

Dilemma:

“Menopause—the great taboo”

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

Host guide As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question (“What if they ...?”).

Try to be curious (“Why do you think that?”) and investigative (“What if they react differently than you assume?”).

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

The dialogue is divided into two parts.

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

Dilemma:

Maria feels that menopause has hit her like a hammer. But the worst part is not the joint pains, brain fog, or hot flashes that she gets from time to time. The worst part is the pressure she feels to try to hide it, and not knowing how long it will affect her. She feels that menopause is not something people talk about or even known much about, even though half of the population will go through it.

Her dilemma is that she is unsure whether or not she should do something to detabooise it in the workplace, so she will no longer feel so lonely and out of place. And what could she do?

Recently, she was in a big meeting with mostly male colleagues and suddenly had a hot flash, which made her want to run to the window and open it, despite the cold temperature outside. But she did not open it, because she felt that she would have to explain if she did, and having to explain to everyone that she has hit menopause felt worse than having to suffer through the hot flash in silence. Her ability to concentrate, however, did go out the window.

After this episode, she went to see her doctor in the hopes of getting some good advice on keeping the symptoms to a minimum. The doctor said that there is, unfortunately, very little research done in this area, but that some find that it helps to stretch and/or meditate as well as getting fresh air and light during the day. And of course, it also helps to have a workplace that is open and flexible in terms of menopause symptoms.

After visiting the doctor, Maria brainstormed. Her department doesn't have a room to retreat to do physical exercises, and it doesn't have a culture where you can speak freely about menopause. However, there is a path around campus that could be used to get fresh air and light. But what should Maria do now? She would like the panel to discuss whether she should suffer in silence, talk to her manager, or approach female colleagues with the goal of creating more openness together, or something else entirely.

Dialogue one:

1
What advice does the panel give?

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "Pregnant women also often experience a lot of discomfort. Why is it that discomfort from menopause is taboo when discomfort from pregnancy isn't?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

43 per cent lie about why they call in sick from work when the reason is menopause. (Berlingske Tidende, 3 September 2023)

Menopause is the period in the years before and after a woman stops menstruating. How long menopause lasts varies. In this stage of life, and in the years after, the body produces a significantly lower amount of female sex hormones. This affects the body mentally and physically in many different ways. (Sundhed.dk)

2 Dialogue two:

What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Do people discuss the discomforts of menopause openly in your unit? If yes, how? If no, what would it take for you to do it?"
- "Is there a room in your unit that you can retreat to and do physical exercises?"
- "Does the culture allow for taking a walk during the working day, either alone or as walk-and-talk meetings?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"