobbed at you far more than once during your life. We also seem to hear that we’re grumpy, fickle, or annoying a lot thanks to the existence of fun little upgrades to the female existence like PMS, pregnancy, or menstruation. So, if you’re sick of hearing that, then this book is for you! Through the course of this summary, we’ll take an in-depth look at the hormones that drive us (and sometimes drive us crazy) and why the mood swings that have earned a women an unnecessary bad rap are actually evolutionary advantages that make us strong. So, through this summary, you’ll learn:

- Why women are actually entitled to feel grumpy as much as they want
- Why women shouldn’t be subjected to medication that represses their feelings and
- Why coffee after lunch can be detrimental to your hormonal health

# Women Have Feelings For a Reason!

If you're like most women, you can probably name more than a few times where you've criticized yourself for your appearance or your feelings. You've also probably engaged in a lot of negative self-talk by telling yourself things like, "I'm so fat" or "I'm too sensitive." You've probably also noticed that you experience frequent mood swings which can make you doubt your own feelings or lash out at people you love only to feel deeply guilty about it later. But believe it or not, your mood swings don't make you weak and they definitely don't make you a bad person! In fact, they can actually give you an advantage.

That's because the hormonal ups and downs that women experience are evolutionary upgrades which provide them with increased awareness and enable them to protect themselves and their families. What might once have aided cave women in hunting and gathering can now be used to keep a group of women safe on a night out or snatch your baby up before she runs into traffic. Here's how your hormones are actually helpful: your mood swings occur because of the relationship between your brain's neurotransmitters and your hormones, especially that pesky dominant female hormone, estrogen. For optimum mental health and emotional consistency, you want your estrogen levels to stay relatively high and fairly stable. But right before your period, your estrogen levels drop, which makes you more emotional.

During this period of hormonal fluctuation that's often known as PMS, you might cry or get angry more easily. But it also makes you more emotionally intelligent and able to adapt your feelings to what the situation calls for. This ability to empathize with others' emotions and adjust your emotions in response to an interaction's overall tone actually makes you a great communicator and friend. But while it's happening, it can make you feel pretty lousy. It also means that, because of all these ups and downs, women are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression. But that doesn't mean that your mood swings make you "crazy" or "hysterical" or any of the

other misogynistic label that are often slapped on women. It also doesn't mean that you need to be medicated so you can shut those feelings away.

However, that's not to invalidate the fact that some people-- men and women alike-- definitely do fight serious battles with depression and anxiety and do find relief from medication. And it's wonderful that anyone struggling with mental health can find a solution that brings them peace! But it's not wonderful when medication is prescribed to people who don't need it. And unfortunately, because our predominantly patriarchal society often takes issue with women expressing any emotion, psychologists are often quick to prescribe antidepressants to shut up any emotional outbursts as soon as a female patient describes anything resembling symptoms of depression. This problem can also arise through the efforts of well-meaning doctors who are not attempting to suppress or objectify their patients, but who simply don't have enough time in their work day to focus long enough on each patient. This means that their focus is now on simply prescribing quick "fixes" to treat symptoms instead of listening closely to each patient and understanding that women having feelings is not always a "problem" that needs to be "fixed."

# Profound Periods

If you've never thought of your periods as being the gateway to a profound emotional experience, think again! By this point, you're likely well-acquainted with the ups and downs that occur during your period, especially the way you can go from feeling like your most amazing self to being convinced that you're fat, ugly, and no one likes you. But as weird as it might sound, these mood swings aren't just cycles of arbitrary torture; in some cases, they can actually facilitate some vital personal growth. But to maximize that growth, you've first got to understand what's going on in your body. And if you struggle to track your cycle, this exploration can show you why keeping up with your body's internal rhythm is more important than you think.

So, first comes the high-school biology refresher. You probably already know that your menstrual cycle occurs in two distinct parts: the follicular phase and the luteal phase. During the follicular phase, a new egg develops in your ovaries and women might experience a strong evolutionary pull to find a mate. That's also why you might feel sexier during the first half of your period. The luteal phase is where you might feel as though all hell is breaking loose. As your estrogen levels drop, your progesterone levels surge, which is why you start to feel moody and depressed. Your sinking estrogen levels are also responsible for a decrease in your serotonin hormone, which helps regulate your mood and make you happy. In fact, low serotonin is actually one of the leading causes of PMS!

During this part of your cycle, you may experience intense emotions that you're likely to dismiss as being over the top. You might battle irrational thoughts and have to convince yourself that, no, you're not really fat and no, everyone you love doesn't hate you. And while it's awesome to keep your irrational thoughts under control (and everyone definitely should!), the truth is that many feelings which arise during your period are genuine and actually need to be expressed. Because it's easy to repress your feelings during the rest of the month, the drop in estrogen means that you're more



exposed to your feelings. During this time, the feelings that may exist as nagging doubts in the back of your mind are more likely to come to the surface and this can provide you with an important opportunity to explore them. So, although not every feeling you experience during your period is grounded in reality, some are and it can help to listen to them.

# Crazy in Love

If you've ever felt like falling in love can hijack your rational brain and turn you into a bit of an obsessed love junkie, the good news is that you're not crazy. In fact, the hormones which are connected to love hit the female brain with effects as strong as that of pharmaceutical drugs, so when you fall in love, it's absolutely possible that you might act a little crazy! For example, just take a look at dopamine, a neurotransmitter that's responsible for keeping your brain stimulated and functional. It also plays a huge role in how we experience pleasure and, as one of the central chemical elements involved in our experience of physical attraction, it's what makes the process of falling in love positive and exciting.

But when your brain experiences excess levels of dopamine, your serotonin levels plummet. And because serotonin is critical in regulating the way you process your emotions, this fluctuation in hormones can cause people to experience obsessive thoughts they're unable to shake. So, when you start feeling like you want to be around your new love interest all the time and you can't think of anything else, that's why! Your sex drive can also be affected by the prevalence of love hormones and dopamine is responsible for this as well. As your dopamine levels increase, so do your testosterone levels, which means that in moments of heightened attraction, women can experience sexual arousal in much the same way as men do.

Oxytocin, the hormone that's responsible for your sense of trust and the formation of bonds with others, also kicks in when your love hormones are in full swing. During a surge of Oxytocin, you might crave physical contact more than you normally do and you might be more receptive to making connections with strangers. And because your hormone receptors are more stimulated when your estrogen levels increase, women are more likely to fall in love during the first half of their menstrual cycle!

## Opposites (Don't Always) Attract

We all know about the honeymoon phase of relationships, but we know a little less about when it starts to fade. Interestingly enough, for women, that occurs about six to eighteen months after entering a relationship with a new partner. Although that doesn't mean you're guaranteed to fall out of love during this time, it does mean that as you enter a new phase of feeling safe and secure with your partner, you're less awash in that lovey-dovey feeling and more capable of noticing differences between the two of you that may be significant in the relationship's future.

These differences are often prevalent in relationships because women are frequently attracted to people who they believe will complement their own strengths and help them improve their weaknesses. And while that's pretty sound logic, the downside is that those differences sometimes have the potential to cause more harm than help. That's because, once the honeymoon phase is over and you're no longer blinded by infatuation, you may find that your partner's differences are actually pretty annoying to you or that you're more incompatible than you initially thought. Another potential complication is the fact that women often choose partners who embody characteristics that weren't acceptable in her own family.

For example, if you grew up in a household where emotional repression was key, you might be attracted to someone who's loud, open, and emotional because you admire their freedom of expression. But this can create conflict, especially when your partner encounters your family. So, if you're feeling the strain of your partner's differences but you want to save the relationship, mindfulness can be a great way to help. Because mindfulness prioritizes self-awareness and being present in the moment, this can help you to identify the exact triggers and feelings that spark your annoyance with your partner. This knowledge can in turn help you to express your feelings gently and brainstorm creative solutions with your partner.

# Becoming a Mother is a Transformative Experience

Although we already know that motherhood can have a significant impact on a woman's brain and body, we're learning more and more about this process all the time and we can use this knowledge to chart a course of stronger mental and physical health for new mothers. So, to protect your mind and body as a new mom, here are a few best practices to consider. For starters, one of the most important things you can do is avoid medication and listen to your body's intuition when it comes to breastfeeding. Although this may not be possible for everyone, if you're able, it's best to avoid medication completely while pregnant, especially use of antidepressants. Any medication can have an adverse effect on a developing baby, a recent Canadian study lead by professor Anick Berard discovered that exposure to antidepressants in the womb increases the risk of male fetuses developing autism.

There are also some special considerations to keep in mind after your baby is born, particularly when it comes to breastfeeding. Although the process of breastfeeding can be physically challenging or even painful for some women, if at all possible, it's something you should try because breastfeeding develops a powerful connection between mother and baby that no other experience can adequately replicate. And in addition to stimulating your connection, breastfeeding also provides some vital benefits for your baby's health. Because your breast milk is full of enzymes, growth hormones, proteins, and cannabinoids-- a natural substance that occurs through lactations-- and has an effect that's similar to marijuana for your baby. The cannabinoids found in breast milk help keep your baby happy and calm and associate those positive feelings with you.

The process of breastfeeding also helps with building intimacy, which is crucial for a baby's development. Because intimate moments like cuddling stimulate a rush of oxytocin for your baby, your child is literally becoming calmer and happier with every snuggle. The impact of these hormonal responses on your baby's brain means that when you give your children a

foundation of love and affection from their earliest moments, you're literally rewiring their brains to be more receptive to love and healthy relationships.

# Inflammation, Stress, and Depression

Stress never makes a positive difference in anybody's life, but it can have an especially adverse effect on women. That's because it's closely linked to inflammation and depression, both of which are common in the average woman's life. When a woman is stressed, the cortisol levels in her blood increase, her heart starts to beat faster, her immune system is compromised, and inflammation is reduced. This can be a healthy response if it happens in the context of a fight-or-flight situation where stress can help save your life, but if this process occurs on repeat, day after day, and is sustained over a period of years, it can actually have the opposite effect. Instead of reducing inflammation, it begins increasing it, and it can also lead to the development of obesity, heart disease, and a variety of other chronic health problems.

And after existing in "attack mode" for a prolonged period of time, your body becomes worn down and loses energy. If the stress persists even after your body begins its decline, your body can lose the ability to mend itself and your risk of developing depression can soar to an all-time high. So, needless to say, if you're a woman, it's vital that you reduce the stress in your life! But how can you do that? One of the best ways to attack stress is by reducing the "nice girl pressure" in your life. Because many women feel constrained by the societal imperative to repress their real feelings and be "nice" or "good," this can often lead to a lot of emotional repression.

Bottling up your emotions can affect your hormonal balance and reduce the health of your immune system, so the first vital step is cultivating a healthy outlet for emotional expression. Whether you prefer to talk to a therapist, confide in a trusted friend or partner, or simply rant in a diary, venting your emotions is absolutely necessary for preserving your mental and physical health.

# Physical Factors Can Have a Huge Impact on Your Mental Health

Although we might not think about it that way, our diets, sleep patterns, sex lives, and body images can have a tremendous impact on our mental health. So, by taking care of your body, you can also improve your mind! One of the best ways to start is by developing a healthy diet and the road to healthy eating starts with eliminating processed foods. Instead, replace them with natural foods. Although we could go into a lot of scientific explanations about how processed sugars trigger unhealthy habits by re-wiring the pleasure centers in our brains and triggering bursts of dopamine, the simplest answer is that natural foods are just better for us. Because our bodies simply aren't made to handle large quantities of refined sugar, a clean diet of raw foods, proteins, and natural fats can help us to reduce blood sugar and lower our insulin levels.

However, a good diet isn't all it takes to get our health on the right track; we need large quantities of healthy sleep and sex to be successful as well! A good night's rest is especially important for women because the female brain is more susceptible to insomnia. So, if you want to cultivate a healthy sleep pattern, avoid coffee after 2:00 pm (remember how we said earlier that afternoon lattes aren't a great idea?), cut back on your TV watching before bed, and construct a new bedtime routine that features a relaxing bath and a cup of herbal tea. For maximum relaxation, you might even try some refreshing bedtime yoga poses! Healthy sex is also important because, just like exercise, good sex and satisfying orgasms can de-stress you, strengthen your heart health, and release endorphins that increase blood flow to your vagina which promotes genital health! It can also boost self-esteem and make you happier. Who knew sex could be so crucial for your health!

# Reconnect With Your Inner Self

If your work requires you to sit and stare at a computer screen for long periods of time each day and you find yourself feeling lousy all the time, there's no mystery about the cause! Hands down, a lack of physical activity is the most dangerous threat to female health. And exercise is actually just as important for your mind as it is for your body! That's because exercise releases positive endorphins that almost function as a morphine drip for your body. It can even increase your body's production of hormones like serotonin and dopamine, keeping you happy, healthy, and relaxed.

However, because it can often be unpleasant to start exercising if you're not used to it, many people make the mistake of assuming that exercising has to be a pain. But nothing could be further from the truth! You also don't have to follow any prescriptive type or pattern of exercise; rather, the best form of exercise is an activity you'll enjoy and actually do. So, whether that's swimming, running, taking Zumba classes, or going kayaking, the possibilities are endless! Just get outside and find a new activity that connects with you. But it's also important that, in your quest to be more active, you don't forget to check in with yourself from time to time. Periods of inner reflection are just as important as exercise and this can do wonders for your mental health.

One of the best ways to disconnect from the pressures of your daily life and reconnect with your inner self is to spend time alone in nature. The combination of natural light and engaging with your surroundings has been proven to boost creativity, self-esteem, and mental acuity, in addition to reducing anxiety and mental fatigue. So, take time for a long walk through a forest or a stroll through a field of flowers and-- literally-- stop and smell the roses! What we've often dismissed as nonproductive can actually be crucial for your mental health. And as you try to engage with the real you, the one that gets trapped under the competing pressures of every day, it's also important that you remember to stop and breathe. Even something as simple as a few moments of deep breathing in which you concentrate on



each inhalation and exhalation can help you to strengthen your self-awareness and calm down.

## Final Summary

Women are often the subjects of a lot of discrimination and name-calling because of their hormones and mood swings, but these hormonal fluctuations exist for a reason. They're also more beneficial to women than we realize and they should be celebrated because they enable women to be strong communicators, protectors, and partners.



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