

Written evidence submitted by A Member of the Public [MEW0006]

Current figures suggest that between 10 to 20% of women leave their jobs during menopause because they simply can't cope. As it is completely taboo to talk about it, I do wonder whether this figure is actually much higher. There is much talk about why women are not in positions of power, well try to chair a meeting while having panic attacks, with brain fog and sweat pouring off you and maybe you will find the answer! 3 in 4 women suffer with the menopause and 1 in 4 have bad symptoms so a huge number of the workforce are being affected.

I thought I was losing my mind and felt that I had aged 10 years overnight so it was a relief to know I was not alone. Obviously, everyone is different, but this is what I am currently dealing with:

Hot flushes - it absolutely infuriates me that people think the menopause is just hot flushes and that a hot flush just makes you feel hot. If one more person sees me having a hot flush and say 'it is quite hot in here' I will scream. Several minutes before a hot flush, I experience either a wave of depression or a full on panic attack and then it is an entire body sensation which after a few minutes results in sweat pouring out of every pore, sometimes it is just upper body, other times it is full body and I actually have sweat dripping down my neck and back. The particularly lovely thing that accompanies these hot flushes is the dizziness and feeling that you are going to faint. If you can imagine this happening in a meeting, you will understand how it impacts my working day. I currently have several hot flushes every hour.

Emotions - At times I am not in control of my emotions, and this is particularly embarrassing in a work setting, I've never really been hot tempered until the menopause hit, now I am irritable and have uncontrollable rage quite frequently. How do you explain to colleagues that you are not cross with them, you are just having a menopause moment? It is infuriating that it is not talked about so that people are aware. I also suffer from paranoia and it is embarrassing to admit that you have had such irrational thoughts as this.

Brain fog – when your job requires you to remember facts and figures, this one is particularly terrifying, I am conscious that my memory is pretty non-existent at times and when I am being asked in about fees in meeting and my brain is totally blank you begin to understand why so many women give up their jobs.

Physical – some days my joints are so stiff that I walk like a little bent old lady. This is not that much of a problem, just a little depressing! And embarrassing when you limp and someone asks if you have hurt yourself! I never know what to say as saying menopause makes people embarrassed and I don't think anyone knows that menopause can do this to you.

In the workplace, the main problem is that most colleagues have no knowledge of the menopause at all, so they have no understanding of what I am suffering. I fully expect myself to be able to do exactly the same job as before, I am not asking for special treatment however better awareness in the wider world would be a huge help so that the directors of the company do not penalise me when I cannot handle a meeting or remember things.

Working from home and flexibility all helps but it is awareness that is key in my opinion.

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