



'We must break the menopause taboo'

Norma Goldman has spent years bringing women together and educating society about the menopause, but she believes there is still more to be done

By Katharine Wootton

Whether you're going through it right now, are anticipating or have already experienced it, how often does menopause crop up in conversation? Around 13 million women in the UK are peri- or post-menopausal right now, but research suggests a third can't talk about their symptoms with a partner, while only a quarter of women feel able to talk about it at work. And 61 per cent of us have symptoms that have a massive effect on our lives.

One woman crusading for change is Norma Goldman, founder of The Menopause Exchange, set up in 1999 when the taboo around menopause was even worse. She felt many women were struggling to access accurate, practical and impartial advice. With a background as a pharmacist and a health promotion specialist, Norma's aim was to give

women the latest information from a panel of top experts including GPs, consultants, dieticians, pharmacists and counsellors in a newsletter that is sent to around 10,000 people. "We invite everyone to send in their questions and help women feel like they're not alone; they're part of this big community," she says.

As well as the newsletter, Norma also gives talks in workplaces, schools, local councils, charities and other organisations to educate wider society about how menopause affects women and how everyone can play a role in making it a better experience.

In the workplace Norma talks to line managers about how to tackle

the subject with employees as well as helpful, practical changes they could make, such as adjustable temperatures, improving ventilation or changing uniforms to help with hot flushes as well as flexible hours to work around night sweats and insomnia.

One aspect she increasingly addresses is the emotional side. "How menopause affects our mental health is something

we're talking more about and it's important we look at whether there's enough support in the workplace and beyond, including things such as mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy," says Norma.

Over the years she's been running The Menopause Exchange, she says this simple act of providing non-

Did you know..?
A recent survey found two out of five women agree menopause is a taboo subject that no one talks about, while 23 per cent of women felt uncomfortable having a hot flush in a social situation

'We help women feel part of a menopause community'

sponsored, scientifically researched information has helped many women.

"Men - as well as other women - can play a hugely important role in the menopause, whether that's better understanding of what their partner is going through, or learning how to help a work colleague," says Norma. "We're going in the right direction with talking about it more, but we need to aim for it to be less of a taboo subject than it is now."

■ To find out more and sign up to receive the newsletter, call 0208 420 7245 or visit www.menopause-exchange.co.uk



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