

|||BREAK THE |||SILENCE|||

Female Managers' Toolkit





About this Toolkit



As a female manager, you may bring lived experience to this topic that your male counterparts simply don't have. That experience, whether of pregnancy loss yourself, of close relationships affected by it, or simply of navigating a body and a reproductive life alongside a career is a genuine asset in this role.

This module honors that experience while also addressing something important: lived experience does not automatically make us better supporters. In some situations, it can introduce its own blind spots. This module helps you **harness your empathy, manage your own emotional responses, and be the most effective support possible for yourself and for your employees.**



What You Bring That Others Don't

As a female manager, you are statistically more likely than your male counterparts to have a personal connection to pregnancy loss. Research shows that women identify other women with lived experience as among the most validating sources of support.



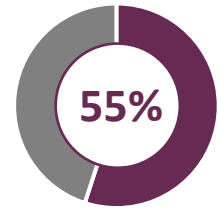
Why this Toolkit



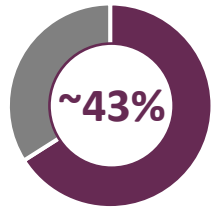
1 in 4
pregnancies
end in
miscarriage



1 in 3
women
show PTSD
symptoms
after loss



55%
experience
depression
symptoms
after loss



~43%
of women
find peer
experience
most helpful

Your Specific Assets as a Female Manager

Embodied understanding

You understand what it means to navigate a body, a reproductive timeline, and a career simultaneously. This translates into instinctive sensitivity.



Credibility in the conversation

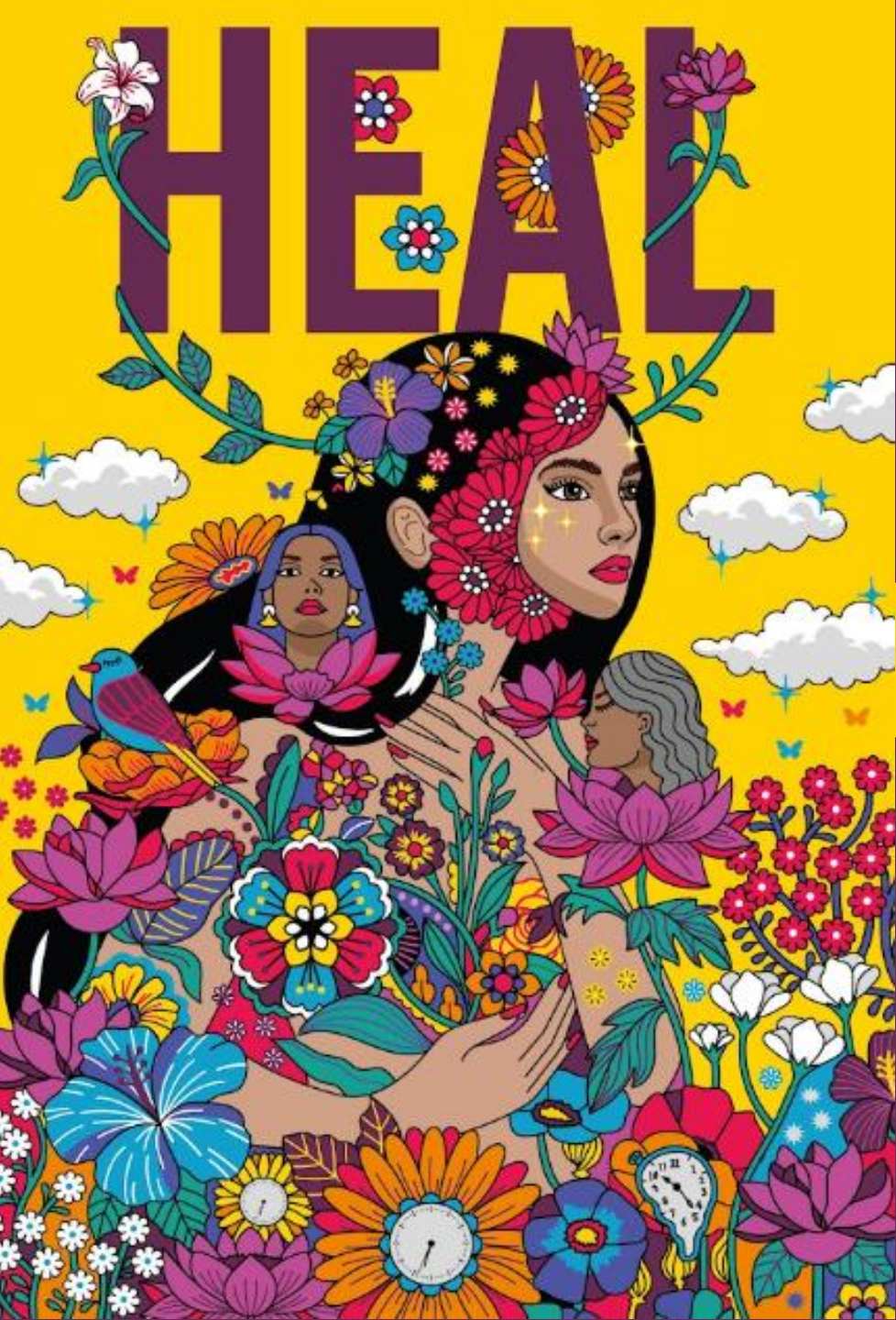
An employee may feel more comfortable disclosing to a female manager, particularly if she senses the manager will understand rather than be awkward or dismissive



Natural language

Female managers often use more intuitive language around grief, loss, and emotion, without the discomfort of having to learn a new vocabulary.






Understanding Your Employee's Experience

Hello Manager,

Welcome. And before we go any further, if this topic feels close to home, that is completely understandable. You may be reading this as someone who has experienced pregnancy loss yourself, or as someone who has watched a friend, a sister, or a colleague carry it. Either way, you are not starting from zero. **You are starting from somewhere that matters.** Pregnancy loss is an umbrella term for several different experiences, each distinct in its own way.



Miscarriage is the most common, the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks, affecting 1 in 4 known pregnancies. Many women experience this before they have even told anyone they were pregnant, which means the grief is often invisible from the very beginning.

Ectopic pregnancy is when a pregnancy develops outside the uterus, most often in a fallopian tube, it is always a loss, and it is medically serious.

Molar pregnancy is a rare condition where abnormal tissue grows in place of a healthy pregnancy and must be removed, it can come with prolonged medical follow-up, which is its own kind of emotional toll.

Stillbirth is the loss of a baby after 20 weeks, a grief that carries the full weight of a life that was already being imagined, named, and prepared for. And abortion, including both a personal decision and a termination for medical reasons, is also a pregnancy ending that can carry grief, relief, complexity, or all three at once, and one that employees are very often navigating in complete silence.



What all of these have in common is that they happen inside a woman's body, in a culture that rarely makes space for any of them. As a female manager, you are uniquely placed to change that, not by having all the answers, but by **creating the kind of space where the question doesn't have to stay hidden**. This toolkit will help you do exactly that.

Even if You Think You Already Know

One of the most common pitfalls for female managers who have experienced loss themselves is the belief; conscious or not, that they know what the employee is going through. The Miscarriage Association is explicit on this point: even if you have experienced a loss yourself, their experience may be very different



Key reminder

Two women can experience the same type of pregnancy loss at the same gestational age and have profoundly different emotional responses. One may feel relieved. One may be devastated. One may want to return to work the next day. One may need six weeks. Neither response is wrong. Your job is not to understand, it is to create space for her response, whatever it is

What She May be Experiencing

Grief of varying intensity

Not proportional to gestation, disclosure, or relationship status

Physical recovery

Fatigue, hormonal shifts, bleeding, follow-up appointments, often for weeks

Shame and secrecy

Many women had not announced the pregnancy, the loss becomes 'invisible'

Anxiety about the future

Fertility concerns, fear of another loss, worry about career perception

PTSD symptoms

Present in 1 in 3 women at one month, intrusive memories, avoidance

Recurrent loss complexity

Women experiencing multiple losses often receive less support each time

When You Have Your Own Story

Managing Personal Grief in a Professional Role

If you have experienced pregnancy loss yourself, whether recently or years ago, supporting an employee through theirs can activate your own grief in unexpected ways. This is not a weakness. It is human.

Here is what it can look like:

- Feeling unexpectedly emotional when the topic arises
- An urge to share your own story, to validate hers, or to feel less alone yourself
- Overidentifying with her experience and projecting your own feelings onto her
- Feeling resentful if she seems 'less affected' than you were
- An anniversary or due date being triggered, even one from years ago

None of these make you a bad manager

They make you a human being. The goal is not to eliminate your emotional response; it is to be aware of it, so that you can separate your experience from hers and show up with clear eyes.

Should You Share Your Own Story?

This is one of the most nuanced questions in this module. The answer is: sometimes, with care and the right intention.

Consider sharing when

She has already opened up and a brief disclosure would help her feel less alone

You share only a small amount, enough to signal understanding, not to shift focus to you

You make clear that her experience may be very different from yours

You check in after sharing: 'Does it help to know that, or would you prefer I focus on you?'

Hold back when

You are still in active grief and sharing may destabilise you

The conversation would shift focus from her to you, even unintentionally

She has not indicated any desire to know about your personal life

You would share out of your own need, rather than hers

The Empathy Trap and How to Avoid it

Empathy is your greatest asset in this role. It is also, in excess, a potential vulnerability. Here is what happens at both ends of the spectrum and how to find the steady, effective middle.

Too little empathy

Treating the loss as primarily administrative. Delegating entirely to HR. Reverting to performance management too soon. Expressing sympathy briefly then moving on. Avoiding the topic after the first acknowledgement

Too much empathy

Over-involvement in her emotional process. Checking in so frequently it becomes intrusive. Projecting your own grief onto hers. Making the situation about your shared experience as women. Struggling to make practical decisions due to emotional overwhelm.

The sweet spot - Compassionate professionalism

Acknowledge with genuine warmth. Ask rather than assume. Follow her lead. Take practical action. Check in regularly but not intrusively. Keep your own emotional centre stable enough to be useful to her.



Return to Work Check-in Questions

- How are you feeling about being back? Is there anything you'd like to share?
- Are there any aspects of your role or environment that might be difficult right now?
- Are there any adjustments to your schedule or workload that would help?
- Do you know what support is available through YourDOST?
- When would you like us to check in next?



Navigating Sensitive Team Dynamics

As a Female Manager, you May be More Attuned to These Dynamics, but That Doesn't Mean They Are Easy to Navigate.

A colleague announces a pregnancy

Give the grieving employee a private heads-up before any announcement reaches the team. Ask if she would like any adjustments, for example, to be absent from the team meeting where the announcement is made.

Her due date

If you know when the due date was, note it privately. A gentle check-in around that time; 'Just thinking of you this week', can mean more than you might expect

Baby showers or team celebrations

Participation should always be optional and private. A quiet word: 'You are absolutely not expected to attend if you'd prefer not to, I'll make sure that's understood' is enough

A colleague returns from maternity leave

A private conversation in advance is a powerful act of support. You cannot prevent the moment, but you can prepare her for it and be available for a check-in afterward. Be especially attentive if the maternity returner was pregnant at the same time.

If you become pregnant yourself

If you are pregnant and managing an employee who has experienced loss, be thoughtful about how and when you share your news. A private, empathetic heads-up before a public announcement is a small act of care with significant impact.



Reflection Exercises: Deepen Your Practice

These exercises are designed specifically for the female manager experience. They encourage honest self-examination alongside practical skill-building.

Activity 1

 20 minutes

The Personal Inventory

Purpose

Understand how your own history with this topic may show up in your management.

Steps

1. Reflect: Have you personally experienced pregnancy loss, or been close to someone who has? Is it fully resolved, or does it still carry weight?
2. Write down 2-3 ways in which your personal history might shape how you respond to an employee - both helpfully and less helpfully.
3. For each, write one intention: how you will use the positive aspect, and how you will manage the challenging one

Reflection

What would you need from your own support system before handling this situation if it were triggered by your own grief?

Activity 2

 15 minutes

The 'Her Experience, Not Mine' Exercise

Purpose

Identify and examine your unconscious assumptions about this topic.

Steps

1. Think of an employee who has just experienced a miscarriage at 8 weeks. Write two completely different responses she might have; one deeply devastated, one feeling more relief than grief.
2. For each: What would be the most helpful thing you could do as her manager? How would the conversation be different?
3. Reflect: Which response would be easier for you to support? Why?

Reflection

Does either response challenge any assumptions you hold about how women 'should' feel after a loss? Where do those assumptions come from?

These exercises are designed specifically for the female manager experience. They encourage honest self-examination alongside practical skill-building.

Activity 3



The Conversation Role-Play (Pair activity)

Purpose

Practise the conversation with specific attention to the female manager dynamic.

Steps

1. With a trusted colleague, role-play the initial supportive conversation. Person A (manager) has experienced a loss herself. Person B has just disclosed her miscarriage.
2. During the role-play, Person A must resist the urge to share her own story and maintain full focus on Person B's experience.
3. Debrief: Was there a moment when Person A wanted to share? What stopped them — or didn't?

Reflection

How do you distinguish between sharing your story to support someone else, and sharing it for your own comfort?

Activity 4



The 'Her Experience, Not Mine' Exercise

Purpose

Identify the workplace moments that may be hardest for your employee — and plan for them.

Steps

1. List all the pregnancy or baby-related moments that commonly arise in your team: announcements, baby showers, maternity returns, etc.
2. For each one, think about how you would handle it for an employee who has recently experienced loss.
3. Think about any upcoming events in your team right now. Is there anything you should be thinking about proactively?

Reflection

Is there anything on this list you have been unconsciously avoiding thinking about?

These exercises are designed specifically for the female manager experience. They encourage honest self-examination alongside practical skill-building.

Activity 5

 15 minutes

The Self-Care Audit

Purpose

Make sure you are resourced before you resource others.

Steps

1. Rate yourself honestly on: Emotional availability (1–10) · Knowledge of support resources (1–10) · Confidence in having this conversation (1–10) · Personal resolution of any related grief (1–10).
2. For any score below 7: what is one action you could take this week to strengthen that area?
3. Identify one person or resource you could reach out to for your own support.

Reflection

What does it mean to you to be 'resourced enough' to show up well for someone else? Are you there right now?

Female managers in this situation are sometimes at risk of over-giving, absorbing an employee's grief because it echoes their own. This section is explicitly for you.



Signs you may need support

- You find yourself thinking about this employee's situation frequently outside of work
- The topic is activating grief you thought was resolved
- You feel personally responsible for her recovery, not just professionally supportive
- You feel resentful of the emotional weight, or guilty about that resentment
- You are not sleeping well or feel emotionally drained

This is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of humanity.

But it is also a signal that you need to seek your own support, so that you can continue to be useful to her, and to yourself. The YourDOST platform is available to you. You are not expected to hold this alone.



What You Can Do

- Access YourDOST for a confidential session with a counsellor or psychologist
- Speak to HR about handling a specific situation, they are there to support you too
- Talk to a trusted peer manager for a sounding board
- Give yourself explicit permission to feel whatever you feel about this topic
- Remember: compassionate professionalism means being fully present, not fully merged

Your Manager Pledge



Write down one thing you will do differently as a manager after completing this module. It can be small. It just needs to be real.

I commit to.....

Support Available In India and globally



Internal Resources - Quest Global

Primary resource YourDOST

Available 24/7, YourDOST connects employees and managers with licensed psychologists, counsellors, and coaches. Sessions are confidential and accessible via chat, audio, or video.

Available in English and Hindi.

Managers can also access the platform for their own support needs.

[YourDOST.com](#)

Access via Quest Global employee portal

Internal HR / People Experience Team

Your first internal point of contact for policy guidance, leave arrangements, and sensitive case management. Contact them for advice on handling a specific situation.

Learning Hub Quest Learning Hub

This module is part of the Cost of Silence series. All three modules count towards your inclusion and well-being learning pathway.



Support Available In India and globally



India-Based Support Resources

FREE · INDIA iCall - TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences)

A free, professionally managed psycho-social helpline run by trained psychologists. Offers individual counselling over phone and chat. Available Monday–Saturday, 8am–10pm. Available in English and Hindi.

<https://icallhelpline.org/>
Helpline: 9152987821

FREE · 24/7 · INDIA Vandrevala Foundation Helpline

A 24/7, free mental health helpline offering support for grief, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. Available in multiple Indian languages including Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, Marathi, and English.

Helpline: 1860-2662-345 ·
<https://www.vandrevalafoundation.com>

CLINICAL · INDIA Nimhans (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences)

India's premier mental health institution. Useful as a referral for employees who need clinical-level support after pregnancy loss.

<https://www.nimhans.ac.in/>
Helpline: 080-46110007

INDIA Pregnancy Helpline India

A counselling helpline for women on the Indian subcontinent navigating pregnancy-related concerns, including loss. Non-judgmental, caring support via call and chat. Available 8am–midnight.

25 pregnancyhelpline.in



Support Available In India and globally



Global Resources to Share with Employees

Free · Share with employee

Tommy's- Wellbeing After Miscarriage (Free YouTube Series)

A 6-part video series by specialist baby loss counsellor Denise Caskie. Sessions cover grief, PTSD, CBT tools, hormonal changes, and planning for the future. Free and accessible anywhere in India. Search 'Tommy's Wellbeing After Miscarriage' on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ2bvCicce_rP8kKpWDEaCsnwf-Hqvil6

Manager Guide

The Miscarriage Association - Workplace Guide

The most comprehensive free manager resource available. Includes conversation guides, a 5-step guide to what to say, and employer information pack.

<https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/miscarriage-and-the-workplace/>

Free · Online

Postpartum Support International- Free Online Support Groups

Free virtual support groups for pregnancy and infant loss, facilitated by trained mental health professionals. Open-ended participation.

<https://postpartum.net/get-help/loss-grief-in-pregnancy-postpartum/>



Support Available In India and globally



Resources for Self Understanding

Cry It Out Loud!

Chasing the Rainbows shares stories of grief, healing, and hope from infertility, pregnancy loss, miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant loss - featuring parents, medical experts, and healthcare professionals. Listening to even one or two episodes will give you a felt sense of what employees are carrying. → Search "Cry It Out Loud Chasing the Rainbows" on Spotify or Apple Podcast

Cry it Out Loud

Pregnancy Loss and Work

How to Support Your People Effectively (The Work Couch Podcast)

A manager-focused conversation on how to have better conversations and create a supportive team culture around pregnancy loss. Conversational and practical. → Search "The Work Couch Pregnancy Loss" on Spotify or Apple Podcasts

The Work Couch Pregnancy Loss

Faye's Story –

What I Needed from My Employer- The Miscarriage Association

A real employee shares her experience of returning to work after pregnancy loss and what she wished her manager had done. Short, powerful, and directly relevant. → Search "Miscarriage Association Faye employer" on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@miscarriageassociation>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKSQP481zIU>



Support Available In India and globally



Resources for Self Understanding

Supporting employees through pregnancy loss

Maven Clinic Covers why miscarriage and pregnancy loss are difficult topics steeped in feelings of anguish, shame, and uncertainty - and how managers and organisations can provide meaningful support. Includes the psychological impact and what return to work can feel like.

mavenclinic.com/post/supporting-employees-through-pregnancy-loss

Pamphlets and Leaflets

As a male manager, you may find that offering a resource feels more natural than finding the words, and that is a completely valid way to show care. The pamphlets below are designed to be shared directly with an employee after your initial conversation, giving her something to return to privately, at her own pace, without needing to ask for more.

[Why Me?](#)

[Miscarriage and Workplace](#)

[Women-stand-for-Women](#)

[Late pregnancy loss](#)

[Partners Too](#)

[management](#)





A final note from the YourDOST team

You may never know the full impact of your response to an employee's loss. You may never know whether the conversation you had or chose not to have was the thing that helped someone stay, heal, or feel that their work and their life mattered to the people around them.

But this much is known: the cost of silence is real. And the alternative, acknowledgement, compassion, and practical action, costs very little, and gives back so much.

Thank you for completing Break the Silence training for female managers.