

menopause at work<sup>®</sup>  
ASIA PACIFIC

# WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO Reduce Stigma?

Professor Corrigan's 'stigma reduction theory' describes three core ways to tackle stigma: contact, education and protest.



# 1. Contact

Very Effective

This involves face-to-face contact with a person experiencing the situation, condition or life stage in question. Corrigan's research has found that using an everyday person, with whom the audience can identify, is more effective than using a high profile celebrity or sports person. Video-based contact is also effective, especially for young age groups, but not as much as direct contact.



## Action

Invite a guest speaker who can talk to your employees about her experience of working through menopause. What were the challenges? What (would have) made a positive difference?

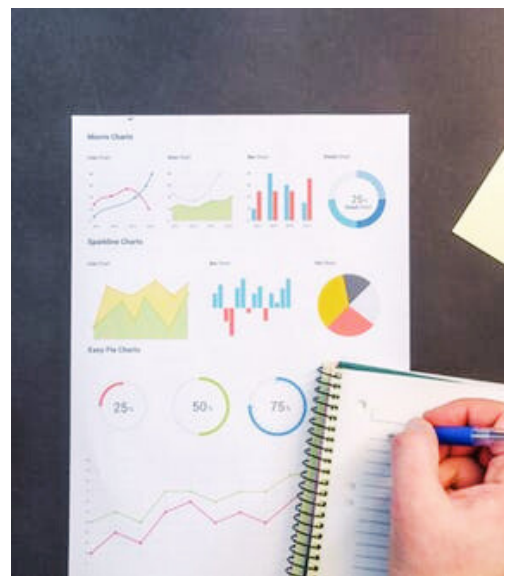
If you have an employee from your own workplace willing to share her experience, make sure they know they are supported and valued so they don't feel too vulnerable.

# 2. Education

Effective

Make the facts and figures about menopause readily available to your staff, while emphasizing it is a natural and normal transition every person born female goes through. Don't assume men don't want to know about it – it could be just what they need to better understand what's happening for their partners wives, mothers or relatives.

Please, share the good news not only the bad! For example, 50 per cent of women said their working lives had improved since the onset of menopause, according to a British study of nearly 200 women aged 50 to 64, conducted by the Social Issues Research Centre in 2002.



Some women even say menopause is the **best kept secret**, that it's a liberating life stage when women's energy is freed from reproduction and can now be channelled into other life pursuits.

# 3. Protest

Least Effective



This “shame-on-you” approach appeals to people to stop or ignore their negative thoughts and attitudes towards, for example, older women. It can have paradoxical rebound effects, increasing stigma rather than reducing it.

## Action

Run training for your managers and employees where it is safe to name the negative stereotypes we may have internalised, and examine the impact of this. Processes related to unearthing unconscious bias can be helpful here.

## Other Factors Important in Reducing Stigma in the Workplace

### Visible Senior Leadership

Can you enlist a senior leader who is willing to share her own experience? Or at a minimum, attend any education or training events you hold?

### Communicating that a Menopause-friendly Workplace is Good for Everyone

Some of the changes that occur during menopause, will affect males as they age as well – such as increased trouble sleeping with age, slower cognition, or need to use the toilet at night more often. Make it clear that the reasonable adjustments that can be offered to women, such as flexible work practices, are available for all, at any time of life.



*Thea Connor*

Guest Speaker and Trainer on Working through Menopause

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- [Engaging Senior Executive Teams](#)
- [Education for All Staff](#)
- [Organisational Support \(eg Strategy, Policy Reviews & Staff Surveys\)](#)

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### Remember:

There will be some female employees who won't want to speak up at work, even if you create a supportive culture. So it's good to provide links to other services they can access confidentially. Here is one unique offering:

The Orca Effect is a confidential online program connecting women from different workplaces, so they can feel more confident, connected and able to cope. [More details here.](#)

