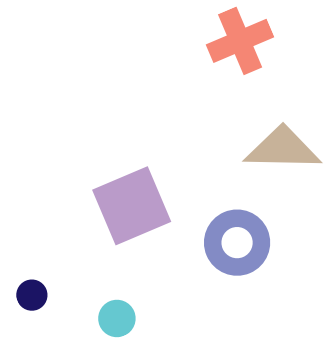


Approaches to menopause support training

It is likely you will want to initiate some form of training to complement your strategy for embedding menopause support into your organization. Being clear on the scope, form and content of training is key. We outline below some considerations to assist you.



CONSIDERATIONS

Whom to train?

- Line managers/supervisors
- Senior management
- Co-workers

How to train?

Training objectives:

- Raise awareness about menopause as a workplace issue?
- Impart knowledge?
- Promote confidence and skill-up managers in how to have constructive conversations about menopause?

Training medium:

- Online as part of general training
- Menopause-specific online training
- Hybrid of online training with a face-to-face component
- Consider length of the training components, and their sequencing (i.e., online before F2F?)

Group-based training workshop composition:

- Single-gender groups vs. mixed gender
- Age-cohort specific vs. intergenerational training

Other considerations:

- Internal or external training provider
- Mandatory or voluntary
- One-off or regular training

What to include in training?

- Facts and myths about the menopause
- How menopause, work and life fit together
- Sensitivity training
- Practical advice
- Behavioural tools
- Culture change management
- Introducing information sources and resources
- Post-training opportunities for interaction



MORE INFORMATION ON APPROACHES TO MENOPAUSE-SUPPORTIVE TRAINING

Whom to train?

Line manager, team leader, supervisor or direct report:

This is the key group that makes the biggest difference to how supported menopausal women feel at work. Yet those within 'middle management' are often precluded from information sharing and leading best practice surrounding health and wellbeing. Supplying training that is specific to their position as intermediaries between the point of initial employee disclosure and responsibility for ensuring healthy and motivated staff is necessary. Providing guidance on steps to take and what resources are available to them also increases confidence in managing conversations and negotiations on the work floor and preventing escalation.

Senior management: Messaging from the top is vital as it sends cultural signals that menopause can be discussed, recognized and accommodated in the workplace. Key for this group is ensuring that the delivery of training is quick, impactful in providing facts surrounding menopausal transition at work, and clearly identifies 'hot spots' when using language that may inadvertently have harmful consequences when framing issues. Think, for example, about the controversy generated by the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England who in 2018 referred to the UK economy as a 'menopausal economy'.

Co-workers: Empathic colleagues can have a positive effect on women's propensity to discuss menopause. Offering information sessions on menopause and the workplace is an excellent way of raising awareness and ensuring that organizations frame menopausal transition as an accepted (rather than a problematic) part of working life.

How to train?

Delivery of the training may depend on whom is responsible for the initiative (see above) as well as the scope of the menopausal support strategy.

There are several considerations surrounding training logistics. These include whether you will use internal or external facilitators; if it will be one off, series or periodic training; and if it will be mandatory or voluntary. Some other factors specific to menopause that were highlighted in our research are included below.

Online as part of general training: Increasingly, training packages are online, so employees have the choice when and where to complete them. Diversity and Inclusion or OHS mandatory training is often an easy way to begin introducing people to the idea of menopause as an acceptable experience

to discuss in the workplace. However, some research has suggested that completing online training does not ensure full engagement and does not provide an interactive forum where employees or supervisors can raise questions or discuss their experiences. A hybrid model of online and face-to-face training may be suitable.

Menopause-specific online training: Online training that is menopause-specific may be easier to develop and have the added benefit of enabling employees and managers to reflect on the topic in relative privacy. However, the likelihood of training fatigue is often high in organizations, and producing a professional package is likely to be costly.

Single-gender groups vs. mixed gender: Considering whether training should be separated by gender is important. On the one hand, it provides both men and women an arena where they can disclose and discuss with less fear of offending. On the other hand, if facilitated well, mixed gender groups could result in a more insightful session for all. Whatever the decision, avoid inadvertently marginalizing employees who may identify as non-binary.

Age-cohort-specific vs. intergenerational training: Similar to gender decisions surrounding training, you may wish to make age-conscious decisions around whom you either target or invite to particular sessions. In many ways, age-organized training groups would be supported by research that shows that both men and women under 40 have less everyday experience or encounters with menopause than those over 40 people, and narrower age cohorts may result in participants feeling more comfortable in knowledge sharing and asking questions. Alternatively, encouraging cross-generational discussions may be important to broader diversity and inclusion strategies.

What to include in training?

Different groups of employees will require different training. However, it is likely that high-impact training will include aspects of the following:

Facts and myths about the menopause: A general introduction to what the menopause is, in order to raise awareness and impart knowledge. Facts and figures about menopause are useful in highlighting how it is a common, everyday experience for half of the population, as well as highlighting that it can be either a significant or an unproblematic event for women. Emphasizing the diversity of women's experience is vital.

How menopause, work and life fit together: It is likely that most organizational members will not have thought about menopause at work. It is therefore important that work and menopause are framed as being related but not necessarily problematized. For example, activities that explore the effects of having to keep a significant health or life episode secret are a powerful way to show the negative impact of stigmatizing menopause. For more senior managers, providing information such as national or company-specific demographics allows them to develop messaging and thought leadership pieces for distribution across the organization.

Practical advice: Covering off the practical advice and support available in your organization is key. It is likely that participants will be keen to know why the organization is interested in supporting menopause, what are the steps involved in disclosing and supporting menopausal transition, and assurances that their actions are supported by the organization (whether the actions of menopausal women, or line managers trying to support menopausal women). You should also highlight the consistency of your menopause support strategy in relation to other workforce strategies, and highlight how it relates to other organizational priorities surrounding, for example, retention and talent management of workers and health and wellbeing.

Sensitivity training: Sensitivity training activities provide the opportunity for people to become aware of their prejudices and the impact of group or interpersonal dynamics in a safe and non-judgmental space. For example, exercises surrounding how we think about older bodies or how they are represented in the media might provide opportunities to talk about ideas and stereotypes of older bodies. Unconscious bias training is the most popular sensitivity training technique at the moment, although it has not been applied to supporting menopausal transition in the workplace. It is important to remember that sensitivity training alone will not help remove stigmas and is in danger of not providing productive alternatives that guide and change behaviour.

Behavioural tools: Those who have face to face encounters with women discussing menopause are likely to find guidance on what to say and how to say it useful. This can include scripts and awareness of where they can access organizational guidance and policies. Group exercises that consider ways to introduce the topic of health and wellbeing support to team members and colleagues in productive and non-confrontational ways can also help to develop practices that will work best in your organization's culture. You may also wish to include guidance on how to correct 'mid-air

mistaking' (when something is said during a busy working day that causes offence) surrounding conversations about menopausal transition.

Culture change management: It has been shown that changes in organizational culture and positive framings of women's contributions can increase women's affirmative perception surrounding menopause in terms of self-efficacy and competence.

Introducing information sources and resources: Giving participants the opportunity to engage with the policies, procedures and practices that your organization has either introduced to support menopause transition, or, sees as relevant to menopause transition conversations. For example, distributing an employee-friendly roadmap of where exactly to find the policies and their relevance to menopause support at work may provide the opportunity for employees to offer suggestions as to other areas of practice that need to be considered.

Post-training opportunities for interaction: Making sure that people can continue dialogue after training is important. This may be in the form of online support forums for either employees experiencing menopause or those with questions. Online support forums could be moderated by an organizational member who has autonomy for enabling support mechanisms. Other common support spaces might include hosting a 'menopause cafe' at work and inviting people to volunteer for working groups that periodically review your menopause support resources.

How to contact the MIPO team

If you would like to get in touch to discuss menopause support strategies and/or supervisor training, please email Professor Gavin Jack at Monash Business School: gavin.jack@monash.edu