

THE PMDD PROJECT

MANAGING WORK WITH PMDD

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) can make managing work challenging, especially during the luteal phase when symptoms like anxiety, fatigue, brain fog, and irritability may be at their worst. However, with the right strategies, you can maintain your productivity, manage stress, and seek the support you need from your employer.

This guide offers practical tips on how to manage your workload while navigating PMDD, how to talk to your employer about your condition, and ways to reduce work-related stress.

UNDERSTANDING HOW PMDD AFFECTS WORK

PMDD symptoms often appear 1-2 weeks before menstruation and can significantly affect your ability to focus, interact with colleagues, and complete tasks.

Common symptoms that impact work include:

EMOTIONAL:

Depression, anxiety, irritability, and mood swings



PHYSICAL:

Fatigue, headaches, and joint pain



COGNITIVE:

Difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and brain fog



Managing PMDD at work means finding a balance between taking care of yourself and meeting professional demands.

Tracking your symptoms and understanding how they align with your cycle can help you predict when your PMDD will be at its worst and plan your work accordingly.

MANAGING YOUR WORKLOAD WITH PMDD

Here are some practical strategies to help manage your workload and stay on top of tasks, even during more symptomatic phases:

Track your cycle and symptoms:

Use a period tracker to monitor your cycle and predict when your PMDD symptoms are likely to flare. This will allow you to plan your workloads around the times you feel your best and make adjustments during more difficult phases.



Prioritise tasks:

During your luteal phase, focus on high-priority tasks and break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps. Consider creating a to-do list that separates essential tasks from those that can be postponed or delegated.

Plan ahead:

If possible, schedule meetings, presentations, or high-focus tasks for the part of your cycle when you feel most energetic and focused (usually during the follicular phase, right after your period).

Take regular breaks:

Fatigue and brain fog can make it hard to stay productive for long periods. Allow yourself short, frequent breaks to rest, stretch, or go for a quick walk to reset your energy.

Practice self-care during the work day:

Incorporate stress-relief practices into your work day, such as mindfulness exercises, deep breathing, or short meditation sessions. These can help reduce stress and improve your focus.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR EMPLOYER ABOUT PMDD

Talking to your employer about PMDD can feel intimidating, but being open about your condition can help you receive the support and adjustments you need to succeed at work.

Here's how to approach the conversation:



Decide whether to disclose:

You're not obligated to disclose your PMDD diagnosis, but if it's significantly affecting your work, it may be beneficial to have an open conversation with your manager or HR. **This can help you get accommodations that improve your work-life balance.**

Plan the conversation:

Before speaking with your employer, think about how to explain PMDD in a way that focuses on how it affects your work performance. Be prepared to discuss potential solutions and adjustments that would help.

Explain PMDD simply:

PMDD is a cyclical condition linked to the menstrual cycle, causing severe emotional and physical symptoms that can impact productivity and focus. Be clear about how it affects your specific work tasks, such as meeting deadlines, concentrating, or managing stress.

Frame the discussion around solutions:

Rather than focusing on limitations, present solutions that would help you work more effectively, such as adjusting deadlines or allowing flexibility with your hours.



Ask for reasonable adjustments:

Under the UK's Equality Act 2010, PMDD may be considered a disability if it substantially affects your daily activities.

You could request reasonable adjustments, such as:

Flexible start and finish times

The option to work from home during your symptomatic phase

A reduced workload or extended deadlines during difficult days

Access to a quiet space or the ability to take more frequent breaks



MANAGING WORK STRESS WITH PMDD

Work stress can make PMDD symptoms even more challenging to handle. Managing both stress and your PMDD requires proactive planning and self care.

Here's how:

Communicate your needs regularly:

After discussing your condition with your employer, maintain open communication. Let them know if adjustments are helping or if further support is needed.



Delegate when possible:

If your workload is too heavy during symptomatic phases, delegate tasks or ask for help from colleagues. This can help alleviate pressure and prevent burnout.



Break work into manageable chunks:

On days when brain fog or fatigue is overwhelming, try working in short bursts with regular breaks. Breaking tasks into smaller steps can make them feel less overwhelming.

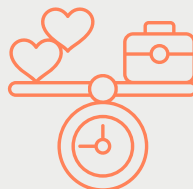


Create a calming work environment:

Whether you work in an office or from home, set up a workspace that helps reduce stress. Keep your desk organised, add calming elements like plants or aromatherapy, and, if possible, try to work in a quiet space with minimal distractions.

Set boundaries:

Set clear boundaries between work and rest. If you work from home, avoid working from your bedroom to maintain it as a place of relaxation. Similarly, turn off work-related notifications outside of work hours to allow yourself time to unwind.



DESK ESSENTIALS



Warm blanket

Supportive chair and cushions

Mindfulness tools, e.g. Focus timers

Hydration and healthy snacks



Desk organiser and planner

Aromatherapy diffuser



Mini fan



Noise-cancelling headphones

Pain relief medication

Stress balls or fidget toys



WORK ESSENTIALS FOR ON-THE-GO PROFESSIONALS



Heat patches

Pain relief medication or portable TENS machine



Support belt or compression band



Portable snacks and water bottle

Essential oil roller

Cooling gel

Comfortable, supportive shoes or compression socks



Scheduled micro-breaks

Noise reduction earplugs



Stress balls or fidget toys



SEEKING SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

If managing PMDD and work stress becomes too overwhelming, seeking external support can help:

Mental health support:

Many workplaces offer **Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)** or access to mental health professionals.

Counselling, therapy, or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help manage PMDD-related stress and anxiety.

Peer support:

Finding support from others who have PMDD can be empowering.

Consider joining online or in-person support groups where you can share experiences and coping strategies.

Use available resources:

Reach out to charities like **The PMDD Project** or organisations that specialise in menstrual health for information, advice and support.

Managing PMDD at work can be tough, but with proactive planning, effective communication, and the right support, you can balance your health with your professional responsibilities. Whether it's adjusting your workload, setting boundaries, or speaking openly with your employer, small steps can help you take control of your work life and manage stress more effectively.

Remember, you are entitled to support, and creating a sustainable work-life balance is key to managing PMDD in the workplace.

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