

WORPLACE WELLNESS

WORKSHOP GUIDE



CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	2
LEARNING OBJECTIVES.....	3
FEATURED VIDEOS	3
FILM 1 – CREATING A PERIOD POSITIVE WORKPLACE.....	4
FILM 2 – CREATING AN OPEN & POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR MENOPAUSAL STAFF.....	5
GROUP EXERCISE.....	8

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the session the group should understand that menopause and period problems are not just a women's issue! It will directly or indirectly impact everyone at some point.

At some point, you will know a parent, daughter, partner, friend, or colleague going through them. It's not a women's issue, it's one that will indirectly impact everyone – and in the workplace in particular.

Whether you are experiencing one of them yourself, managing someone experiencing them or think that it doesn't impact you directly right now, this course will help you understand their effects and how you can respond.

LOOK – watch the videos and reflect on the content and message.

THINK – activities and questions linking the videos to their own experience and workplace.

REMEMBER – a summary of the key learning points.

Each section relating to the videos will last around 15 minutes.

GROUP EXERCISE – At the end of the series of videos there is a practical exercise which will bring the learnings together. Delegates should be encouraged to record any personal development actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Creating a Period Positive Workplace
- Creating an Open and Positive Environment for Menopausal Staff

FILM 1 – CREATING A PERIOD POSITIVE WORKPLACE

LOOK (play video, 6 minutes)

Give the group some background before you show the film 'a Period Drama'.

Talking about periods in the workplace needs to change from being taboo to unremarkable. Those who suffer with painful periods will likely know how it feels to try and hide this at work. Smiling through gritted teeth during meetings when all you want to do is lie down, taking a concoction of painkillers to get you through another hour at your desk, lying to colleagues and blaming a headache for your unusual quietness.

There is also a stigma associated with the topic, so people with periods find themselves lying about their reasons for being sick as opposed to feeling empowered to share the truth as to why they are suffering. Apart from anything else those who work for corporations that have a very competitive work culture may not want to be seen as "feeble" or "fussy".

We need to build a better workplace and culture surrounding menstrual health where talking about periods is unremarkable.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Share with the group that research shows that 73% have struggled to do their work in the way they want because of their period. The most common issues experienced are; low energy (83%) being in pain (79%) less concentration (61%) feeling anxious about leaking (57%) and having to stop work to take or buy pain medication (50%)”

Ask the group to think about the actions that management and those who have periods can take to build a positive and supportive environment. Responses might include the following.

Management

- Management, first and foremost, has a responsibility to ensure that these conversations are taking place within the workplace and that the company is helping people who have periods feel supported with regards to all aspects of their health.
- Creating a safe space in which each employee knows that they're going to be able to talk about any challenges regarding all areas of their health - from mental health through to the physical symptoms associated with menstruation.
- Protection policies and policies focusing on the language surrounding periods could be incredibly beneficial for the inclusion of trans men who still have periods and non-binary people who have periods.
- Leadership teams are often predominately male, so, it is imperative that they educate themselves on menstrual health - including menopausal and perimenopausal health - so that they're fully equipped to lead teams with women and people with periods within them.

People with periods

- To advocate for ourselves in the workplace, we need to really prioritise self-care. Taking the time to slow down and listen to what your body is saying to you, not overworking or over-scheduling your diary during this time if we're not feeling our best can significantly aid our mental health and wellbeing.
- Speaking to other colleagues and management within the workplace can help us to feel safe and supported as opposed to feeling isolated, too.

- Take the brave step to be open with your manager about when we are struggling due to our menstrual cycle. If your period affects your ability to work, then your manager should know that so they can be supportive. And please see a doctor if your menstrual cycle affects your ability to perform day to day tasks.

REMEMBER

We need to build a better workplace and culture surrounding menstrual health where talking about periods is unremarkable. Things have improved in some workplaces, with both employees and employers alike more open to discussing the impact of menstrual cycles and accepting that staff may have different needs throughout the month.

If the group includes people experiencing it themselves remind them of the learning messages to be honest about how it affects them.

- Where you feel comfortable, be honest and open with how your cycle impacts you at work. It's important to normalise these conversations to remove any stigma.
- Take time to slow down and listen to what your body is saying to you – try to organise your workload accordingly so you're not stretching or over-scheduling yourself if you're not feeling your best.
- Be open with your managers about when you are struggling due to your menstrual cycle and, if you know, what will help. If your period affects your ability to work, then your manager should know so they can understand how they can support.

If the group includes managers and leaders remind them to educate themselves and provide support.

- Educate yourself on menstrual health – including menopausal and perimenopausal health – so that you're comfortable talking about these topics and equipped to lead teams with women and people with periods within them.
- Create a culture of honesty in your team, in which each employee knows that they have a safe space to talk about health issues affecting their work, including symptoms associated with menstruation.

Finally, if the group includes people who feel it doesn't impact them directly right now, remind them of the value of educating themselves.

- Understand the impact the menstrual cycle has on women and those who have periods – the physical, mental and emotional symptoms – and become comfortable talking about them respectfully.
- Where appropriate, ensure your colleagues with menstrual cycles know you are here to talk or support if they need it.

FILM 2 – CREATING AN OPEN & POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR MENOPAUSAL STAFF

LOOK (play video, 5 minutes)

Set the scene for the team before showing the video. Whether you are experiencing the menopause yourself, managing someone experiencing menopause or think that it doesn't impact you directly right now, this session will help you understand it's effects and how you can respond.

You are about to watch 'Take Over' and meet Louise. Through her we will see the inner workings of an office manager's menopausal body re-imagined as a corporation facing a hostile takeover bid.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

The medical definition of menopause is when periods finally stop. In everyday use, we use the term 'menopause' or 'perimenopause' to refer to all the changes that happen around the time of your periods stopping. These can start before your periods stop and can carry on for long after your last period ends.

Common menopause symptoms that may influence people at work include.

- Tiredness
- Hot flushes
- Heart palpitations
- Poor memory/brain fog
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood changes/anxiety
- Needing the loo more
- Sleep issues
- Joint pains/skin irritation

Ask the group to discuss what they think the common myths and attitudes relating to the menopause are and how we might respond to them. Points covered should include the following.

"Menopause is a women's issue".

At some point, you will know a parent, daughter, partner, friend, or colleague going through menopause. It's not a women's issue, it's one that will indirectly impact everyone – and your business too.

"Menopause means you're past it".

Far from it! Women of menopausal age are the fastest-growing demographic of the UK workforce – many are your senior teammates, and some even start their own businesses at this stage in life.

"Only women in their 50's are affected by the menopause".

1 in 100 women under 40 will experience 'early menopause'. Plus, some people will experience menopause symptoms into their 60s or 70s – there is no one "menopausal age".

"Menopause is just hot flushes".

As you'll see from the list of common symptoms, it's much more than that – menopause can cause physical, psychological, and behavioural symptoms, which differ person to person.

“You shouldn’t talk about menopause at work”.

Menopause is a natural life stage that 50% of the population will go through. There’s no shame in talking about it as openly as you would a colleague who’s expecting a baby.

REMEMBER

Time to conclude the session.

If the group includes people experiencing the symptoms of menopause, remind them to ask for support:

- Speak up about what you want – a fan at your desk, flexible working arrangements or a more breathable uniform.
- Seek help if you need it – if you’re struggling, be open with your manager about what you’re dealing with and arrange to see your GP to find a treatment that’s right for you.
- Remember, it’s completely normal and there’s nothing to be embarrassed about.

If the group includes people managing someone experiencing the symptoms of menopause, remind them to provide support:

- Have an open-door policy – check in on your team and, if you suspect that one of them is struggling, let them know you’re here if they need to talk.
- Know what support you have in place and talk to your HR team if you think it could be improved.
- Educate yourself – the more you know, the better manager you’ll be to team members going through the menopause.

If the group includes people who feel it doesn’t impact them directly right now, remind them to be aware:

- Understand that menopause will impact everyone, either directly or indirectly and educate yourself accordingly – at some point, you will experience or will know a parent, daughter, partner, friend, or colleague going through menopause.

GROUP EXERCISE

Ask the group to write their name, what they learned, and any lingering questions on a blank card.

Before they leave, direct them to deposit their cards in a folder labeled either:

“Got It”

“More Information, Please,” or

“I Need Some Help!”

whichever best represents their understanding of the sessions content.