



## MENSTRUAL WORKPLACE POLICY

*(For the purpose of introducing this concept, I will be using language including words like woman and man and pronouns like she, he, and we, and I will be referring to menstruation and menopause as the experience of a woman. My apologies if that upsets or disturbs anyone. My mission here is to introduce this needed concept in the simplest way possible.)*

### What is a Menstruation & Menopause Workplace Policy?

A Menstruation & Menopause Workplace Policy is a state of the art, **cutting edge** response to the reality of a woman's experience of menstruation and menopause at work.

A menstrual and menopause workplace policy is a series of commitments, agreements and understandings based on everyone **stopping pretending** that women don't menstruate and instead, asking: *how can we support women as women in the workplace?*

This is a radical shift from the current dominant perspective – where we have basically been **covering up** the fact that women menstruate and disappearing the menstrual cycle and menopause from the public eye.

Menstruation and menopause affect half the population, and yet they are the least talked-about subjects, considered **taboo**.

The idea of **actually supporting women** and honouring their menstrual cycle is a radical shift. However, it is actually a physiological need to rest and tend to oneself around our bleeding time, and if a woman does not do that, it often shows up later in the cycle as **uncomfortable experiences** ranging from PMS to all manner of things.

How a woman tends to her menstrual experience has a **direct impact** on her menstrual cycle each month, on her experiences of childbirth and menopause, and on her entire life!

As well as **having an effect on everybody around her**, especially the people she lives with and works with!

The idea of a menstrual workplace policy is daring.

It invites questions on a few big issues – particularly around equality. Men and women are different, but **are women only equal to men if they behave like them?**

Some people suggest that menstrual and menopause workplace policies put us back pre-1970s feminism. That requesting mindfulness and care around our menstrual cycle sets us apart from men, and perhaps **shows our weakness**, demonstrates how we are more expensive for workplaces and therefore threatens our jobs.

This subject brings up everybody's issues around the female body. Menstruation, Ageing, blood and more.

But that is appropriate, and timely, because the current dominant perspective is harming women.

(Head [over here](#) if you're interested in a menstrual policy template that you can adapt to your workplace!)

## Why do we need policies that support our menstruation?

Apparently the average person spends **90,000 hours** at work over their lifetime. So that is a lot of hours, and for a woman many of those will be during her bleeding time.

Our cultures have been ignoring the **very obvious differences** between women and men for a long time. Women are **cyclical mammals** and their experience of life is actually very different to men.

This may be a new story for the majority of women and men because our menstrual cycle has been so successfully '**disappeared**.'

The result of a 'disappeared' menstrual cycle is that it is not honoured, and is actively dis-honoured.

This then leads to **menstrual shame**, which leads to **menstrual pathology** and **body shame**, which leads to **low self-esteem**, which can lead to **eating disorders**, **self-harm** and **dangerous sexual decision-making**

We know this is the case, and that our menstrual experiences and attitudes also impact how we give birth and journey through menopause.

So, honouring the menstrual cycle is the **path forward**, and menstrual and menopause workplace policies are part of that.

## Women need this

Research tells us that menstrual shame is affecting women at work. We know that many women are not doing well at work in terms of their menstrual cycle.

I was involved in a research project called '[The Waratah Project](#)' funded by the [Victorian Women's Trust](#) where more than **3500 women** were surveyed about their experience of menstruation and menopause.

The results showed us lots of things, including that **58 percent of women** said that **a day off to rest** would make their period a better experience every month.

24% of women said that **being able to ask for what they need** from their employer would make their period better experience.

Other things that women said would best support them at work included **understanding**, **respect**, and an environment where they can be **open** and have **flexible arrangements** if and when they need them.

Some women have more difficult periods and menopausal experiences than others and those who do often feel misunderstood by men, and by women who don't.

Women also wished they could simply **use the toilets** when they need to. For some this is very often, and they have felt **criticised** or **shamed** by that need.

Many women have felt they've needed to **lie about their situation** to have days off, if they need them in particular situations within their cycle or menopause.

Basically women wish they could be **honest and open at work** about their cycles and menopause, and have the capacity to **slow down, rest, attend to their needs, take time off** or **work flexible hours** during difficult periods.

The women who were surveyed wished for their workplaces to **appreciate** their cyclical nature and work with that, for example, by **scheduling and planning around their cycle** based on when is the best time for them to do certain things or be a certain way.

They wanted their bosses to appreciate the self-care required by women during their periods, and the future impact on these women if they don't – which usually means a more difficult cycle the next month....

And of the **young women** surveyed, aged 12 to 18, **52 percent** of them said that not having to make an excuse when feeling unwell would make their period a better experience.

## Current situation

These desires and suggestions from the surveyed women highlight the current mainstream situation, and that's nothing for anyone to feel proud of.

Women need to lie to look after themselves in the way their body demands.

This is a very sad state of affairs, but it can be rectified. As many examples indicate, life at work with a menstrual and menopause workplace policy is much improved.

It's about creating the conditions at work where women can thrive rather than simply survive.

And part of creating these conditions means taking into consideration the optimal times around the woman's cycle to undertake certain activities.

When women are thriving they feel safe, they are happy, and **their contribution at work is enhanced!**

For example, during her bleeding time, a woman is deeply connected to her **intuition** and has the potential to have glimpses of the future based on what has gone before and where she is now.

During her ovulation time and leading up to it, the capacity for creativity and the effect she has on other people is greatly enhanced. In a wise world, women would schedule their work around the cycle.

## Examples of Menstrual Workplace Policy uptake

Several countries have menstrual workplace policies in place: [Zambia](#), Mexico, [China](#), [Indonesia](#), [Japan](#), [Taiwan](#) and [South Korea](#). Italy has one in parliament right now.

Examples of companies with a menstrual workplace policy include:

- the [Victorian Women's Trust](#) in Australia

- [Culture Machine](#), a digital media start-up in Mumbai, India
- [Gozoop](#), India's largest digital agency
- and a social enterprise in called [Coexist](#) in Bristol, UK

Coexist has shown much leadership in this field and is conducting research on the effects of their menstrual workplace policy as they say in their material on the subject:

“The fact that we still live in patriarchal society, which means that people who menstruate are expected to fit into a system designed for people who do not menstruate, is something which Coexist wishes to challenge; the menstrual cycle is an asset not a weakness, and we believe it should be valued as such.”

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### **Inspiring!**

And what these policies typically include is:

- Paid days off – one day a month, or more, or less...
- Flexible working hours
- Working from home
- Working in a more comfortable place in the workplace – perhaps on the couch with a hot water bottle!
- And flexible working hours for example finishing early or starting later

### **How to get a menstrual workplace policy at your workplace**

If you work in a place that is big enough to have a **HR department**, that would be a good place to start the conversation.

If you are in a smaller organisation perhaps you could **go straight to the boss** and discuss these ideas. Or perhaps within your workplace there is a potential ‘**champion**’ for this concept, perhaps a leader at work who you can approach first to present this concept, and they can represent you to the boss or senior management.

Sometimes, due to deeply held outmoded beliefs and attitudes, **senior women may struggle** with this concept as they have battled on in the workplace with no consideration available for their cycle.

And perhaps there are **male ‘allies’** in your workplace who can support you with this as well.

It could be helpful to **take along information** about other organisations that have implemented a workplace menstrual policy, with the **feedback stories** from their staff.

You can use this **policy template** as a starting-off point. But ask the women at work, what would help them?

**Experiment your way** to the solution, see what emerges in the process...

And for a menstrual and menopause workplace policy to actually work and stick, there will need to be

**education for everybody** about the menstrual cycle and menopause and what can actually happen when it is honoured.

So basically a lot of unlearning and re-programming, to reclaim the menstrual cycle and menopause from the her current shame and taboo status.

## Thankyou!

Thankyou for being a leader in the field of raising consciousness and ushering in **appropriate gender equality in the work place!** Even if that leadership simply looks like quietly digesting the vision of such a policy. If and when even a small number of us hold the vision, we know our culture will shift! [#tipping-point](#)

Change of this sort often comes from the grassroots up. This is actually part of the **revolution** that we are all involved in, the **paradigm shift** that needs to happen – supporting women in their full embodied power and vision!

This way of **seeing a woman as whole**, with her menstrual cycle part of that wholeness, is basic systems thinking, whole-picture perspective, holistic...

Helping women practice self-care during their menstrual cycle as they need to, as well as also during menopause, **increases self-esteem and self-worth**, and enhances our physical and emotional experiencing.

And this goodness will ripple out in so many different directions!!

Thank you and good luck!  
*And Viva La Revolution!*

**xxx Jane**

P.S. Please consider supporting me in this important work via [Patreon](#) – with many thanks!