

Workplace Conversations About Menopause

Facilitating Constructive Conversations

Managers and Human Resource (HR) professionals should be encouraged and empowered to create open and non-judgmental spaces for employees to discuss their menopausal experiences as well as other health topics that may affect their work life. By fostering a culture of open communication, employees may be more inclined to share their concerns or needs related to menopause, allowing HR to provide appropriate support for them and others in similar situations.

Productive conversations between employees and managers, especially about sensitive or personal topics such as menopause, must strike the right balance between professionalism, compassion, and practicality.

Consider how a meeting format and platform should be designed to meet the conversation goals and the unique needs of the employee:

- **One-on-one vs. group meetings**
- **Regularly scheduled check-ins vs. informal or impromptu conversations**
- **Virtual vs. in-person conversations**
- **Anonymous or named suggestion boxes**
- **Internal vs. external professional or facilitator/coach**

Conversation Tips for Managers

1. **Offer privacy and confidentiality.** When addressing menopause-related issues with employees, managers should initiate conversations in confidence, giving the employee the appropriate privacy to share their experiences, concerns, and any specific needs related to their menopause and work life without fear of judgment or disclosure to other colleagues. It is important to reassure employees that they have control over if and how the conversations might escalate to engage others in the company.
2. **Use inclusive and empathetic language.** Menopause does not have a singular look, age, or experience. Using inclusive language when discussing menopause will help employees who do not present as “stereotypical women of a certain age” engage in conversations or seek support. Managers should approach discussions with sensitivity, acknowledging the diversity of challenges employees may face and respecting the individual experiences of each person.

EMPACT Menopause survey respondents shared a desire for “open communication” and “empathy and/or understanding from colleagues and all levels of leadership.”

3. **Ask open-ended questions.**

Open-ended questions tend to invite employees to share their thoughts and feelings without offering assumptions in the wording. Ask questions that give employees the opportunity to express themselves freely and without judgment. For example:



- What (if at all) has helped or hindered your ability to talk to colleagues or supervisors about your work-related menopause experience or needs?
- Can you describe 1 or 2 instances where you felt supported or faced work-related challenges due to your menopause experience? What could have made the challenging situations better for you?
- Please share 2-3 adjustments that you would suggest we can work towards to address your biggest menopause-related challenges at work?
- What are some features of an ideal workplace in terms of inclusivity and support for women experiencing menopause?
- What is one thing that you wish your coworkers (or this company as a whole) would better understand about menopause?
- Would you like to lead or start an initiative to improve your team's (or this company's) perspective on menopause in the workplace?

4. Escalate when necessary. If a matter requires escalation, managers should communicate that certain content from their discussions will be shared – remembering to de-identify the employee whenever possible to avoid unintended embarrassment or backlash. If the discussion involves medical history, doctor recommendations, and other sensitive information, managers should refer employees directly to their HR department to assist them in addressing their needs.