

BREAK THE SILENCE

HR Managers' Toolkit



About this Toolkit



Miscarriage is one of the most common yet most silenced experiences in the Indian workplace. **Research shows that 1 in 4 known pregnancies end in loss, yet most employees navigate this grief alone, often returning to work still physically and emotionally raw.**

This toolkit equips you not only as a person, as an HR manager too with the knowledge, language, and practical tools to create a psychologically safe space for any employee who has experienced pregnancy loss. You do not need to have all the answers. You just need to show up with empathy and intention



What Is 'Break The Silence'?

Welcome Manager

- A journey designed to help you create a genuinely safe, supportive space for employees in your team who have experienced pregnancy loss
- You don't need to be a grief expert. You don't need to have experienced this yourself. You just need to be willing to show up with curiosity, care, and the willingness to learn



Why this toolkit



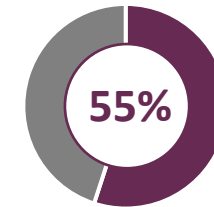
1 in 4

Pregnancies
end in
miscarriage



1 in 3

Women
show PTSD
symptoms
after loss



Experience
depression
symptoms
after loss



Of losses
happen in the
first trimester

Why this Matters in India

In India, the cultural silence around pregnancy loss is particularly pronounced. Pregnancies are often not announced until well into the second trimester, meaning many women experience their loss entirely alone, without social acknowledgement or workplace support. The grief is real. The silence makes it harder to bear.


As a manager in an Indian workplace, your response carries enormous weight. A simple, genuine acknowledgement can be the difference between an employee feeling seen or invisible.

What the research says about managers

- Nearly **70%** of employees say their manager has more impact on their mental health than their therapist or doctor.
- **94%** say managers should have at least some responsibility for their wellbeing. You are not a bystander in this - you are a key part of the support system



Understanding Pregnancy Loss



Hello HR Manager,
We are starting with the foundation: understanding what pregnancy loss is, what it feels like, and why your role matters so much in how an employee experiences it at work.

What is Miscarriage?

Miscarriage is the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks. It is the most common complication of pregnancy, yet one of the most under-discussed experiences in any workplace. Beyond miscarriage, employees may also experience ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, or stillbirth, each carrying its own physical and emotional weight.



The Physical Reality

What managers should know about the body:

- Physical recovery can take several weeks, symptoms include bleeding, cramping, fatigue, and hormonal changes
- Hormonal shifts continue after the loss and affect mood, concentration, and energy
- Medical follow-up appointments (and sometimes surgery) are common and necessary
- The return of menstruation can typically take 4-6 weeks after loss, which can itself be an emotionally difficult moment



The Emotional Reality

The psychological impact of miscarriage is often underestimated, both by society and by the individuals experiencing it. Grief does not follow a predictable path, and is not proportional to how far along the pregnancy was.

Grief & loss

Often the loss of an entire imagined future, not just a pregnancy

Guilt & self-blame

"Did I cause this?" Extremely common and almost always unfounded

Anxiety

About future pregnancies, work perception, and the unknown

Shame & silence

Many had not announced the pregnancy the loss becomes invisible

PTSD symptoms

Present in 1 in 3 women one month after loss

Depression

Up to 55% of women experience depressive symptoms

Your Role as an HR Manager

You don't need to fix her grief. You need to acknowledge it.
Here are the four core principles that guide everything in this toolkit

1 Acknowledge

Don't avoid the topic out of discomfort. Silence reads as indifference. A simple 'I'm so sorry for your loss' goes further than you think.



2 Ask, Don't Assume

Every person's experience is different. Ask what they need rather than deciding for them.



3 Follow Their Lead

Let the employee set the pace, tone, and level of disclosure. Respect their right to privacy.



4 Take Practical Action

Inform them of the Maternity Benefits Act, and ensure they know what support is available. Ask if they need help with their workload or speaking with their manager



The Conversation Guide

We move into the heart of this program: having the conversation.

Many HR managers tell us the hardest part is simply not knowing what to say. This toolkit gives you the words but more importantly, it gives you the confidence to use them.

Setting Up the Conversation

Before you speak, set the environment. Choose a private, calm space, not the corridor, not an open-plan office. The beginning or end of the day often works best. Let the employee lead the conversation. Sit with silences, they are not awkward; they are necessary.

The minimum – always acceptable



I heard about your loss and I just wanted to say I'm very sorry. We are here if there's anything we can do. Please take the time you need."

That is enough. It opens the door. It says: your loss matters to me.

Say / Avoid guide

Say

"I was so sorry to hear your news. Please take whatever time you need."

"I want you to know your job and your position here are secure."

"Is there anything I can do? workload, schedule, anything?"

"You don't have to tell me anything more than you're comfortable sharing."

"Would you like me to speak to the team, or keep this private?"

"Are you aware of the support available through YourDOST?"

Avoid

"Your team will be glad you bounced back." (Dismisses the grief entirely)

"These things happen, try to stay positive."

"Do you know what caused it?"
(Invasive and often leads to self-blame)

"When do you think you'll be ready to pick up your projects again?" (Too soon)

"I know how you feel." (You may not avoid assuming)

"You're young, there's plenty of time."
(Unhelpful and presumptuous)

After the Conversation

- Follow up with a brief, warm written message confirming support and Maternity Benefit Act leave policy
- Schedule a check-in and let her know she can come to you before then
- Check in again after the first week back, not just once.
-



A note on language

Follow the employee's lead on how they refer to their loss. Some say 'pregnancy', others say 'baby'. Using the same language they use signals deep respect and attunement

The Three Phases of Support

We are in the home stretch now. You have learned what pregnancy loss is, and you have the language to acknowledge it. Now we look at how to support an employee across three distinct phases: when you first find out, during their absence, and when they return to work.

PHASE 1 – When you first find out

- Acknowledge the loss immediately and with sincerity, even if it's just a brief message
- Do not press for medical details or ask what happened
- Clarify leave entitlements with HR and communicate these clearly
- Ask whether she would like the team to be told, and if so, how
- Provide information on Maternity Benefit Act policies and other applicable company policies
- Follow up with a brief written note confirming your support



PHASE 2 – During absence or recovery

- Keep contact minimal unless she initiates otherwise
- One warm, work-free check-in message is appropriate
- Protect how her leave is described to colleagues



PHASE 3 – Return to work

- Offer a pre-return meeting, even a coffee before her first day back
- Check if any colleagues are visibly pregnant, this may be difficult for her
- Check in with her manager to see how she is doing and whether other accommodations should be made available

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 that would help?
- Do you know what support is available through YourDOST?



Reflection Exercises: Deepen Your Practice



We move into practice. These five activities are designed to be completed individually or with a peer. They are honest, practical, and designed to build your real-world confidence.

Activity 1

 15 minutes

The Silence Audit

Purpose

Understand where silence around pregnancy loss may exist in your team culture.

Steps

1. Reflect quietly: In your current team, how comfortable would an employee feel disclosing a pregnancy loss to you?
2. Write down 2-3 things in your environment, language, or management style that might contribute to silence.
3. For each one, note one small change you could make.

Reflection

What would need to change for an employee to feel they could come to you within 24 hours of a loss?

Activity 2

 20-25 minutes

The Conversation Role-Play (pair)

Purpose

Build confidence in having the initial supportive conversation

Steps

1. Find a trusted colleague. You play the role of the HR manager, Person B has just disclosed a miscarriage.
2. Use the Day 6 Say/Avoid guide as a reference but try not to read directly from it.
3. After 5 minutes, switch roles. Debrief: What felt natural? What was hard? Use this as an opportunity to help coach or guide the other manager too.

Reflection

What was the most difficult moment in the conversation?
What does that tell you about where you need support?

Activity 3

 20 minutes

The Empathy Map

Purpose

Ensure your company's managers are prepared for the conversation.

Steps

1. Complete the exercise on the page previous, only this time assume it is the employee's manager.

Reflection

What did they say right, what do they need to be coached on

Activity 4

 10 minutes

Know Your Resources

Purpose

Make sure you have the right information at hand before you need it.

Steps

1. Locate your company's pregnancy loss / bereavement policy.
2. Log into www.breakthesilence.in and explore what support is available to employees in addition to your own policies/support.
3. Note 3 key pieces of information you would share with an employee in their first conversation with you.

Reflection

Would you feel confident telling an employee what support is available today? If not, what do you need to find out?

Your HR Manager Pledge



Write down one thing you will do differently as an HR 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.

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

The pamphlets and handouts listed below are not just for your own reference, they are resources you can quietly place in someone's hands at the right moment. Sometimes an employee is not yet ready to talk, but they are ready to read; having something tangible to offer can be the most practical act of support a manager can give.

[Miscarriage and Workplace](#)

[Late pregnancy loss](#)

[Management](#)

[Pregnancy loss and Infertility](#)

[Feelings and facts](#)



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 Module 2 of the Break The Silence Manager's Toolkit.