



MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

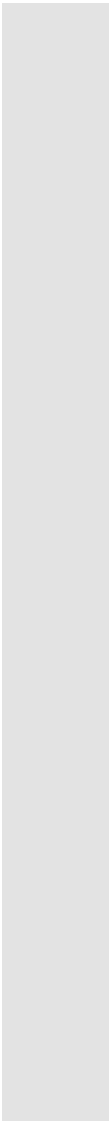


A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

Created by Sarah Russell on behalf of the Gender Equity Team (fka Women's Initiatives Committee) 2024



AGENDA

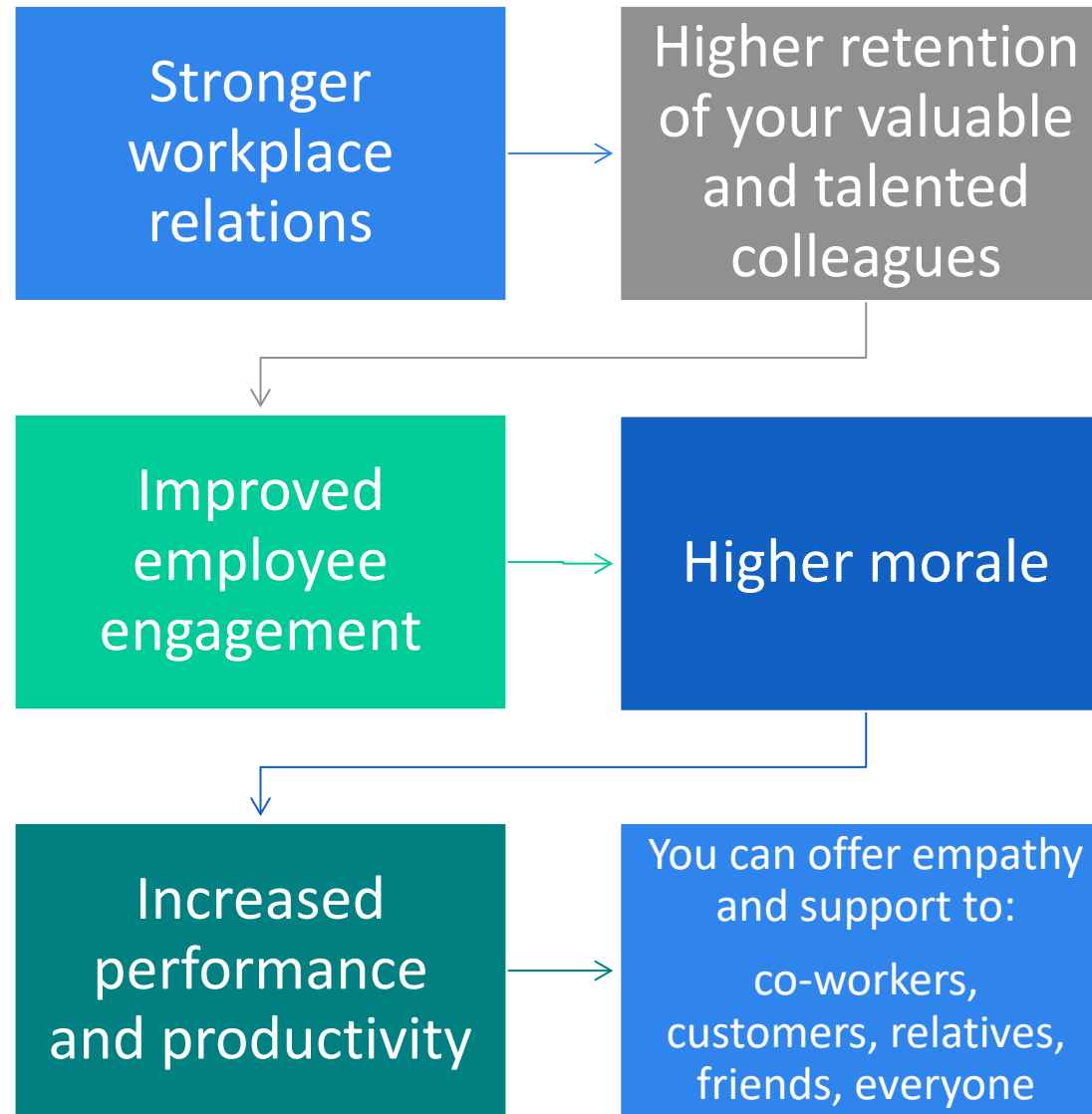
- Raise awareness
 - What does menopause have to do with work?
 - Definitions and symptoms
 - Creating an inclusive culture and providing support
 - Improved employee engagement saves time and money
 - Work adjustment ideas
 - Handle difficult conversations at work with confidence
 - Additional resources
 - Reference list
- 

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In addition to women, menopause can affect any employee with a menstrual cycle which can include the following:

- Trans people, defined as people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
- Intersex people, which includes those born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit traditional "female" or "male" definitions
- Non-binary people, which includes those who don't define themselves as strictly male or female

WHY DO WE ALL NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MENOPAUSE?



MENOPAUSE AND WORK.

What does one have to do with the other?

Sometimes nothing. It would be great if that was always the case. Some menopausal people sail through their menopause with barely a symptom, but it's not an easy transition for all.

By talking about it openly, raising awareness and putting the right support in place, perhaps we could get to a point where menopause is no longer an issue in the workplace at all.

Raising awareness of menopause in the workplace can help reduce the impact of symptoms on employees' ability to perform well and their careers.

A few simple changes to the working environment can make a world of difference.

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

Menopause has
three stages:

- Perimenopause
- Menopause
- Postmenopause

PERIMENOPAUSE

Transition period that *can start 8-10 years before menopause*. The ovaries gradually produce less estrogen and hormone levels start to change. Menstrual cycles become irregular, and symptoms like hot flashes, sleep disturbances, night sweats and elevated heart rate may occur.

MENOPAUSE

When a menopausal person has stopped producing the hormones that cause the menstrual period and *has gone without a period for 12 months in a row*. The ovaries have stopped releasing eggs and producing most of their estrogen.

POSTMENOPAUSE

This is the time *after menopause* has occurred and lasts the rest of a menopausal person's life. Some menopausal symptoms may improve, but others may persist or worsen.

WHAT CAUSES MENOPAUSE?

- **Naturally declining reproductive hormones.**
As you approach your late 30's, your ovaries start making less estrogen and progesterone – the hormones that regulate menstruation – and your fertility declines.
- **Surgery that removes the ovaries.**
Surgery to remove your ovaries causes immediate menopause.
- **Chemotherapy and radiation therapy.**
Cancer therapies can induce menopause.
- **Primary ovarian insufficiency.**
Premature menopause can stem from genetic factors or autoimmune disease.

Many menopausal people will rise into senior positions of leadership in their 40's or their 50's.

Perimenopause, or the transition into menopause, generally occurs between age 45 and 55.

And this is where the symptoms really start, and it *can last up to 10 YEARS.*

So just as a menopausal person is stepping up, taking the reins, earning at their highest potential, their body can feel like it is betraying them.

8 in 10

50M

20%

18%

**Between the ages
of 40 and 55,
80% of
menopausal
people**

Will experience
many physical and
psychological
symptoms in
menopause

**50 Million
menopausal
people**

In the U.S. are
currently in
menopause

**20% have left or
considered
leaving
their jobs**

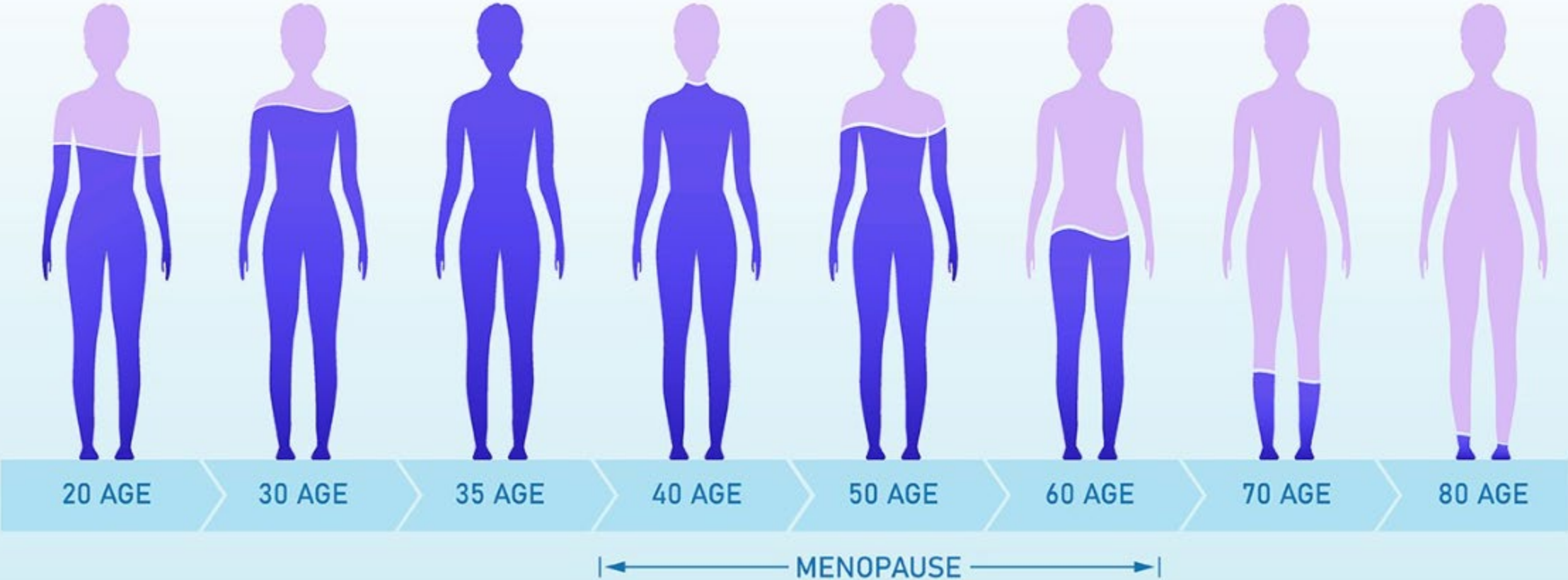
Due to
menopause
symptoms

**18% have not
pursued a
promotion**

Because of
menopause
symptoms

ESTROGEN HORMONE LEVEL

■ Estrogen deficiency
■ Estrogen level



TOP 40 MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

1. Hot flashes
2. Cold flashes
3. Night sweats
4. Clammy feeling
5. Heart palpitations
6. Irritability
7. Mood swings
8. Trouble sleeping
9. Irregular periods
10. Feeling of loss of self
11. Loss of self-confidence
12. Fatigue
13. Anxiety
14. Depression
15. Lack of focus
16. Poor concentration
17. Faulty memory
18. Incontinence
19. Itchy, crawly skin
20. Achy joints, muscles
21. Tense muscles
22. Sore breasts
23. Headaches
24. Digestive issues
25. Bloating
26. Allergies worsen
27. Weight gain
28. Hair loss/thinning
29. More facial hair
30. Dizziness
31. Vertigo
32. Changed body odor
33. Electric shock feeling
34. Tingling extremities
35. Bleeding gums
36. Burning tongue/
roof of mouth
37. Chronic bad breath
38. Osteoporosis
39. Weakened fingernails
40. Ringing ears (tinnitus)

**MOST
COMMONLY
REPORTED
PHYSICAL
SYMPTOMS**

Hot Flashes

Night Sweats

Sleep
Disturbances

Joint Pain

Osteoporosis

Cardiovascular
disorders

**MOST
COMMONLY
REPORTED
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SYMPTOMS**

Mood
disorders

Depression

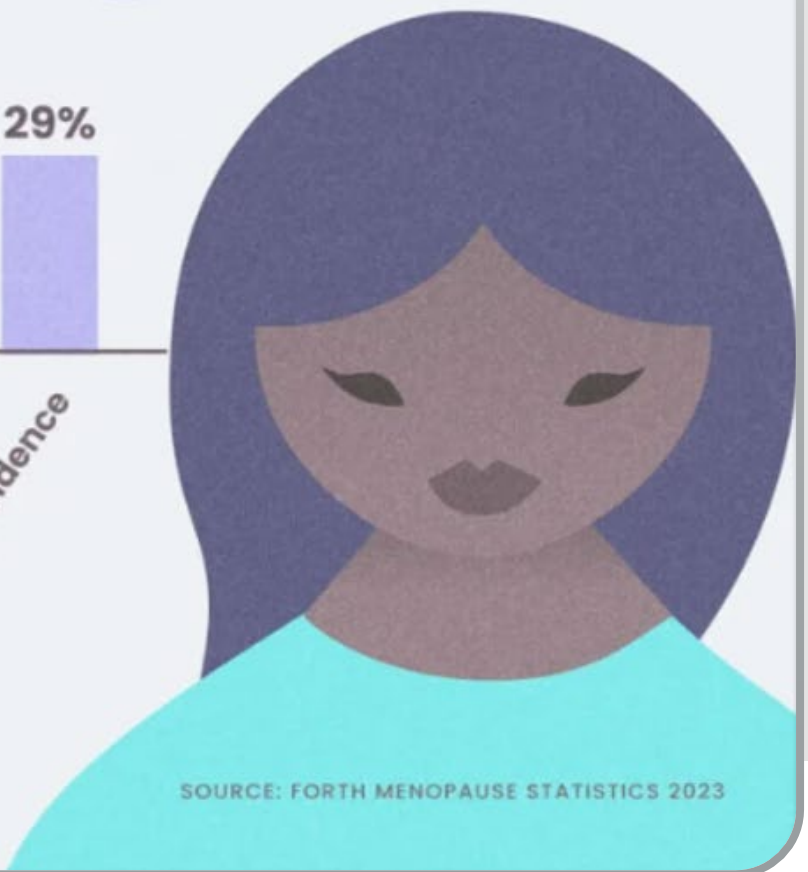
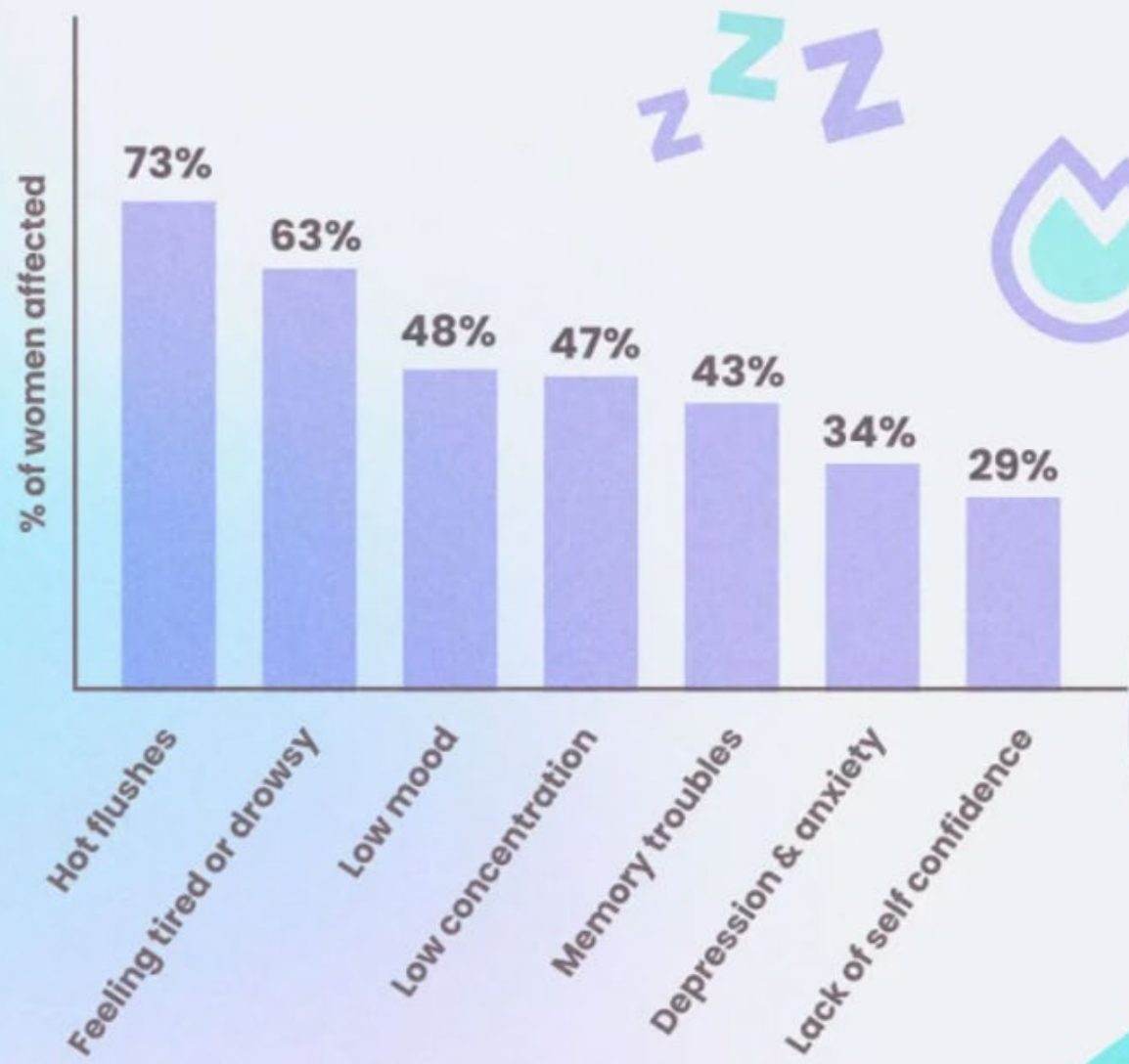
Difficulties
concentrating

Memory
lapses
(forgetfulness)

Fatigue

Irritability and
anxiety

MENOPAUSE - COMMON SYMPTOMS AT WORK



SOURCE: FORTH MENOPAUSE STATISTICS 2023

HOW THE EFFECTS OF MENOPAUSE ARE UNEXPECTEDLY IMPACTING THE WORKPLACE



Symptom-related lateness for work



Lost productivity due to medical appointments



Reduction in working hours



Reluctance to attend meetings



Relationships within the workplace



Reduced engagement with work

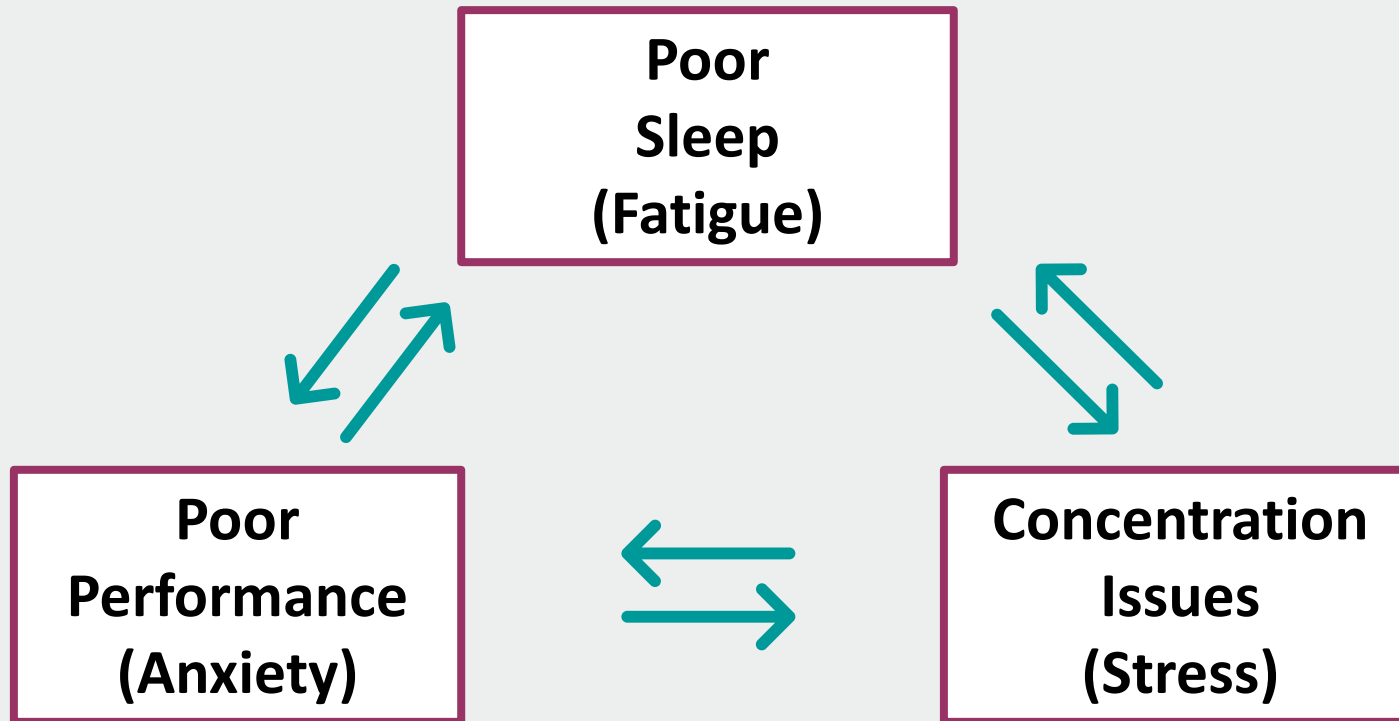


Talent leaving the workforce



Cost of hiring new employees

HOW DO THESE SYMPTOMS AFFECT YOUR COLLEAGUES?



THE UNFORTUNATE HISTORY OF THE MENOPAUSE

MENOPAUSE MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

- Historical medicine defined women as “deformed males” who after the menopause finally became more like the “male ideal”
- 1710 – menopause defined as a “disease” and the “worst of calamities to beset the female sex”.
- Freud – male dominant theory of human development

Treatment ‘cures’ in the 1800’s

- Leeches on the genitalia and cervix
- Cold water to the abdomen
- Arsenic
- Sitting in hot rooms to sweat more
- Golf



Myth:

The older you are when you get your period, the older you'll be when you start menopause.

FACT:

In reality, the exact opposite is true. If you started menstruating later than average, you may begin menopause earlier.

Myth:

Men have menopause, too.

FACT:

It is typical for men to have a drop in testosterone as they age, but “manopause” isn’t like menopause at all. Testosterone levels lower gradually as a man ages, not quickly like estrogen in menopausal people. It is not fair, but “the change” also doesn’t cause as many – or sometimes *any* – symptoms for men.

Myth:

Menopause automatically starts at age 50.

FACT:

Wouldn't it be nice if everything in life was that predictable? Unfortunately, just like the onset of menstruation, labor, and childbirth, menopause doesn't make an appointment with you. You could begin experiencing symptoms *as early as your late 30's to as late as your early 60's.*

Myth:

People in menopause can still get pregnant.

FACT:

You are not considered in menopause until you have gone 12 consecutive months without a period. That means, if you get a period after not having one for 11 months and 29 days, you are still in perimenopause and there remains a chance that you could still get pregnant. After a year has passed with no period, a menopausal person can no longer get pregnant.

Myth:

It makes you irritable.

FACT:

Menopause itself does not alter mood. But some of the symptoms such as night sweats and hot flashes, can mess with your sleep. That might make you moodier during the day.

Myth:

The only way to get through menopause is to take hormones.

FACT:

You always have choices when it comes to your body and your health in menopause.

*Thoroughly research your options to help ensure accuracy – check multiple sources, professional opinions change.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE AND PROVIDING SUPPORT



Encourage open communication about menopause and treating it as a health issue like any other. The more openly and easily we talk about menopause the less of a taboo it is.



There are formal training programs and support systems designed to accommodate menopausal people experiencing menopause. We need to provide all employees with tools to handle difficult conversations.

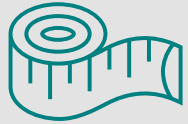


Sends a message that we value all employees equally. Inclusivity boosts morale & productivity and is a mark of a forward-thinking organization.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE AND PROVIDING SUPPORT



We must lead with empathy, recognizing that menopausal people's experiences are diverse, and their needs vary. Let's encourage open conversations about menopause, dispel myths, and foster understanding.



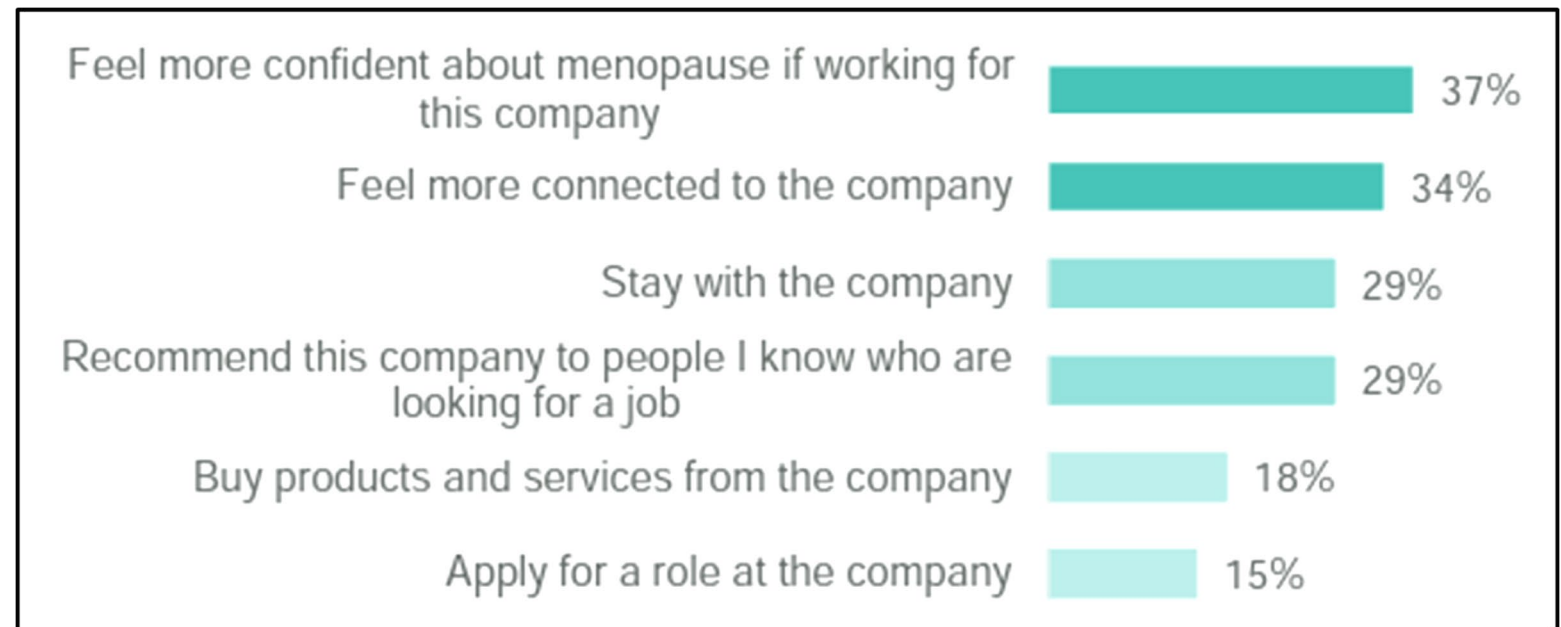
There is no 'one-size fits all' when it comes to supporting your colleagues going through menopause. Every menopause sufferer will have different symptoms, for different lengths of time, and with varying degrees of severity. There needs to be a range of options and that menopause is a topic that managers and colleagues feel comfortable talking about.



Considering the financial implications, we can drive the necessary changes to foster a culture that supports menopausal people navigating menopause while maximizing the potential contributions of a diverse and empowered workforce.

Additionally, a new demographic is entering this life stage: millennials. This generation, known for transparency and speaking about issues openly, are now confronting perimenopause – the transitional phase before menopause – which can begin *as early as the mid-30's or early 40's*. It is during this transitional period that the effects of hot flashes and mood disruption can be most acute and debilitating.

If a company offered support for menopausal people going through menopause, I would...



WHAT REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS/ ACCOMMODATIONS CAN BE MADE?

Menopause is not a protected characteristic under the ADA, but employees may still be protected from discrimination through other laws. If menopause symptoms have a long-term and substantial impact, these symptoms could be a disability.

An employee may request a workspace review from their supervisor or can reach out to the Accommodations Specialist in Human Resources.

accomodation@cityofmadison.com

608-266-4615

NOTE: Someone may experience multiple symptoms at the same time and may need multiple adjustments/accommodations.

WHAT REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS/ ACCOMMODATIONS CAN BE MADE?

Some general adjustment/accommodation ideas:

- Flexible scheduling
- Modified break schedule
- Allow work from home/Flexi-place
- Modify or reduce work-site temperature
- Modify dress code
- Use cool vest or other cooling clothing
- Use fan/air-conditioner at the workstation
- Redirect air conditioning and heating vents

NOTE: Someone may experience multiple symptoms at the same time and may need multiple adjustments/accommodations.

SYMPTOM SPECIFIC IDEAS

SLEEP DISRUPTION AND/OR NIGHT SWEATS

- Recognize someone may take more short-term absences if they've had a difficult night
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis
- Offer a flexible working arrangement, for example, a later start and finish time
- Ensure employees know they can work from home on an ad-hoc basis if they've had a rough night

HOT FLASHES AND/OR DAYTIME SWEATS

- Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example, provide a fan, move a desk closer to a window or adjust the air conditioning
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water and restrooms
- Adapt uniforms to improve comfort to more natural materials and away from man-made materials
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn such as face masks (subject to any COVID-secure measures required)

NOTE: Someone may experience multiple symptoms at the same time and may need multiple adjustments/accommodations.

SYMPTOM SPECIFIC IDEAS

HEAVY OR IRREGULAR PERIODS

- Provide easy access to restrooms
- Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the restroom
- Be understanding about someone working from home if they have very heavy bleeding
- Make sanitary products available in restrooms
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed

MUSCULAR ACHES, AND BONE & JOINT PAIN

- Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules
- Allow someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps

WITHIN YOUR ASSESSMENT INCLUDE THE IMPACT OF:

- Temperature and ventilation
- The materials used in any uniform or corporate clothing
- Available access to toilet facilities and access to cold water

NOTE: Someone may experience multiple symptoms at the same time and may need multiple adjustments/accommodations.

BENEFITS OF HAVING THIS DIFFICULT CONVERSATION AT WORK

- Difficult conversations can be challenging, but they ultimately lead to growth on your team.
- Approach sensitive subjects with empathy and care, you can make an uncomfortable discussion productive and come to a positive outcome.
- Have open communication about menopause and treat it as a health issue like any other.
- The more openly and easily we talk about menopause the less of a taboo it is.
- Lead with empathy, recognize that menopausal people's experiences are diverse, and their needs vary.

Source: <https://workleap.com/blog/difficult-conversations-at-work/>

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/committeeof200/2024/04/11/how-to-build-a-menopause-inclusive-workplace/>



IMPROVED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SAVES TIME AND MONEY

- Higher morale
- Improves work culture
- Increased performance and productivity
- Less workplace stress
- Better working relationships with colleagues
- Stronger workplace relationships
- Lower absenteeism
- Higher retention of your valuable talented colleagues
- It makes us a more attractive place to work
- We would be seen as a forward-thinking organization

SUPERVISOR GUIDANCE TO HANDLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

1. SET THE TALKING POINT IN ADVANCE

Give the other person advance notice of what you would like to discuss.

2. FOCUS ON FACTS, NOT FEELINGS

Dig into what you're feeling so you can understand and share your thoughts clearly.
Try to separate what you know from what you think or feel.

3. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR TRUST AND HONESTY

It is important to foster a sense of trust and mutual respect.
Have regular feedback exchanges to help people feel more comfortable and candid with you.

4. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Ask questions to explore, don't assume what the employee is thinking.

5. AIM FOR UNDERSTANDING ABOVE CONSENSUS

You may not see eye-to-eye but find a sense of understanding.
Be empathetic and listen to their perspective.

6. FIND A SOLUTION TOGETHER

Wrap up by setting clear action items.
Follow up.

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE TO HANDLE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

1. REQUEST A MEETING

When you make the request keep your message as simple as possible.

Example: *"I would like to talk about X. When would be a good time for you?"*

2. SHIFT YOUR MINDSET

Try thinking of the meeting as an opportunity to have a constructive conversation.

3. GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS

Think through what you want to say and think of possible solutions.

4. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR LANGUAGE AND TONE

A calm demeanor can help a difficult conversation go smoothly.

5. ADDRESS THE ISSUE DIRECTLY

Immediately express your appreciation for meeting with you. Shift the conversation to the purpose of the meeting, show them that you respect their time.

6. ACTIVELY LISTEN TO YOUR BOSS'S PERSPECTIVE

Be open and receptive, ask for clarification if needed, avoid becoming defensive.

7. REACH A SOLUTION

You may have different viewpoints, ask if there is anything that would encourage them to reconsider.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EAP 608-266-6561

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/employee-assistance-program>

PROHIBITED HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Civil Rights 608-266-4910

APM 3-5 <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/apm/3-5.pdf>

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Human Resources 608-266-4615

APM 2-22 <https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/apm/2-22.pdf>

FMLA INQUIRIES

Human Resources 608-266-4615

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/human-resources/benefits/family-medical-leave>

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/human-resources/organizational-development/courses/course-catalog>

OCTOBER 18

**IS WORLD MENOPAUSE
AWARENESS DAY**



Thank you



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