

**SELF-RELATION AS A KEY DIMENSION OF ECOLOGICAL THINKING  
IN THE CLIMACTERIC PERIOD OF WOMEN 40+  
(Within the Context of the Integrative MindEco Model)**

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*The article examines self-relation as an independent psychological construct and a key dimension of ecological thinking in women during the climacteric period after the age of forty. The study demonstrates that the transformation of self-relation during this life stage has a systemic character and significantly determines the direction of personal adaptation, emotional stability, and psychological well-being. The methodological foundation of the research is the integrative model of ecological thinking MindEco, developed since 2020 and applied in psychological counseling and educational practice.*

*Special attention is paid to the relationship between self-relation, identity transformation, body perception, emotional regulation, and existential reinterpretation during the climacteric transition. The article differentiates ecological and non-ecological scenarios of self-perception and analyzes the psychological consequences of each. The MindEco model considers self-relation not merely as a component of personality structure but as a central regulatory module influencing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adaptation.*

*The practical section presents psychological mechanisms and supportive strategies aimed at developing ecological self-relation, strengthening self-worth, reducing anxiety, and forming a mature model of self-perception in adulthood.*

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## Introduction

The climacteric period represents one of the most complex transitional stages in a woman's psychological development. Beyond physiological and hormonal changes, this stage initiates profound transformations in identity, emotional regulation, social positioning, and existential perception. For many women, the age after forty becomes a period of reassessment of life meanings, personal achievements, relationships, and future perspectives.

Unlike earlier developmental crises associated with social adaptation or role acquisition, the climacteric transition directly affects the deeper structures of self-perception. The woman encounters changes in bodily image, reproductive identity, social expectations, and internal psychological narratives. These processes frequently provoke increased anxiety, emotional instability, feelings of loss, or self-devaluation.

Modern psychological research increasingly recognizes that the quality of adaptation during this period depends not solely on biological factors but also on the individual's internal psychological framework. In this context, self-relation becomes a central factor of resilience and adaptation.

Within the integrative MindEco model, ecological thinking is understood as a multidimensional system of conscious interaction with oneself, others, emotions, body, and life processes. One of the core dimensions of this system is the line "relationship with oneself," which determines the degree of internal support, self-acceptance, and psychological sustainability during periods of transformation.

The present article aims to deepen the understanding of self-relation as a systemic psychological construct and to analyze its role in shaping ecological thinking during the climacteric period in women over forty.

## Theoretical Foundations of Self-Relation

Self-relation is a multidimensional psychological phenomenon reflecting the individual's stable emotional, cognitive, and behavioral interaction with oneself. Unlike self-esteem, which is primarily evaluative and dependent on external comparison, self-relation includes deeper processes of self-acceptance, internal dialogue, self-support, and existential self-perception.

In classical psychology, aspects of self-relation were addressed in the works of numerous theorists. Erik Erikson emphasized the importance of identity restructuring during adulthood and described middle adulthood as a period requiring reinterpretation of personal meaning and integrity. Erik Erikson viewed psychological maturity as the ability to maintain continuity of self despite inevitable life changes.

Analytical psychology, particularly the work of Carl Gustav Jung, considered midlife as a stage of individuation — a process through which a person moves toward deeper integration of the personality. Jung argued that crises emerging in midlife often represent not destruction but psychological reorganization and expansion of consciousness.

Russian psychological traditions also contributed significantly to the understanding of personality and self-perception. Sergey Rubinstein emphasized the unity of consciousness and activity, arguing that personality develops through active internal interaction with reality. Boris Ananyev considered personality development inseparable from biological, social, and psychological processes.

Within contemporary integrative psychology, self-relation is increasingly understood as a dynamic regulatory system influencing emotional resilience, behavioral adaptation, and existential stability.

### **Climacteric Period as a Psychological Transition**

The climacteric period should not be interpreted exclusively as a biological or medical phenomenon. From a psychological perspective, it represents a developmental transition involving restructuring of identity, emotional priorities, and life meanings.

Women during this stage often face several interconnected processes:

- changes in body perception;
- reevaluation of attractiveness and femininity;
- transformation of family and social roles;
- increased existential reflection;
- reassessment of unrealized goals and aspirations;
- changes in emotional sensitivity and vulnerability.

The internal experience of aging is influenced not only by physiological changes but also by sociocultural narratives surrounding female age and value. In many societies, youthfulness remains associated with social desirability, productivity, and attractiveness. Consequently, women may internalize age-related fears and develop destructive self-perception patterns.

Non-ecological adaptation frequently manifests through:

- denial of age-related changes;
- chronic self-criticism;
- perfectionism;
- emotional suppression;
- anxiety concerning appearance and social relevance;
- fear of losing personal significance.

Such mechanisms gradually weaken psychological resilience and contribute to emotional exhaustion.

In contrast, ecological adaptation involves conscious acceptance of change, flexible identity restructuring, and development of mature self-support mechanisms.

### **Self-Relation as the Central Line of Ecological Thinking**

Within the MindEco framework, ecological thinking is conceptualized as a system of harmonious interaction between cognitive, emotional, behavioral, bodily, and existential dimensions of personality.

The line “relationship with oneself” occupies a central position because it regulates:

- interpretation of personal experiences;
- emotional response to change;
- resilience during crises;
- quality of internal dialogue;
- perception of personal value;
- ability to maintain psychological boundaries.

A woman with ecological self-relation demonstrates:

- acceptance of bodily transformation without self-rejection;
- emotional flexibility;
- reduced dependence on external validation;
- stable self-worth;
- capacity for compassionate self-support;
- readiness for psychological growth.

The MindEco model suggests that ecological self-relation functions as an adaptive regulatory mechanism. Rather than resisting inevitable transformations, the individual learns to integrate them into a renewed self-concept.

Thus, the climacteric period can become not a stage of decline, but a stage of psychological maturation and expanded self-awareness.

### **Comparative Analysis of Ecological and Non-Ecological Scenarios**

#### **Non-Ecological Scenario**

The non-ecological scenario is characterized by rigid resistance to internal and external changes. The woman attempts to preserve previous identity structures without adapting them to new developmental realities.

Psychological markers include:

- chronic dissatisfaction with appearance;
- self-devaluation;
- excessive comparison with younger women;
- emotional instability;
- dependence on external approval;
- fear of aging;
- internalized shame regarding bodily changes.

In this scenario, self-relation becomes conflict-based. Internal dialogue is dominated by criticism, anxiety, and emotional rejection. Psychological energy is directed toward fighting natural developmental processes, which intensifies stress and reduces adaptive capacity.

Long-term consequences may include:

- depressive symptoms;
- psychosomatic manifestations;
- increased interpersonal conflicts;
- emotional burnout;

- identity diffusion.

### **Ecological Scenario**

The ecological scenario involves conscious acceptance and reinterpretation of age-related transformation.

Key characteristics include:

- mature perception of femininity;
- acceptance of bodily reality;
- emotional self-support;
- flexible identity restructuring;
- internal stability;
- development of new life meanings;
- strengthening of personal autonomy.

In this model, the woman no longer perceives aging as loss alone. Instead, maturity becomes associated with wisdom, authenticity, emotional depth, and expanded personal freedom.

The internal dialogue changes from criticism to cooperation with oneself. Emotional energy becomes directed toward growth, creativity, relationships, and self-realization.

### **Practical Aspects of Forming Ecological Self-Relation**

Practical psychological work within the MindEco model demonstrates that ecological self-relation can be consciously developed.

The following directions are particularly effective:

#### **1. Reconstruction of Internal Dialogue**

Women learn to identify destructive self-criticism and replace it with supportive and realistic internal communication.

This process includes:

- awareness of automatic negative thoughts;
- reduction of perfectionistic expectations;
- development of emotional self-compassion

#### **2. Reframing of Body Perception**

The body is no longer viewed exclusively through the lens of youth and external attractiveness.

Instead, psychological work focuses on:

- gratitude toward bodily experience;
- restoration of bodily trust;
- reduction of shame-based perception;
- strengthening embodiment awareness.

#### **3. Identity Expansion**

Women are encouraged to move beyond narrow socially imposed roles and explore broader dimensions of identity:

- creativity;
- intellectual development;
- mentoring;
- social contribution;
- spiritual growth.

This helps reduce the fear associated with role transformation.

#### **4. Development of Emotional Ecologicality**

An important aspect of ecological thinking is the ability to experience emotions without suppression or destructive dramatization.

Psychological support includes:

- emotional regulation skills;
- anxiety management;
- reflective practices;
- mindfulness techniques;
- development of emotional resilience.

#### **The MindEco Model as an Integrative Framework**

The MindEco model integrates elements of:

- developmental psychology;
- existential psychology;
- cognitive approaches;
- emotional regulation theory;
- body-oriented psychology;
- ecological models of consciousness.

The model views personality as a dynamic ecosystem where cognitive patterns, emotions, bodily experience, and identity processes continuously interact.

The line “relationship with oneself” functions as a systemic regulator because it directly influences:

- interpretation of life events;
- emotional adaptation;
- behavioral strategies;
- interpersonal relationships;
- existential meaning-making.

In women during the climacteric period, this line becomes especially significant due to the intensity of internal restructuring processes.

#### **Conclusion**

The climacteric period represents not only a physiological transition but also a profound psychological transformation affecting identity, body perception, emotional stability, and existential self-awareness.

Within the integrative MindEco model, self-relation is understood as a key systemic dimension of ecological thinking. The quality of this self-relation largely determines whether the woman experiences the climacteric transition as a period of crisis and loss or as a stage of maturity, internal growth, and psychological integration.

Ecological self-relation enables the individual to preserve internal stability while adapting to inevitable life changes. Through conscious acceptance, emotional flexibility, and reconstruction of identity, women may transform this life stage into a period of expanded self-awareness and personal development.

The MindEco approach demonstrates that psychological sustainability in adulthood depends not on denial of change, but on the capacity to establish a mature, respectful, and ecologically balanced relationship with oneself.

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