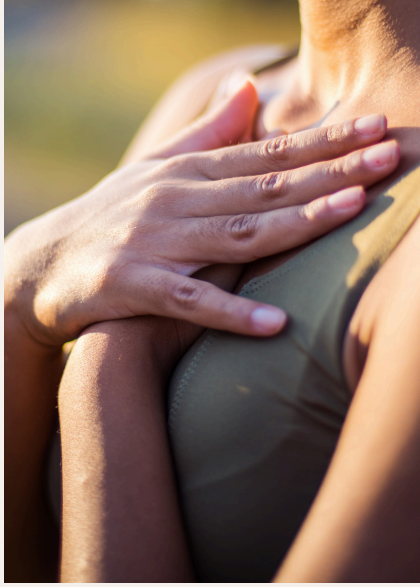
A GUIDE FOR TACKLING

hot flashes

...(naturally)

BY PERINAVIGATHER

INTRODUCTION



It is helpful to remember that hot flashes aren't just about hormones; they are also linked to nervous system regulation and emotional processing. Hot flashes look different for every woman, some experience just a few mild waves, others have seven or more flashes a day.

Hot flashes tend to disrupt sleep, focus, mood, increase anxiety and have a negative impact on daily life.

While hormone replacement therapy is considered the gold standard for vasomotor symptoms (e.g., hot flashes), other natural alternatives have been shown to help with hot flash frequency and intensity, increasing comfort and calm (and sleep!).

These techniques are recommended as non-drug options, especially when paired with healthy eating and regular movement.

STRATEGY ONE

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Why it works:
CBT helps you notice and change unhelpful thoughts and habits that make hot flashes feel even more overwhelming. It does not “turn off” hot flashes, but it can reduce how upsetting they feel, how much they interfere with daily life and sleep, and can sometimes reduce how often you notice them.

Large studies show CBT clearly improves hot-flash “bother,” mood, and quality of life, which is why The Menopause Society recommends it as a proven non-hormone treatment for hot flashes and night sweats.

CBT HOW TO:

1. Notice the thought: During a hot flash, catch the first thought ("This is unbearable," "I'm going to embarrass myself," "I'll never fall back asleep").
2. Swap the thought: Gently replace it with a calmer, more accurate statement ("This is uncomfortable but temporary," "My body is doing something normal,").
3. Shift the focus: Bring attention to something you can control right now, cooling your body, slowing your breathing, or grounding with your senses (what you can see, hear, feel).
4. Practice when calm: Spend a few minutes most days writing down one stressful thought and a kinder, more realistic alternative so it's easier to grab in the moment.
5. Use structured support: Workbooks, apps, or brief therapy specifically designed for menopause symptoms can walk you through small steps week by week.

Free Tools:

- Free CBT Menopause Workbook by Dr. Anna Cantlay
- Free CTT Audio Programs (National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists)
- Health and Her Free Menopause App

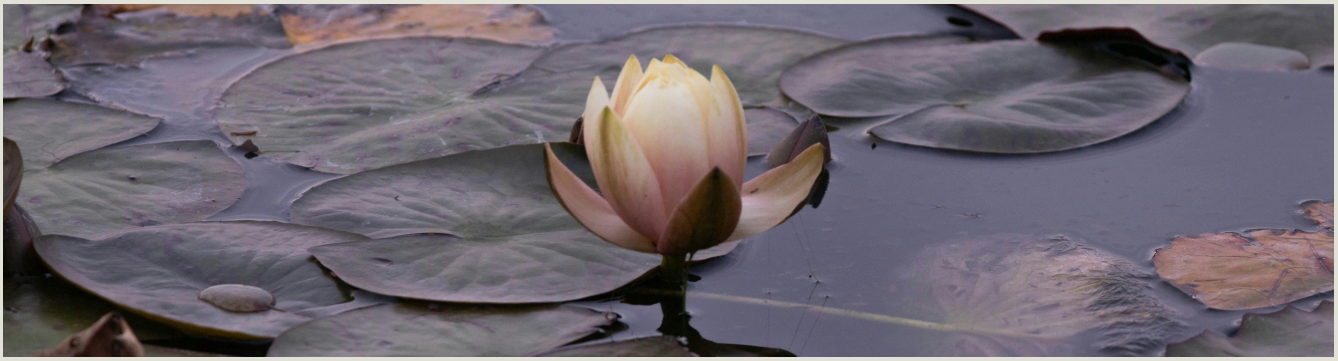
STRATEGY TWO

HYPNOTHERAPY

Why it works:
Clinical hypnosis is a guided form of deep relaxation plus focused imagery (often “cooling” imagery) that helps your brain and nervous system react differently to hot flashes.

In good-quality studies, women who did a short course of clinical hypnosis had a large drop in hot flash frequency (around 50–70%) and in how intense and bothersome they felt, along with better sleep and mood.

Because of these results, The Menopause Society lists clinical hypnosis as a recommended non-hormone treatment for hot flashes and night sweats.



HYPNOTHERAPY HOW TO:

With a professional:

1. Work with a trained clinician such as a psychologist, counselor, physician, or certified hypnotherapist with experience in menopause or hot flashes.
2. In sessions, you are usually guided into a calm, deeply relaxed state and taught to use cooling imagery, such as cool air, ocean waves, snow, or turning down an internal “temperature dial.”
3. Most research-based programs involve about 5 sessions plus home practice between visits.
4. Over time, your body learns to shift into a calmer, cooler response more quickly when a hot flash starts.

If you do not have access to a professional, a free or low-cost self-hypnosis recording can still help. Daily practice with a menopause-specific hypnosis audio can be a realistic at-home option for reducing hot flashes and improving sleep.

Look for recordings created by a hospital, university, researcher, licensed psychologist, or trained hypnotherapist who specifically mentions menopause or hot flashes.

HYPNOTHERAPY HOW TO (CONT'D):

Self-Guided:

1. Sit or lie somewhere comfortable and safe.
2. Play a calming hypnosis or guided imagery recording.
3. Let your body relax while imagining cool sensations like a breeze, cool water, shade, or snow.
4. Practice once a day, even on days when symptoms are mild.
5. Use the same imagery at the first sign of a hot flash or when you wake with night sweats.

Free Tools:

- EverCalm Menopause Hypnosis (app)
- A "guided hypnotherapy for hot flashes" YouTube session by a clearly licensed clinician (e.g., clinical hypnotherapist or psychologist)
- UCLA Mindful (for general relaxation and coping)

SAFETY NOTE:
Always check who created an audio or video (look for licensed clinicians or reputable health organizations), and do not use these recordings while driving or operating machinery. If you have a history of a serious mental health condition, check with a healthcare professional before using hypnosis recordings regularly.

STRATEGY THREE

COMFORT BOOSTERS

These are not “cures” for hot flashes, and big studies have not shown them to dramatically cut the number of flashes on their own. They are simple, low-risk changes that many women find make hot flashes and night sweats easier to live with day to day.

1: Cooling & Calming During the Day

Why it helps:
When your internal “thermostat” is extra sensitive, small rises in body heat (warm rooms, hot drinks, stress) can tip you into a hot flash. Cooling your body and gently calming your nervous system won’t stop every flash, but it can make them shorter, less intense, and less disruptive.

2: Night-Sweat Friendly Sleep Routine

Why it helps:
Night sweats are exhausting because they wake you up and can leave you wired and anxious. A “night-sweat friendly” sleep routine focuses on cooling your sleep environment and making it easier to fall back asleep after a flash, which can improve sleep quality even if night sweats still occur.

DAYTIME COOLING HOW TO:

- Dress for quick cooling:
  - Wear light layers you can easily take off.
  - Choose breathable fabrics like cotton, linen, or moisture-wicking materials.
- Keep cool tools handy:
  - Carry a small handheld or folding fan.
  - Sip cool or iced water regularly.
  - When a flash hits, place a cool cloth or cold pack (wrapped in fabric) on the back of your neck or chest.
- Adjust your environment when possible:
  - Lower the thermostat a little if you can.
  - Open a window or use a fan in stuffy spaces.
  - Step outside a hot room, car, or kitchen for a few minutes to cool down.
- Pair cooling with calming:
  - During a flash, repeat a steadying phrase such as “This is uncomfortable, but it will pass,” or “My body is doing something normal, and I can ride this wave.”
  - Breathe in gently through your nose, then breathe out slowly through pursed lips, keeping your shoulders relaxed.

How to think about it:
These steps may not change your hormone levels, but they can give you a sense of control and reduce how overwhelming each flash feels.

NIGHTTIME ROUTINE HOW TO:

- Cool down your bedroom:
  - Keep the room on the cooler side if you can.
  - Use a fan or open window for airflow.
  - Keep a cold pack or cool, damp cloth next to your bed so you can quickly place it on your neck or chest if you wake sweating.
- Choose sweat-smart bedding:
  - Use light, breathable sheets and blankets.
  - Wear loose, breathable, or moisture-wicking sleepwear.
  - Keep a spare T-shirt or pajama top by the bed so you can quickly change if your clothes get soaked.
- Wind down gently:
  - Dim lights and reduce electronic use >30 minutes before bed.
  - Try a short, calming practice: gentle stretches, a soothing podcast, or a few minutes of slow, comfortable breathing in bed.
- Have a simple “night plan”:
  - When a night sweat wakes you, avoid turning on bright lights.
  - Do a quick cool-down: flip your pillow to the cool side, use your fan or cool cloth, take a sip of cool water.
  - Repeat a calming phrase like “This is a wave; it will pass” instead of slipping into worry spirals about tomorrow.

How to think about it:
The goal isn’t a flash-free night; it’s more comfort, quicker cool-downs, and an easier path back to sleep so you feel better the next day.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy): Evidence level: Strong research – multiple clinical trials show CBT reduces how bothersome hot flashes feel and improves mood, sleep, and quality of life in midlife women.

Clinical Hypnosis / Hypnotherapy (including self-guided audio): Evidence level: Strong research – well-designed studies show hypnosis can significantly reduce hot flash frequency and severity and improve sleep and mood, and newer trials support daily self-guided audio as an effective option.

Comfort Booster – Cooling & Calming During the Day: Evidence level: limited research – large studies do not show big changes in hot-flash numbers from cooling techniques alone, but many women report they feel cooler, more in control, and less distressed.

Comfort Booster – Night-Sweat Friendly Sleep Routine: Evidence level: limited research – sleep-environment and relaxation changes have not been proven to treat hot flashes, but they can improve comfort and sleep quality, which often makes symptoms easier to handle.

THANK YOU!

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