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Health and wellbeing in the workplace: the doctor explains

Sarah Gilzean, Partner, MFMac

Dr Jane Catley, The Doctor Explains

Dr Sigi Joseph, The Doctor Explains

25 August 2026



Health and wellbeing statistics



CIPD Health and Wellbeing Report 2025:

- Average level of employee absence per annum rose to 9.4 days
- Mental ill health was most common cause of long-term absence, and second most common cause of short-term absence behind minor illnesses such as colds/flu

ONS sickness absence in the UK labour market 2025:

- 148.8 million days were lost to sickness or injury, an increase of 9.8 million days from pre-pandemic 2019 level

UK Government Keep Britain Working report:

- Each sick day costs businesses an average of £120 in lost profits

Key legal issues

- Legal issues relating to poor health and wellbeing can be complex
 - Dismissing for long term or repeated short-term absence can be difficult
 - Procedures cannot be applied mechanically, individual circumstances will always be relevant
 - Lack of contact and/or co-operation from employee
 - How long is an employer expected to keep an employee's job available?
 - To what extent does sick pay entitlement and PHI impact?
 - What if an employer has caused or contributed to the ill health and subsequent absence through poor management?

Key legal issues

Disability discrimination:

- Recognising disability - fairly low threshold
- Is there more to it than the medical evidence?
- Constructive knowledge
- Impact on employee's management
- Reasonable adjustments (to absence management procedures as well as supporting a return to work)
- Avoiding discrimination when dismissing a disabled individual for disability related ill health – ensure you can objectively justify

Key legal issues

Health and Safety obligations:

- Employers “duty of care” to identify risks to health and safety, for example by carrying out a risk assessment, and to take steps to reduce or prevent risks
- Includes potential damage to mental health due to bullying or excessive workloads - consider stress risk assessment

Personal Injury:

- In *Woodhead v WTTV Ltd* - claimant successfully brought a PI claim that arose from mismanagement of a disciplinary hearing

Prevention is key

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- Prevention better than cure
- Identify red flags at an early stage
- Proactive management as far as possible
- What can the employee be doing – can the employer support that?

Workplace health webinar



The Doctor Explains

Health Education & Wellbeing Workshops for Business

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DFFP, Fellow Australia lifestyle medicine Physician
(FASLM), British menopause society certified

Dr Sigi Joseph MBChB. FRCGP, DRCOG, DFFP, ALCM,
MSc clinical education, British menopause society
certified



Steps for employers

Be approachable

Lead by example

Review systems and SOP's for clear guidance

Ensure adequate workforce

Encourage regular team check in's

Minimise isolation by encouraging team face to face meetings

Allow flexible working where possible

Steps for employees

Realistic goal setting for workload

Use peer support

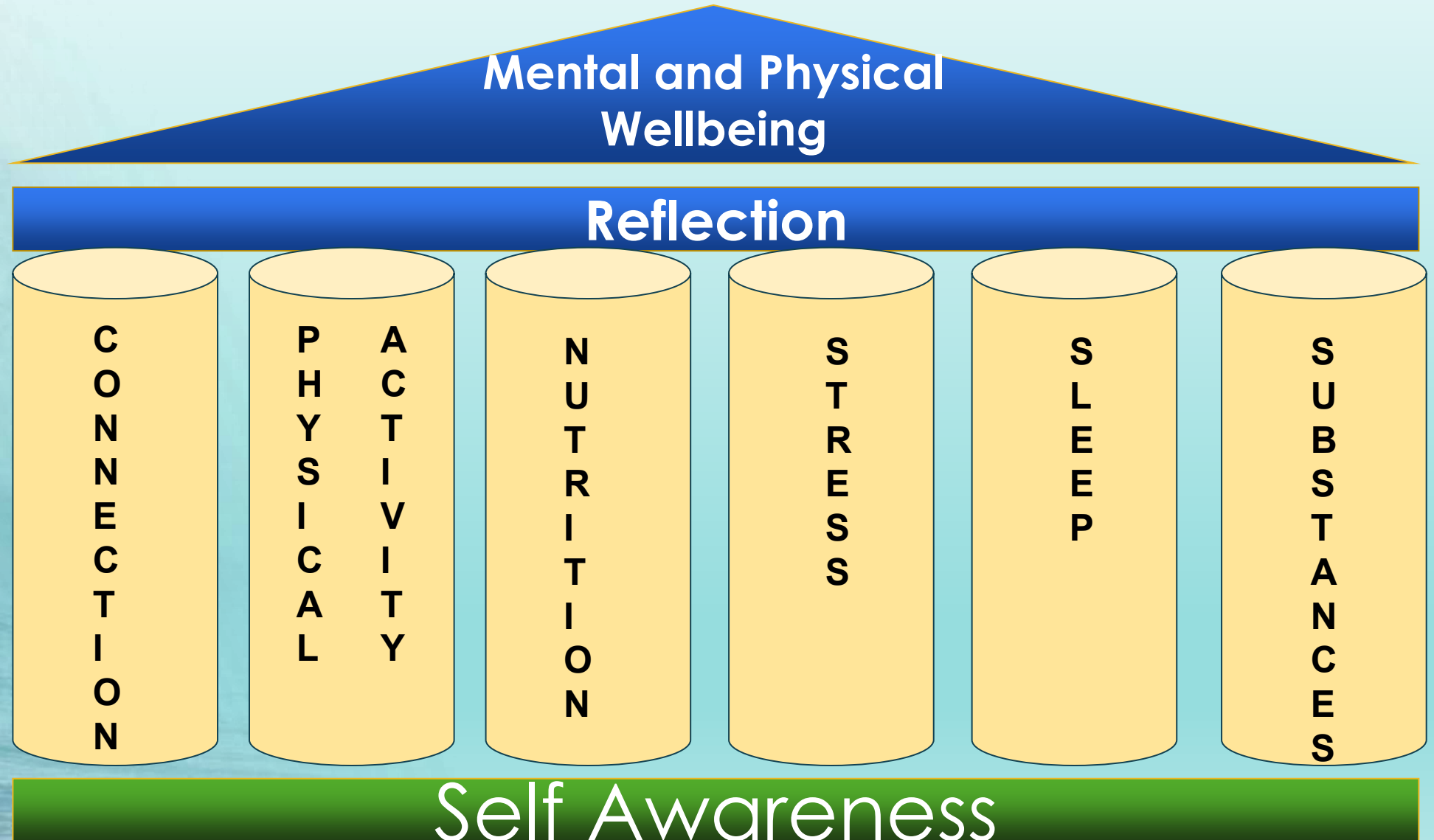
Look at time management skills and delegation where appropriate

Ensure rest breaks

Boundaries with breaks and protecting relaxation time

6 Pillars

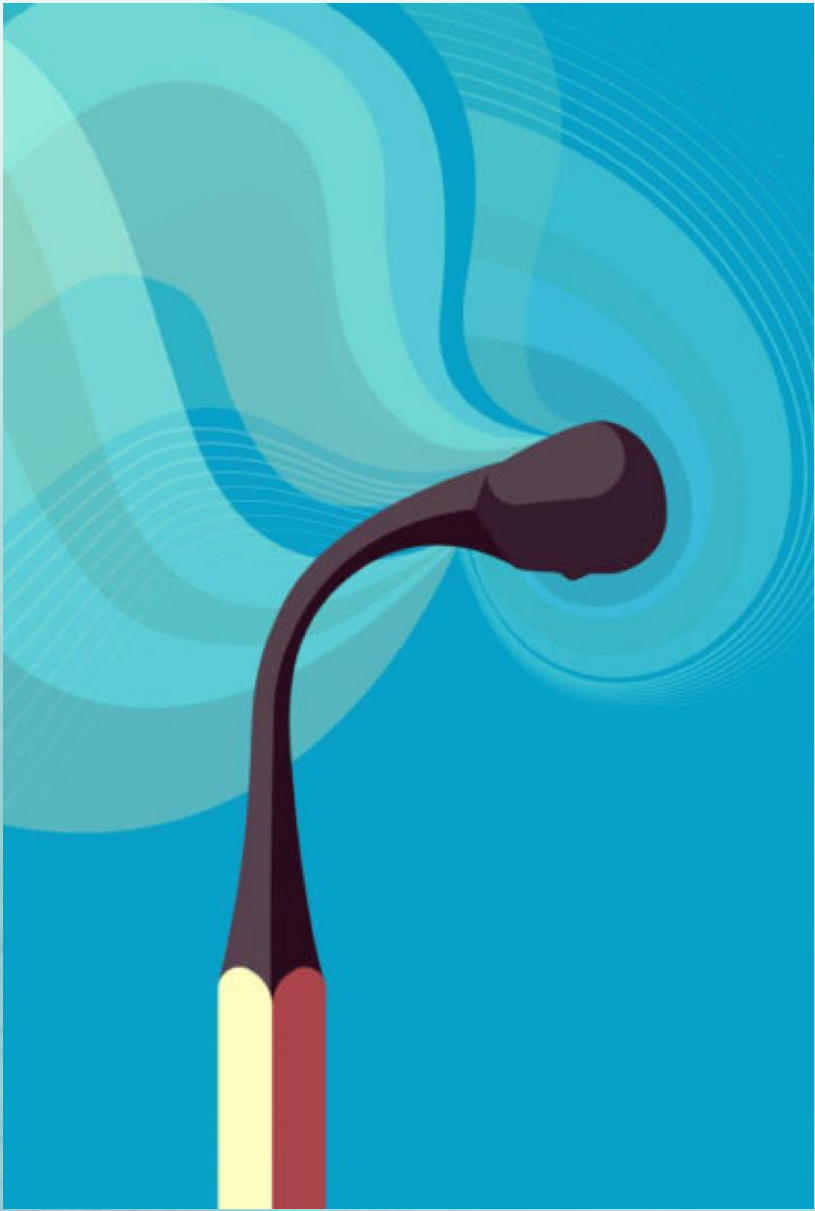
<https://lifestylemedicine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Pillar-Booklet.pdf>





‘**Burn-out** refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.’



An illustration of a lit matchstick with a yellow and red handle. The match is lit, and a thick, dark brown smoke trail rises from the tip, curling into a spiral pattern against a background of concentric, wavy lines in various shades of blue and teal. The overall style is modern and graphic.

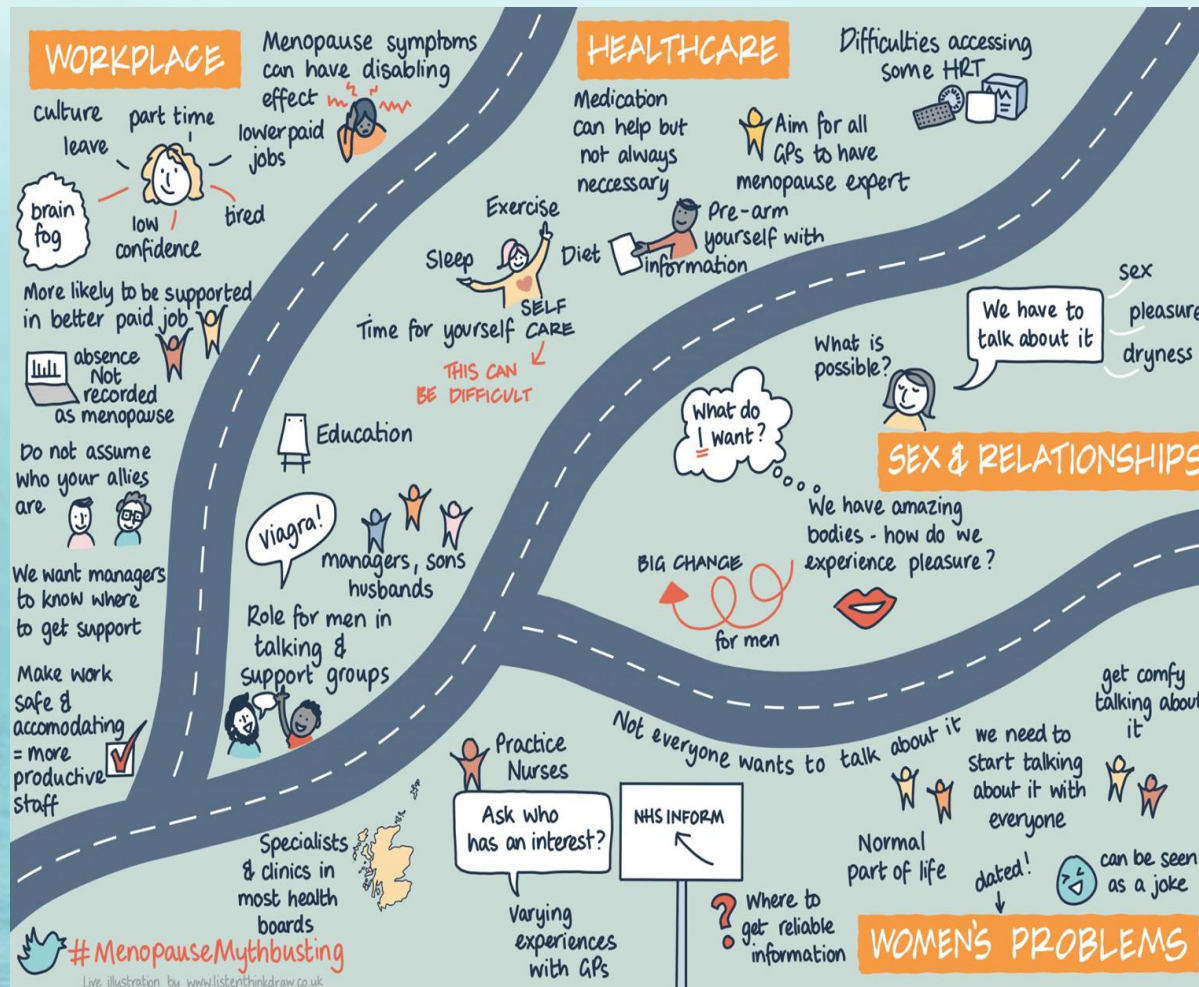
Burnout early warning signs

- feeling tired or drained
- frequent illness (lowered immunity)
- lack of motivation
- memory loss
- changes in your attention span
- feelings of failure or self-doubt
- feeling detached or isolated
- noticing a reduction in the quality of your interactions with colleagues
- or experiencing increased negative emotions towards clients or colleagues

**1 in 10 women leave their job
when they don't want to from
menopause related issues**



Workplace & Menopause



Culture & Action

Policy to Implementation

Destigmatise

Champions & Cafes

Microadjustments

Talent retention

-Tackle gendered ageism

- "Second horizons"
leadership potential

-Menopause as a normal
part of a full work trajectory



Minimising the Impact of Menopause at Work

01

Role Interaction: Consider how symptoms interact with the specific role, particularly shift work, safety-critical duties, prolonged concentration, hot environments, PPE or restrictive uniforms.

02

Functional Effects: Identify the main functional effects, such as disrupted sleep, fatigue, reduced concentration, headaches, anxiety or difficulty regulating temperature.

03

Tailored Adjustments: Use temporary, proportionate adjustments targeted to the problem, like altered shifts, flexible start times, additional breaks, improved ventilation, or access to water.

04

Individual Support: Avoid assuming all employees need the same support; adjustments should be highly individualised and mutually agreed with the employee.

05

Regular Review: Review arrangements after an agreed period, as symptoms, medical treatments, and overall work capacity are likely to change over time.

Getting the Most from Occupational Health Advice

1. Purpose & Usefulness

Best utilized when specific guidance is required regarding employee absence, return-to-work plans, fitness for specific duties, or defining appropriate workplace adjustments.

2. Clear Referral Structure

The referral must clearly outline the employee's specific role, working patterns, key operational duties, and highlight any safety-critical requirements

3. Key Details to Include

Document specific clinical or performance concerns, the observable impact on attendance or work output, and outline any adjustments already trialled.

4. Targeted Questions

Ask precise questions: Is the employee fit for duties? Is a phased return suitable? What specific adjustments are needed, and for what duration?

Key Takeaway: The more specific and detailed the referral, the more practical and relevant the resulting advice.



Thank you for your attention

Questions ?

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