Every woman will go through the menopause, so why is it rarely discussed openly in a work environment?

A significant cultural shift is required in the workplace to openly discuss menopause. Currently, women are afraid to speak up about their own symptoms and ask for help when they so desperately need it.

It is a serious issue considering every woman will go through the menopause.

The average age range for menopause in the UK is 45 to 55 years old, and depending on demographics, this can represent a large percentage of a workforce.

Menopause symptoms are wide-rangiing from hot flushes and memory/concentration challenges to brain fog and severe anxiety with mental health issues. Every woman’s menopause experience is different, lasting for different periods of time.

The menopause is a life event, not an illness. Around 80% of women going through the menopause in the UK have symptoms and 25% of these have severe symptoms. Over 75% of women do not realise their symptoms are due to the menopause. This can be a challenge for them, their colleagues and employers.

There are increasing numbers of menopausal women in work. Two-thirds of women going through the menopause say they have no support at work meaning they choose to introduce their own reasonable adjustments such as avoiding...
promotion, taking a lesser role, reducing hours, and 10% even leave work altogether.

Results of recent Talking Menopause client surveys showed women were embarrassed and ashamed, saying they feel weak and have been mocked and made a joke of when discussing menopause at work.

ENGAGING IN THE MENOPAUSE AT WORK

Given this lack of awareness of menopause and support for women, it’s important to consider how menopause aware your organisation is. Consider:

- Is your organisation engaged in the menopause and are women given the confidence to be open about their menopausal challenges?
- Are the health, safety and wellbeing of menopausal employees effectively managed?
- How can women be supported on their menopausal journey to ensure productively levels are managed and optimised for individuals, their colleagues and the organisation?

These are good questions to ask human resources if you think more could be done.

POSITIVE MENOPAUSE DISCUSSIONS

Menopause needs normalising, acknowledging and accepting across all levels of an organisation. It should not be treated in isolation.

A recent survey undertaken by West Midlands Police found that over 80% of women going through the menopause admitted to their symptoms having affected them at work and over 85% agreed managers would benefit from menopausal training.

Women often tell us they are uncomfortable talking to managers about menopause, how employers do not understand it and the impact and challenges it can bring. However, by having these conversations a positive and inclusive working culture can be developed.

MANAGING MENOPAUSE AT WORK

When menopause is managed well, for example by an employer providing simple reasonable adjustments such as the provision of a desk fan or flexible working arrangements, it can prove beneficial for both parties, including reducing associated issues such as absenteeism, and improving productivity.

Raising awareness through workshops and conferences also helps to give women the confidence to speak up and ask for help as well as get a clear understanding of their symptoms and impact by facilitating menopause conversations.

Human resources, occupational health and employee assistance programmes are all important areas which can actively support individuals and positively impact menopause. General awareness wellbeing programmes have also proven to be a good way of introducing menopause to a wider audience.

Menopause should be visible in any diversity and inclusion programmes and health and safety assessments.

It is recommended that organisations conduct a review of practices and procedures on current support for menopausal women. For example, existing women’s networks, informal and support or interest groups can be positive places to initiate menopause discussions.

Our client survey identified the following key questions, which can be useful and insightful in helping organisations baseline their response to menopause:

- Do you discuss menopause at work?
- Where do you go to get support?

So, where can an organisation start? Firstly, by understanding that menopause is more than hot flushes, and secondly, simply by talking openly about it, making it visible, normalising it. How about asking “Why are we NOT talking about menopause?”

Talking Menopause focuses on engaging and leading positive menopause discussions and support across all levels of the workplace through tailored, interactive programmes aligned with your organisation’s culture.

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Are you ready to start the menopause discussion today? Visit our website: talkingmenopause.co.uk

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How confident are you in talking about menopause at work?

Talking Menopause

Go to www.talkingmenopause.co.uk