

# || BREAK THE || SILENCE ||

## Male Managers' Toolkit



# About this Toolkit



This module is not about suggesting that male managers are less capable of empathy or compassion. **It is about acknowledging something real: when a male manager needs to support a female employee through one of the most physically and emotionally intimate experiences of her life, there are specific dynamics, discomforts, and questions that arise and that are rarely spoken about.**

This toolkit addresses those directly. It is built on the belief that the **best support comes not from pretending those dynamics don't exist, but from understanding them** and moving through them with confidence and care.



# What Male Managers Often Tell Us

In workplace training contexts, male managers regularly raise the same concerns about supporting a woman through pregnancy loss. These are not weaknesses, they are honest, common responses this module is designed to address.



**I don't want to overstep.**

Fear of crossing a professional or personal boundary. This is valid, but it can cause paralysis that reads as indifference to the employee. Acknowledging someone's loss is not overstepping.



**I don't understand what she went through physically.**

Miscarriage is a significant physical experience as well as an emotional one. This module covers what you need to know, not in clinical detail, but enough to be a more informed and sensitive manager.



## **I'm worried about saying the wrong thing.**

This fear is common, but the cost of saying nothing is higher than the cost of an imperfect but caring response. This module gives you the words.



## **I'm not sure this is my place as a man.**

It absolutely is. You are her manager. Her experience at work is directly shaped by how you respond. Gender does not reduce that responsibility.



## **She might not want to talk to me about something so personal.**

She may not want to share details and she doesn't have to. But she almost certainly needs to know you acknowledge her loss and that her job is safe.



**Understanding what your  
employee is going through**



## Hello Manager,

We are starting with the foundation and if this topic feels unfamiliar, that is completely okay. Many male managers tell us they simply were not taught about this, and that is exactly why this module exists.

- **Pregnancy loss** is an umbrella term for several different experiences, all of which involve the loss of a pregnancy at different stages and in different ways
- **Miscarriage** is the most common; it refers to the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks, and it affects 1 in 4 known pregnancies
- **Ectopic pregnancy** is when a pregnancy develops outside the uterus, often in a fallopian tube, it is medically dangerous and always results in loss
- **Molar pregnancy** is a rare condition where a non-viable pregnancy grows abnormally and must be removed
- **Stillbirth** refers to the loss of a baby after 20 weeks
- Abortion including both voluntary termination and termination for medical reasons is also a form of pregnancy ending that can carry significant emotional weight. Each of these is a distinct medical event and each carries its own physical experience and emotional weight

What they share is this: they are all losses. They are all real. And in most Indian workplaces, **they are almost never spoken about which means the person who has lived through one is almost always carrying it alone. As her manager, you are in a position to change that. You do not need to fully understand the medical details. You just need to understand enough to show up** and this toolkit will help you do that.

# 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 is typically 4-6 weeks after loss, which can itself be an emotionally difficult moment

# The Emotional Reality

Research consistently shows that the grief following miscarriage can be profound, long-lasting, and often underestimated. The emotional impact is not proportional to how early the pregnancy was.



**1 in 4**  
pregnancies  
end in  
miscarriage



**1 in 3**  
women  
show PTSD  
symptoms  
after loss



**55%**  
experience  
depression  
symptoms



**66%**  
of male  
partners also  
show anxiety  
symptoms

**Why this matters for you as a manager:** An employee returning to work may still be physically recovering. Fatigue and hormonal changes affect concentration and mood. Performance expectations should be adjusted accordingly.

# Assumptions and Myths – Unpacking Your Own Barriers

## Ask yourself honestly

If an employee told you today she had a miscarriage, what would your first instinct be?

Understanding your own default response is the first step to improving it.

To speak?

To check policy first?

To send her to HR?

To wait until she bring it up?

Unconscious assumptions to watch For

- Assuming she is 'handling it fine' because she came back to work
- Assuming she doesn't want to talk because she hasn't brought it up
- Assuming that being practical (adjusting workload) is enough on its own
- Assuming it's HR's job, not yours
- Assuming her partner is 'more affected' and she will be resilient

# Myths About Miscarriage – Debunked

Carrying false beliefs into your conversations can cause inadvertent harm. Here are the most common myths and the reality.



Miscarriage is rare; it won't happen in my team.

Early miscarriage isn't as devastating as a later one.

She caused it through stress or overwork.

If she's back at work, she's fine.

It's not my place to bring it up.



1 in 4 pregnancies ends in miscarriage. In any team with women of reproductive age, this is a statistical likelihood.

Research is clear: grief does not scale with gestational age. A loss at 6 weeks can be just as shattering as one at 20 weeks.

The vast majority of miscarriages are caused by chromosomal abnormalities in the embryo, nothing the woman did or didn't do.

Many women return quickly out of necessity or habit while still very much grieving. Return to work does not mean recovery is complete.

You are her manager. Her wellbeing at work is directly your responsibility. Leaving the topic entirely to her to raise is a missed opportunity.

# The Conversation: A Male Manager's Guide

## Setting up the conversation

Choose a private space. Not an open plan, not a corridor. A quiet meeting room or one-to-one call is ideal. Let her set the pace. You are there to open the door, not to lead the conversation.

### The minimum – always acceptable



I was so sorry to hear your news. Please take whatever time you need. I'm here if there's anything I can do.

**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

"At least it was early." (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
- Schedule a check-in and let her know she can come to you before then
- Inform HR quietly and with her consent if adjustments are needed
- 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:**

## PHASE 1 – When you first find out

- Acknowledge the loss immediately and sincerely — even a brief message
- Do not press for medical detail 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
- Arrange for workload to be covered without making her feel like a burden
- 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
- Do not copy her into work emails unless absolutely essential
- Pregnancy announcements in the team should reach her via you first, privately
- Protect how her leave is described to colleagues



## PHASE 3 – Return to work

- Offer a pre-return meeting, even an informal coffee before her first day back
- Brief her privately on what has happened in the team
- Discuss workload: start lighter, build back gradually
- Be aware if any colleague is visibly pregnant, this may be difficult for her
- Continue checking in weekly for at least four weeks
- Be flexible on performance expectations and make this explicit

# 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?

# If a Male Team Member's Partner Has Miscarried

This is a frequently overlooked situation. When a male employee on your team has experienced pregnancy loss through his partner, he too may be grieving, often silently.



## What research shows

Studies show that 66% of male partners of women who miscarried show risk of anxiety. Men often internalise their grief, maintain a facade of being 'fine', and suffer privately. As a male manager, you are particularly well-placed to create space for him, and to model that seeking support is a sign of strength.



## What you can do

- Acknowledge it directly: 'I heard about your loss, I'm really sorry. That's hard for both of you.'
- Offer leave proactively, don't wait for him to ask
- Check in privately, without making it public in the team
- Don't assume he is fine because he says he is, check in again a week or two later
- Point him toward YourDost and make clear that seeking support is a sign of strength



**Reflection Exercises: Deepen Your Practice**

**These exercises are designed specifically for the male manager experience. They are honest, practical, and can be completed alone or with a trusted peer.**

## Activity 1



### The Default Response Test

#### Purpose

Examine your honest, instinctive response to this situation.

#### Steps

1. Imagine you receive a message from a female direct report: 'I need to let you know I've had a miscarriage. I'll be off for a few days.' Write down your very first instinct, what would you do? What would you say back?
2. Now review your response against the Say/Avoid guide. What did you get right? What would you change?
3. Draft the reply you wish you had written first

#### Reflection

What does the gap between your first instinct and your revised response tell you about where you most need to build confidence?

## Activity 2



### The Male Lens Check

#### Purpose

Identify and examine your unconscious assumptions about this topic.

#### Steps

1. Write down 3 assumptions you might hold about pregnancy loss and the workplace
2. For each, ask: Where did this come from? Is it based on fact or on cultural conditioning?
3. Now write one behaviour change for each assumption

#### Reflection

Which assumption surprised you most when you examined it?

**These exercises are designed specifically for the male manager experience. They are honest, practical, and can be completed alone or with a trusted peer.**

### Activity 3 (Pair)

 20 minutes

## The Conversation Role-Play

### Purpose

Practise the first conversation in a safe environment

### Steps

1. With a trusted peer, role-play the initial conversation: you as manager, they as an employee who has just disclosed a miscarriage.
2. Use the Say/Avoid guide, but try to make it feel natural, not scripted.
3. After 5-7 minutes, Reflect: What felt authentic? What felt awkward?

### Reflection

What was the hardest moment? What does that reveal about where your real growth edge is?

### Activity 4

 15 minutes

## The Boundary Map

### Purpose

Clarify exactly where appropriate professional boundaries lie

### Steps

1. Draw two columns: 'Crossing a boundary' and 'Not crossing a boundary'.
2. Place each of these in the correct column: asking how she is doing | asking what caused the miscarriage | offering to adjust her deadlines | sending her a card | telling a colleague she miscarried without permission | checking in by text during her absence.
3. Review your answers against the guidance in this module. Were any surprises?

### Reflection

Where have you previously confused 'maintaining professionalism' with 'avoiding a difficult human moment'?

## 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](https://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.

23 [pregnancyhelpline.in](https://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](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](https://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.

[Feelings and facts](#)

[Miscarriage and Workplace](#)

[men and miscarriage](#)

[Late pregnancy loss](#)



## 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.