

Health Advice

How working with awareness for your menstrual cycle can support wellbeing

At first glance, the menstrual cycle doesn't seem to have much to do with the world of work. Over the course of a month, however, many women notice changes in their concentration and energy levels – and their cycle is often the culprit: during their actual menstruation, many things are more stressful, and up to 90 percent of women suffer from period pain, cramps, fatigue, migraines or back pain at some point in their lives. In other phases of the cycle, however, they find their work easier, their ideas flow freely, and their energy levels reach their peak. And it isn't imagined, either: according to a study, the volume of the hippocampus in the female brain increases around ovulation, when oestrogen levels are high. The hippocampus is the part of the brain which is associated with the memory.

The degree to which the menstrual cycle affects daily life varies from woman to woman: some hardly notice anything, while those who use hormonal contraception are less frequently affected. Others suffer from severe symptoms every month but go to work all the same.

Cycle Syncing

Adapting your working life to your menstrual cycle is known as “cycle syncing”. The goal: to make better use of your strong phases and ask less of yourself during others. While no one can plan their working life entirely around their cycle, understanding the phases of your cycle allows you to better manage your energy. To do this, you should start by observing your cycle: note your period, energy levels, pain levels and mood. After three to four months, clear patterns often become apparent.

The four phases of the cycle

1. The cycle starts on the first day of menstruation: at this time, hormone levels (oestrogen and progesterone) are at their lowest. The need for rest and retreat is greater. Be mindful of your body – stress and the pressure to perform can exacerbate symptoms. Walks, meditation and mindfulness exercises, as well as plenty of sleep, can help balance things. If your job allows it, work from home to reduce stimuli. Is your job asking more of you than usual? Make your free time more relaxing to conserve your energy for work.

2. After menstruation, oestrogen levels rise during the build-up phase; during what is known as the “follicular phase” energy returns, and many women feel stronger and more creative. This is the ideal time to think about new projects, tackle complex tasks, or for training sessions, team meetings and creative brainstorming sessions.

3. During the ovulation phase, on around day 14 of the cycle, oestrogen reaches its peak, and luteinising hormone (LH) is released: during the ovulation phase, many women reach their peak level of performance, feeling confident, energetic and expressive – now is a good time for important presentations or negotiations that require full concentration and presence.

4. After ovulation, the oestrogen levels drop. The first half of the luteal phase is often still productive; administrative tasks are ideal now. Towards the end, premenstrual symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty concentrating, or sadness may occur. The body needs plenty of rest now: arrange several short breaks in the fresh air, use quiet rooms if possible, and avoid caffeine.

Do you feel great throughout your cycle, even during menstruation? If so, make use of this energy! Above all else, working in harmony with your cycle means listening to your body – and every woman is different.



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Editor

BARMER, Axel-Springer-Straße 44, 10969 Berlin

Editorial staff

Miriam Ohrem
Specialist Corporate Health Management
miriam.ohrem@barmer.de

Print

Rudolf Glaudo GmbH & Co. KG
Lockfinke 75
42111 Wuppertal

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