

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AGILE TEAMS:

ENDING **THE PAIN** OF PERIODS

Maddie Clingan & Marion Peters



How awkward do you feel right now?



WHERE WE ARE NOW



65%

Feel uncomfortable
mentioning periods
at work

Our Research



10.8
Million

UK workforce
menstruate every
month

ActionAid



98%

Say periods have
some impact on
their worklife

Our Research

Comfort level



for those in Agile teams

NON-AGILE ROLES



AGILE ROLES



**1 = not comfortable
at all**

**REPORTED COMFORT
LEVELS**

**10 = totally comfortable,
as normal as mentioning a headache**

We have the permission to do better in the Agile space:



Intention to away from traditional management and towards more sustainable, human-centric ways of working



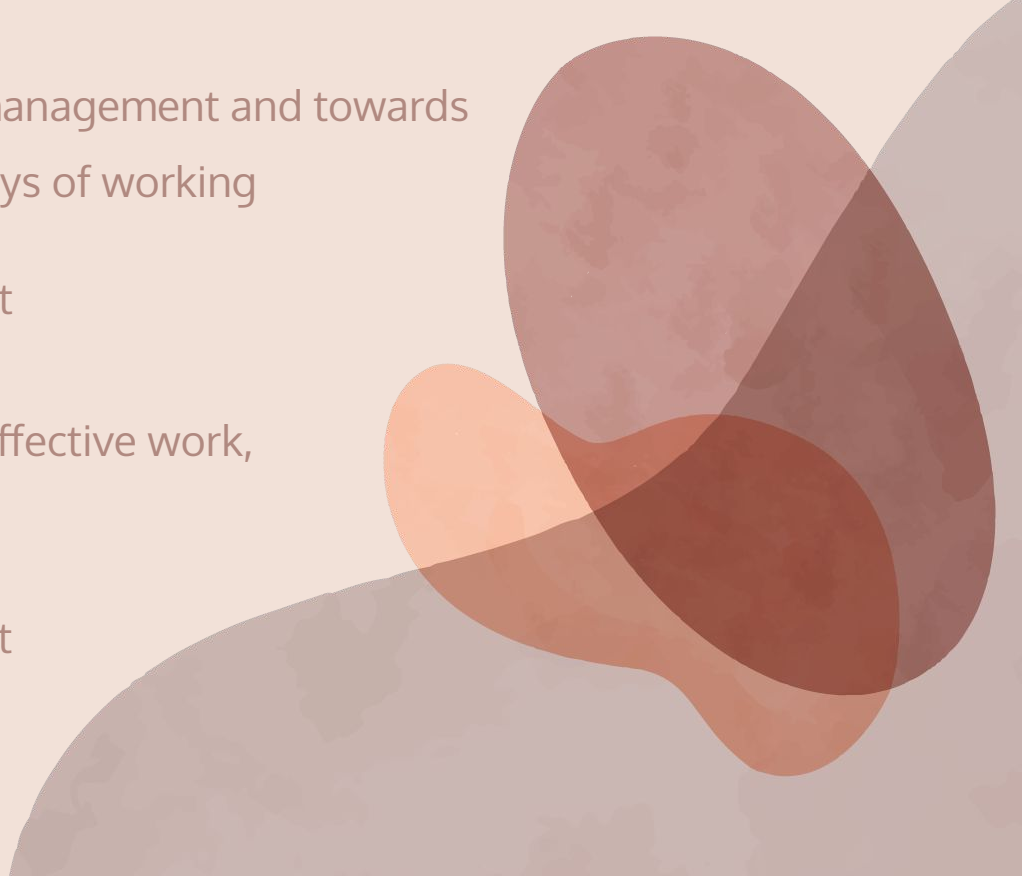
Principle of continuous improvement



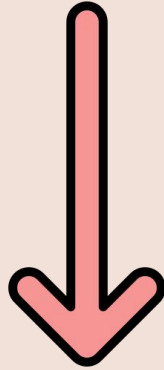
Focus on removing impediment to effective work, whatever they may be



Scrum values of courage and respect



TODAY'S GOAL



stigma

barriers

awkwardness



when talking about and accommodating for menstrual health
in our teams and companies

NORMALISING THE CONVERSATION



FORCING PEOPLE TO
HAVE THE
CONVERSATION

TODAY'S JOURNEY



WHAT WE SHOULD
HAVE BEEN TAUGHT
IN SCHOOL



WHAT I LEARNT IN SCHOOL



During Menstruation

DO

- Bathe or shower
- Wash hair
- Swim
- Dance
- Picnic

DO MODERATELY

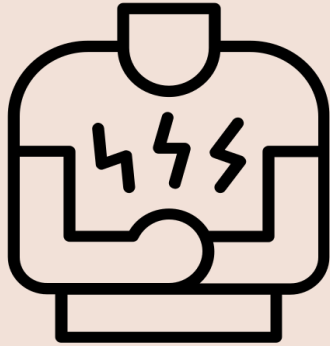
- Skate
- Ride horseback
- Play fast games
- Square dance

How well do you know the science?



Key Players

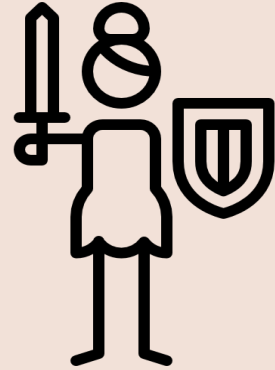
PROSTAGLANDINS



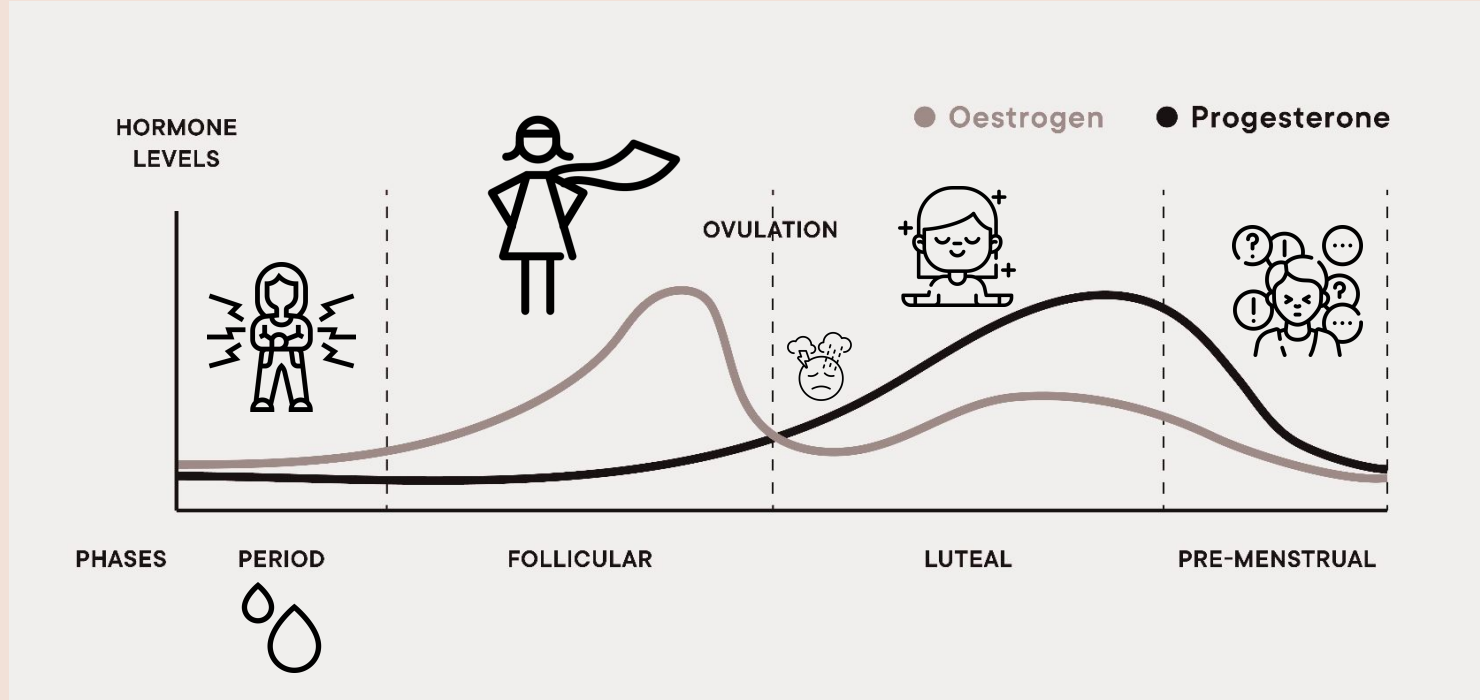
OESTROGEN



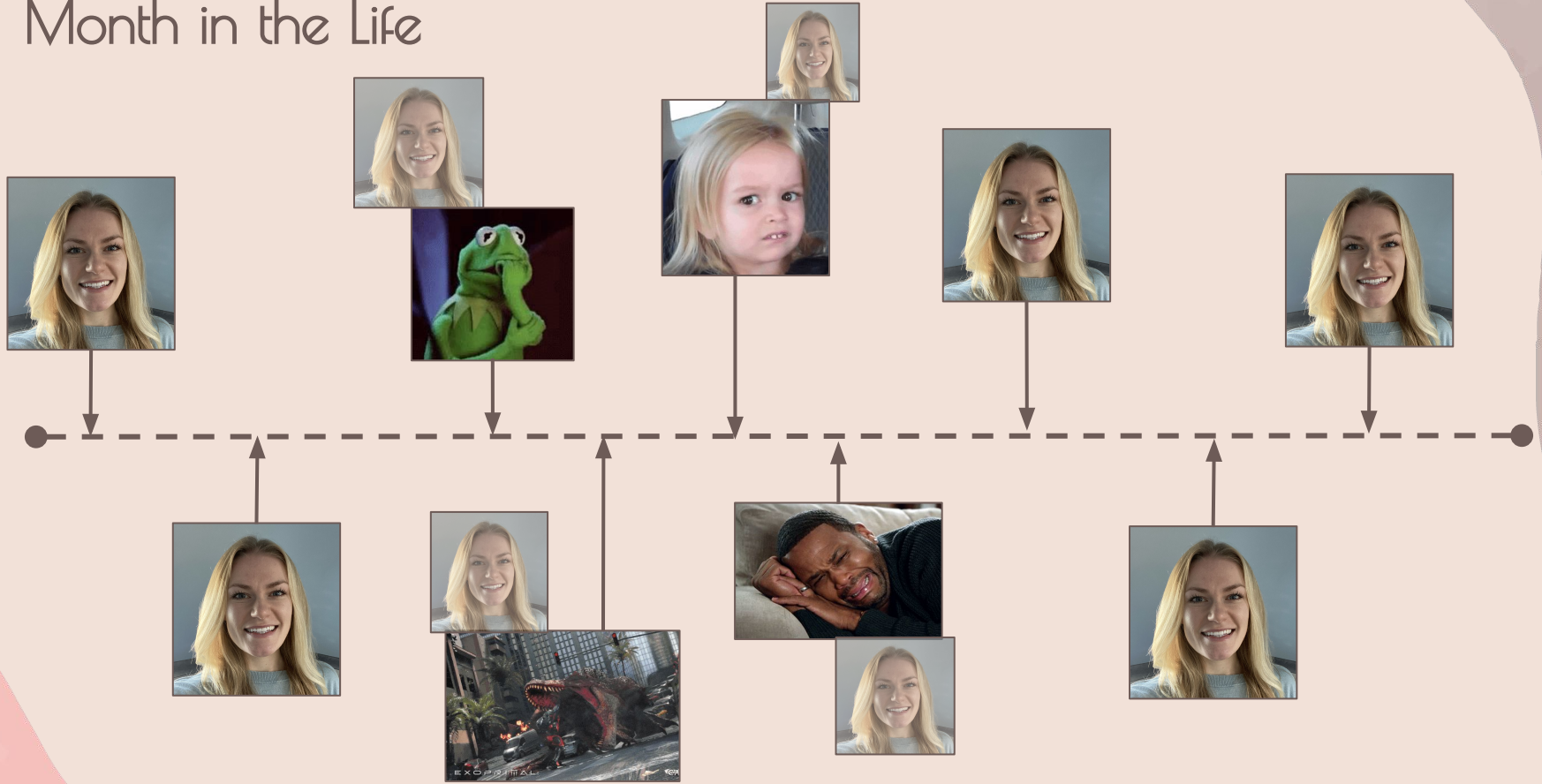
PROGESTERONE



THE PHASES



Month in the Life



LUTEAL

PRE-MENSTRUAL

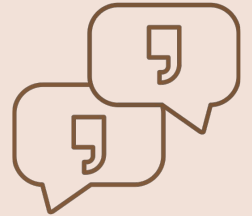
PERIOD

FOLLICULAR

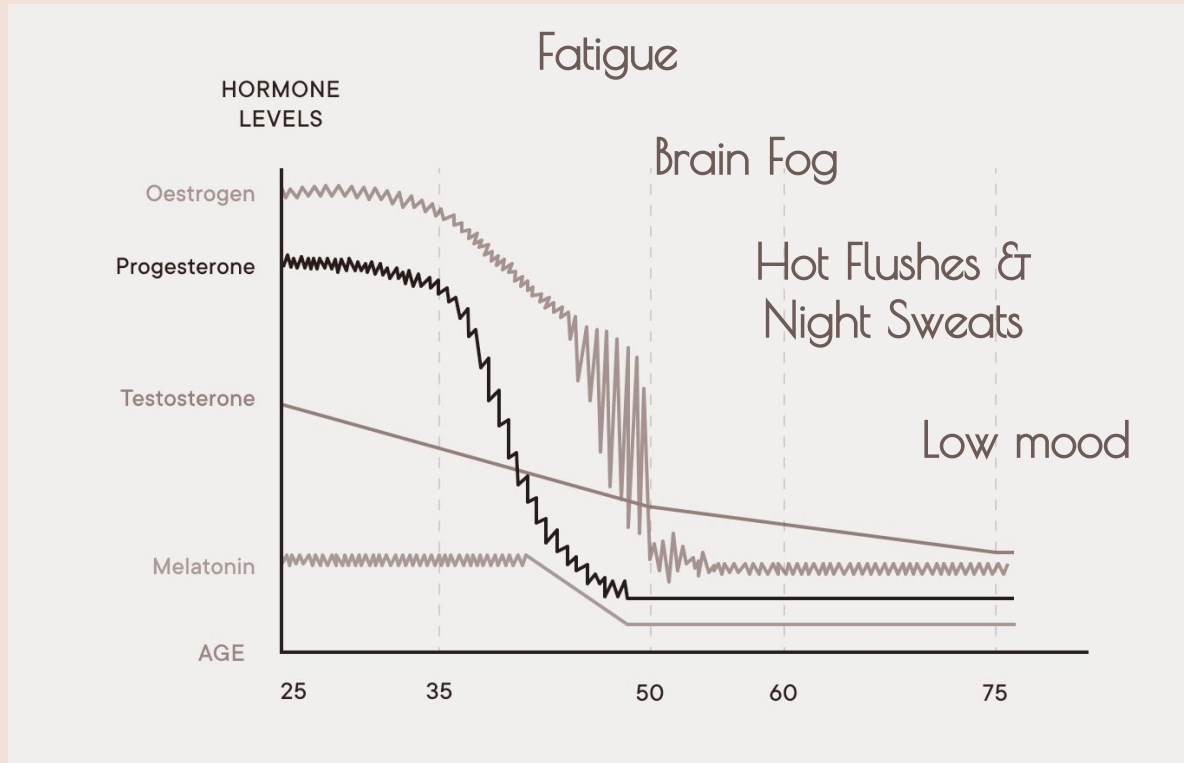


*"I am not going through menopause
but a previous team member
struggled with symptoms.*

*I realised as a woman I knew nothing
about it."*



Perimenopause & Menopause



KEY CONDITIONS

ENDOMETRIOSIS

10%



- Severe pain
- Heavy bleeding
- Nausea and fatigue

ADENOMYOSIS

10%

- Severe pain
- Heavy bleeding
- Heaviness in the stomach

PCOS

10%

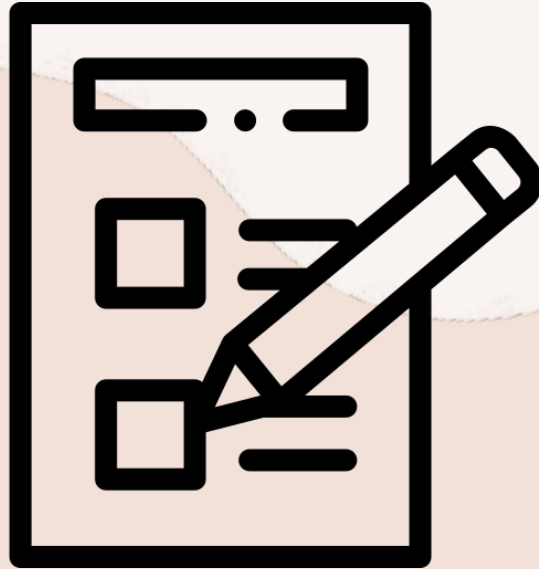
- Irregular menstruation
- Weight gain
- Hair growth & acne

FIBROIDS

50%

- Severe pain
- Heavy bleeding
- Frequent need to urinate

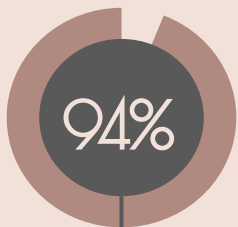
OUR RESEARCH: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE



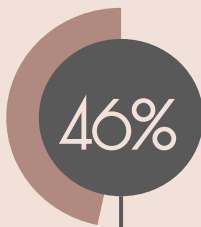


200

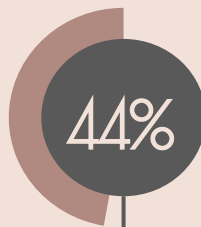
PARTICIPANTS



EUROPE-BASED



WORK
IN TECH



IN
AGILE TEAMS



FACE ADDITIONAL
CHALLENGES

Most frequently reported as the
worst symptom

Impact: Symptoms



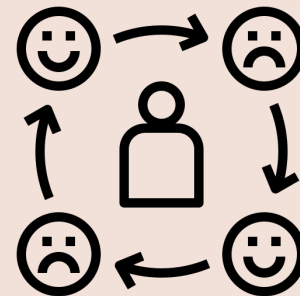
Pain

84%



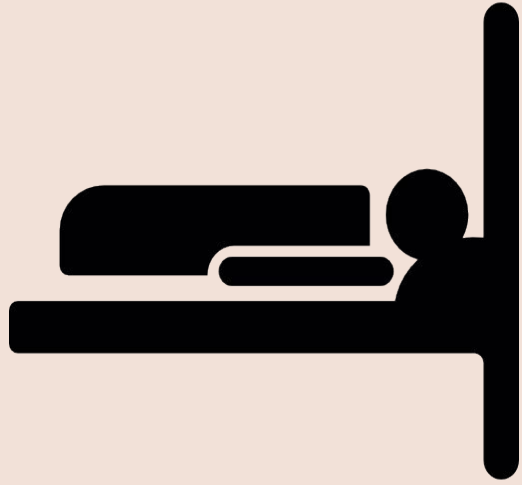
Fatigue

73%



**Mood
fluctuations**

67%



60%

Have had to take
time off work

"I struggle to do normal day to day things when my period starts. I become almost **paralyzed with pain** at the height of it."

"**Debilitating pain** which cannot be relieved except by strong painkillers. Difficult to concentrate and do anything in the day"

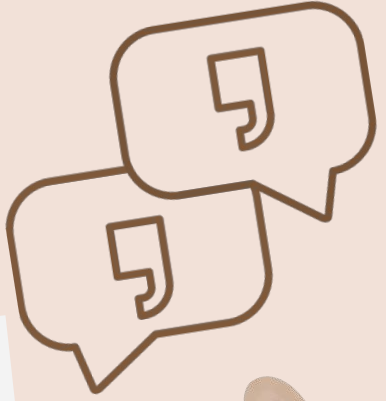
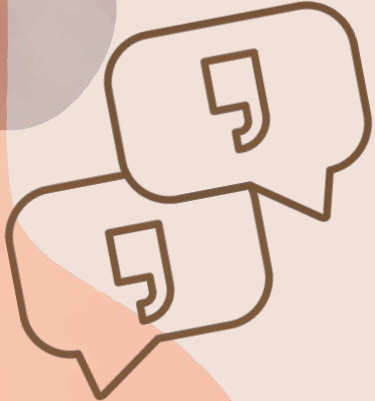
"My symptoms can be bad to the level of **passing out from pain.**"

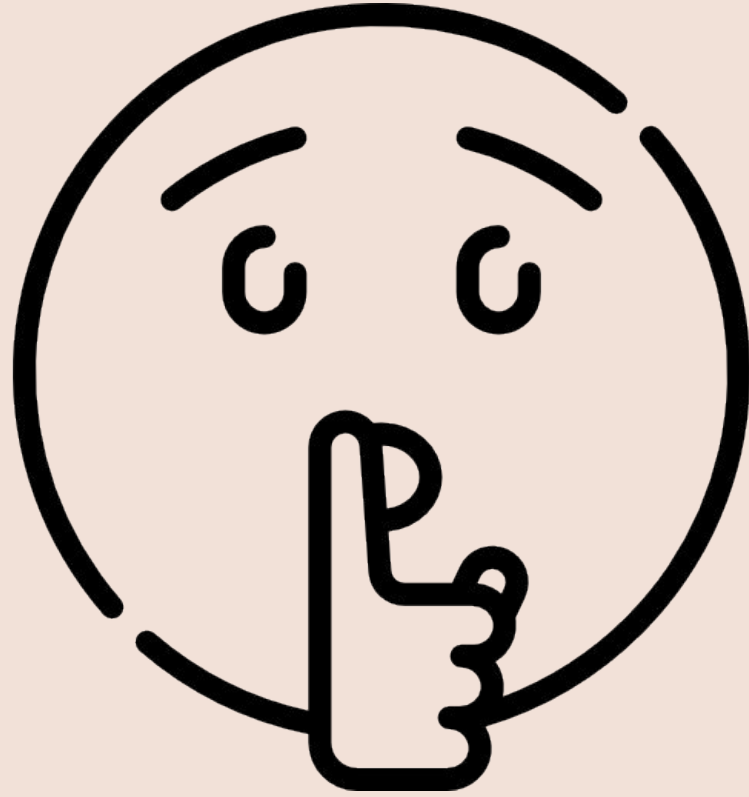
"I would use almost all of my sick leave on for the worst days of my period because sometimes **I literally can't leave the house** due to the pain and the heavy bleeding."

"I used heat patches so much to get through work I gave myself **second degree burns on my stomach**"

"The times I have had to be **in the office I've spent multiple hours in the floor in the loo trying to breathe** before going into meetings I can't concentrate in."

"At one point in my life on occasions I used to bleed heavily and the pain was terrible. I would lose colour and **my lips would turn blue and I would be on the brink of fainting.** This happened twice at work."








≥ 70%

would consider
making up an
excuse



Excuses given:

Upset/dodgy
stomach

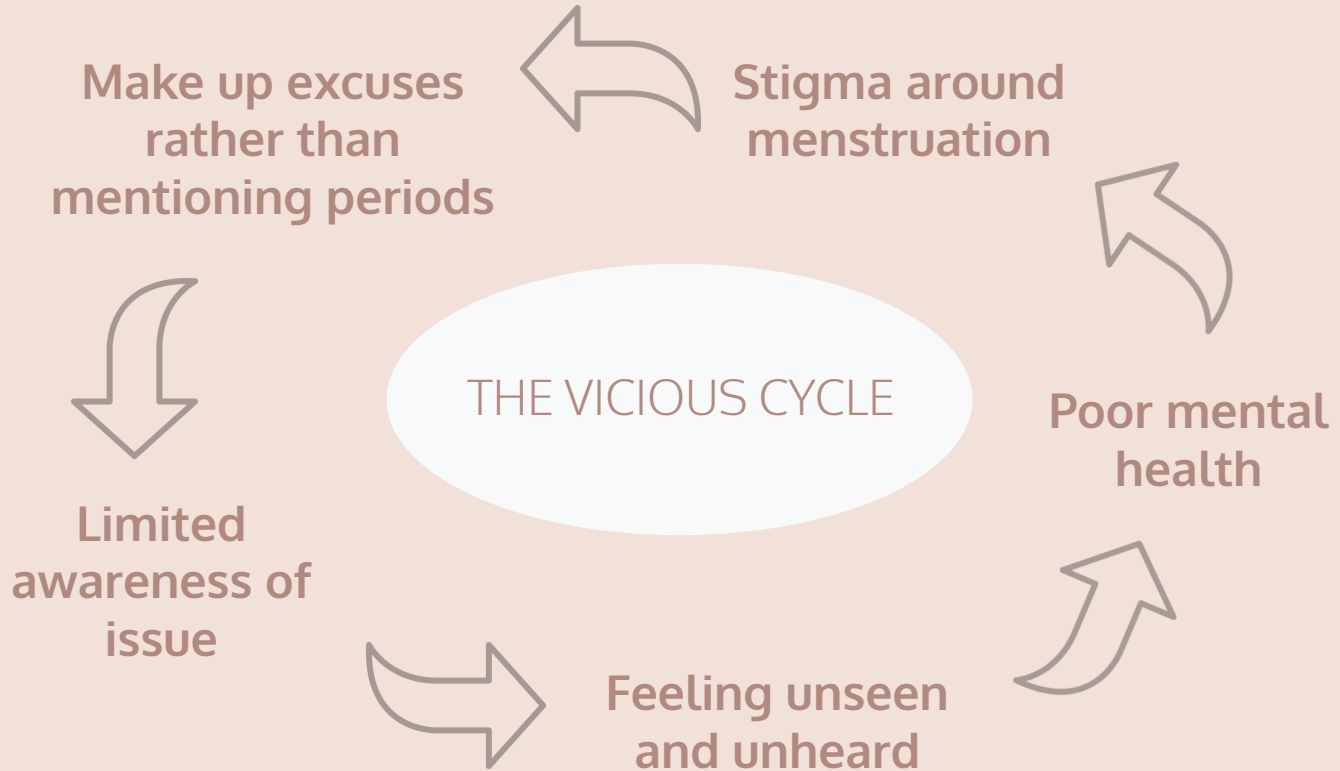
Food
poisoning

Bladder pain

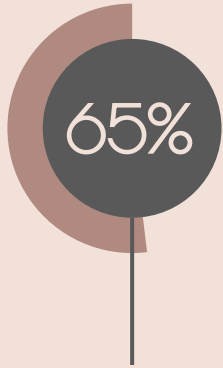
Flu/fever

Headache/cold

Insomnia



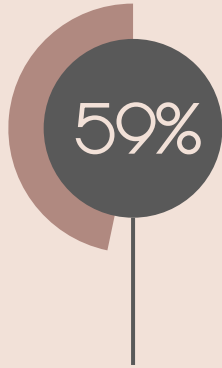
WORKING WELL: AGILE TEAMS



Location flexibility



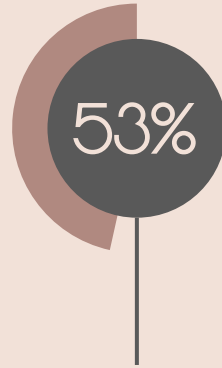
17%



Time flexibility



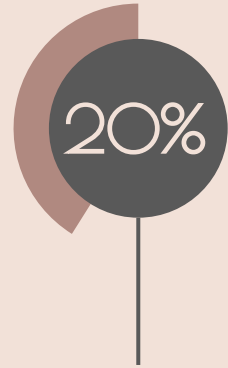
24%



Access to free
period products



34%



Supportive
Managers



12%

NON-AGILE ROLES

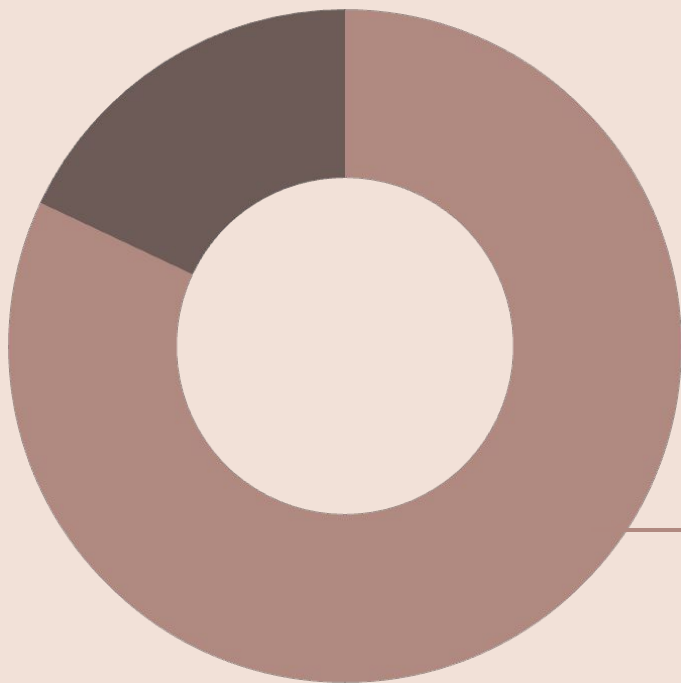


AGILE ROLES



REPORTED COMFORT
LEVELS

*rounded to the nearest 0.5



82%

of those in Agile roles
worked in tech



22%

of the tech
workforce across
Europe are women

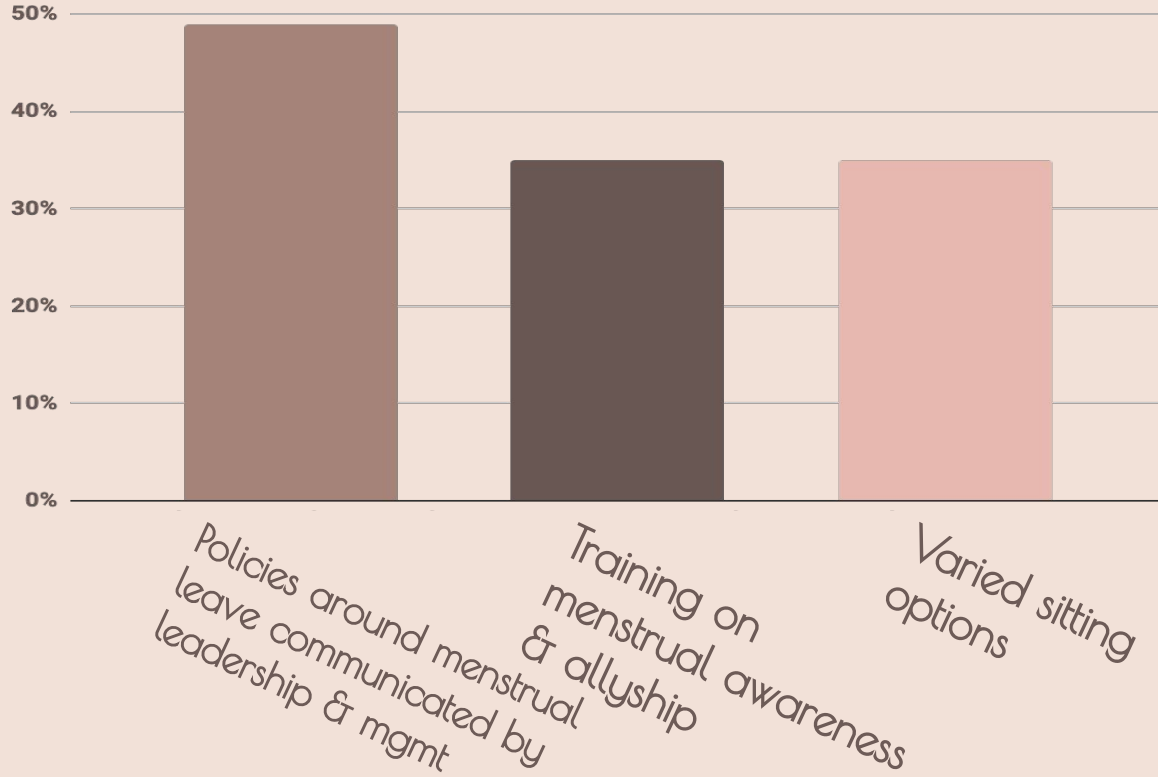
McKinsey and Company, 2023

menstruation = minority

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS: COMPANY LEVEL



Most Voted For More Of



Support for Organisations



#Periodpositive

Free, ongoing support for organisations

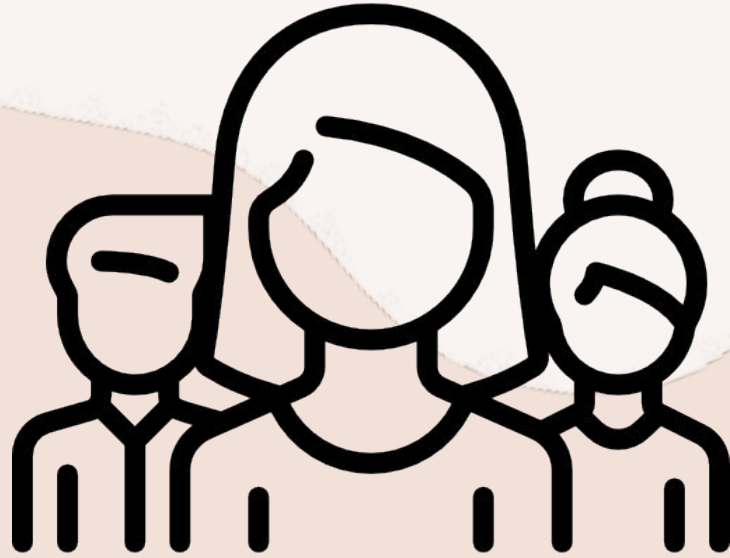


Menstruation & menopause training and accreditations for organisation

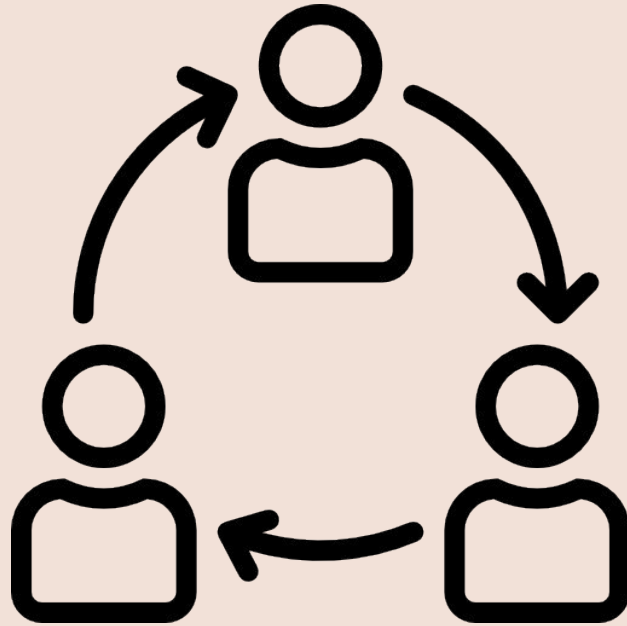


Free lunch & learn materials for workplace menstruation & menopause training

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:
TEAM LEVEL



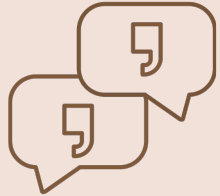
ENSURE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
EXTENDS TO PEOPLE





“I don't think working in an agile team has a positive impact (or any impact) on my experience of menstruation.

The culture remains that things need to be done quickly, and I don't think the flexibility agile offers really extends to much more flexibility for workers”



“Accepting metrics in terms of **velocity/capacity** will need to **fluctuate like a cycle**”

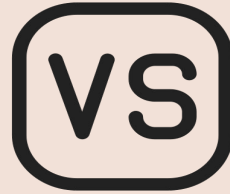
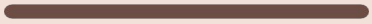
“Ability to **reduce capacity** over times where you aren't functioning at 100%.”

“**Less story points** for sprints including someone's menstruation periods”

“Taking it into peoples capacity or being **more flexible in work amount.**”

1) Bake in A Shared Acknowledgement that
Energy Levels Aren't Always Linear

EXPECTED ENERGY PATTERNS



ACTUAL ENERGY PATTERNS



Practices that are premised
on consistent velocity



Use practices such as
probabilistic forecasting
that allow for variability

2) Normalise Health-Related Conversations & Practices

Kick Off


Team agreements:

- How do we communicate when people are feeling under the weather?
- How do we support as a team?
- How do we ensure that the way we work supports general health?

Example Practices

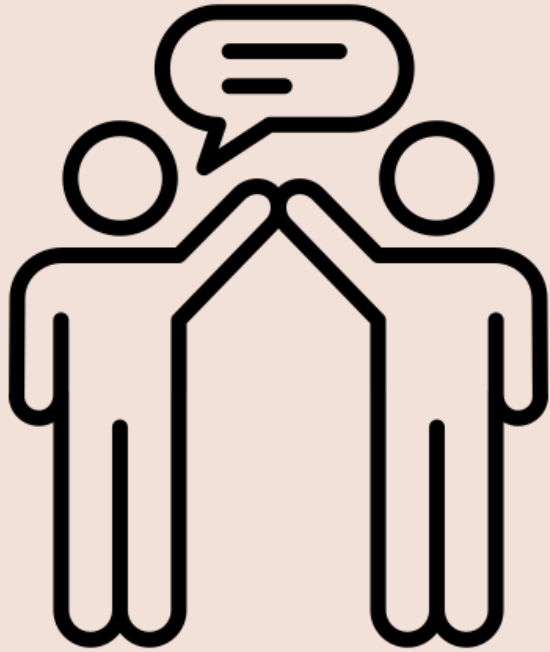
Suggestions:

- Status indications
- Commitment to gaps between meetings
- Exceptions to collaboration
- Exceptions to cameras on

● Maddie Clingan 
Low battery

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL



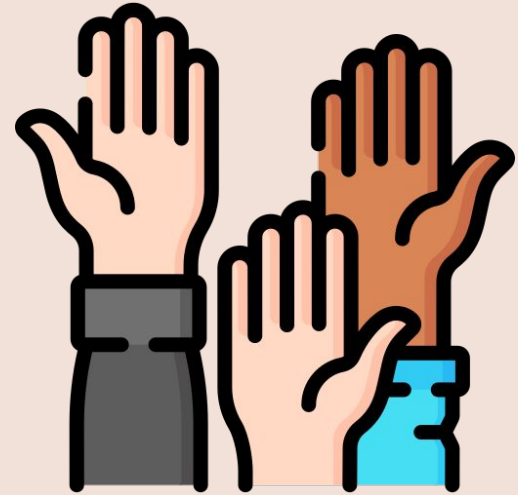


Ask for support &
be supportive

Go a step further

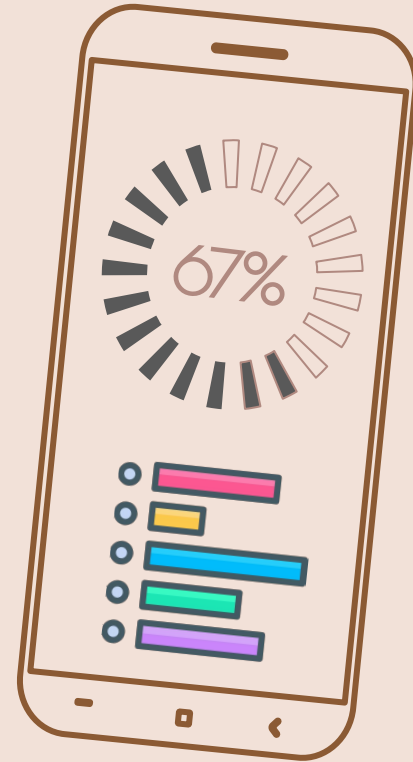


Start a Support
Group



Raise suggestions for
support to
management

CYCLE TRACKING



KEY BENEFITS



ALLOWS FOR
MENTAL
PREPARATION



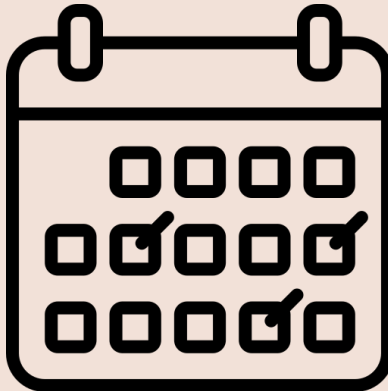
ALLOWS FOR
PLANNING

DRAWBACKS



Time or financial
cost

Irregular Cycles



Security and
Data Privacy
concerns

SOME GOOD ONES



Anonymous
Mode



ORCHA Approved

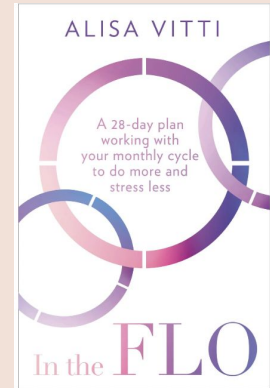
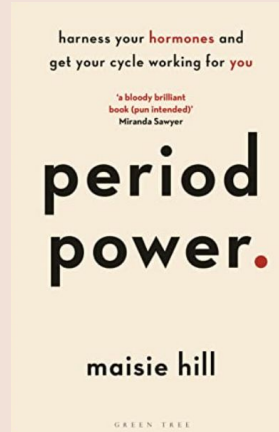
balance
by Newson Health

Menopause Specific
ORCHA Approved

Continue Your Education: Resources



Training (and working) around your cycle



Continue Your Allyship: Campaigns and Charities



"Just a period"

Educate and empower women from their first period to their last

#Justaperiod
call for government
action





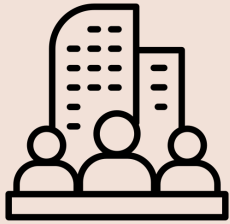
SO MUCH INFO RIGHT NOW

YOUR TAKEAWAY

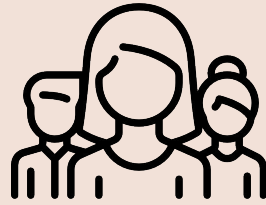
Talk to the person next to you:
What is one thing you will do
differently?



Summary: Potential Solutions



1. Flexible working
2. Access to period products
3. Menstrual leave
4. Training on awareness and allyship
5. Varied sitting options



1. Ensure continuous improvement extends to people
2. Explore forecasting practices that allow for variability
3. Normalise health-related conversations and practices in teams

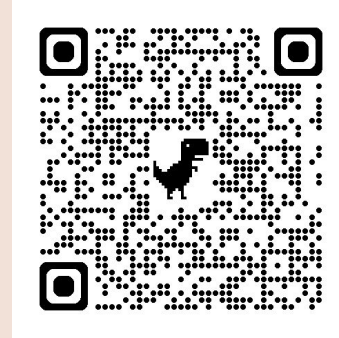


1. Continue your education
2. Continue your allyship
3. Be part of the conversation
4. Raise suggestions for support to management
5. Track your cycle in a way that works for you

How do you feel now?



THANK YOU



FEEDBACK

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MADDIE
CLINGAN

Maddie Clingan

Agile Coach | Championing Women in
Tech & Public Speaking | Board Advis...



MARION
PETERS

Marion Peters

Scrum Master at ControlPlane

