



A LIFE OF TWO HALVES

*The menopause doesn't mean we have to get fat, weak and more grumpy. Jill Shaw Ruddock, author of the bestselling *Second Half of Your Life*, tells Sam Ashburn about her continuing challenge to rebrand the 'change' with her new drop-in centre*

ACCORDING TO JILL Shaw Ruddock, the menopause is a gift. That may not resonate with absolutely everyone of a certain age, but the author of the bestselling book *The Second Half of Your Life*, which provides prescriptive advice to help women use the gift of menopause to make the most of the second half of their lives, is convinced.

She has identified five essential components needed to transform the way we age: Rediscover a Passion; Have a Purpose Greater than Yourself; Exercise; Eat Nutritionally; Stay Connected to Family, Friends and Your Community – which is where, of course, her new brainchild, The Second Half Centre comes in (this will be, in case you're wondering, for both men and women).

There, Ruddock will be able to put her ideology into practice and roll out her five-a-day throughout the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

'The difference the book made to so many people made me realise that I needed to think beyond the book and figure out how to bring my book to life,' said Ruddock.

The Second Half Centre is due to open at the St Charles NHS hospital in West London in the first half of 2012. It will target one of the many deprived areas of London – North Kensington. The Second Half Centre, in partnership with the well-

established charity Open Age, will be a place where both men and women over the age of 50 from all socio-economic backgrounds can come together to connect socially, learn new skills, exercise and become both psychologically and physically healthier.

Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Councillor Julie Mills says, 'Isolation and loneliness makes us old before our time. I have made tackling loneliness my mandate

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of my mayoral term. We are in great need of an integrated social and healthcare centre such as The Second Half Centre in North Kensington.'

It is the reason the Mayor has selected The Second Half of Your Life Foundation as her charity in 2011-2012. She has created a bursary programme from private donations throughout the borough to ensure the underprivileged can attend either a full morning or afternoon of activities, plus a meal, for a nominal fee of £2.

It is Ruddock's hope that The Second Half Centre will become the hub of the neighbourhood, encouraging all those affected by isolation and loneliness to develop new skills, take up new hobbies, and re-

discover dormant hobbies in a safe and nurturing environment. This will enable our ageing population to increase their confidence, make new friends and connect with others who share common interests.

'We must all join together because we are all in this together,' says Ruddock. 'A woman who is 50 and healthy today will live on average until 96, and a man 91.'

'It is the choices we make that will determine if we simply survive or thrive

for the rest of our lives,' she adds.

The centre will attempt to redefine ageing and change lives, and boasts an eclectic and impressive list of activities from needlepoint to Twitter via belly dancing and a menopause masterclass and sessions on sexuality and intimacy for the over-50s.

'Of course we have to age,' says Ruddock. 'But we do not have to grow old. How we grow old, we can control.'

◆ *For more about how to volunteer your time or donate money to The Second Half Centre, email: jill@secondhalffoundation.com*

◆ *The Second Half of Your Life is published by Vermilion, priced £12.99.*