

BOTH SIDES:

HEATHER JACKSON

From power woman to giving women power

AS FORMER CEO of An Inspirational Journey, I oversaw several programmes, events and online activities such as The Balanced Business Forum and now recognised as the world's first gender-balanced leadership conference.

The inspiration for GenM came when I entered the perimenopause. I was ready to have some adventures and to unapologetically swing from the chandeliers, but within a year, I had become an emotional wreck – my self-confidence plummeted, I was incredibly fatigued, I found myself forgetting the names of colleagues I'd known for years, and I would burst into tears at the slightest things!

After multiple visits to the doctor and several tests, it was my friend (and now GenM co-founder) Sam who suggested it was likely perimenopause, as she had been through a similar experience. We just couldn't believe how little information was available, how few products were aimed at menopause, and how uncomfortable and taboo it felt to discuss it. We both felt this was completely ridiculous – half of the world's population goes through menopause! Thus, we decided to do something about it by setting up GenM which stands for Generation Menopause.

GenM works to help brands and organisations better represent the menopause in products, services, signposting, campaigns, and workplace policies, keeping the menopause a priority in every area of business.

Perhaps women are reluctant to talk about the menopause in the workplace. Historically we have fought hard to secure our place in the boardroom, dealing with everything from sexism to family and childcare commitments, so it makes sense that many have opted to keep the menopause issue to themselves, rather than speaking out at work. Whatever the reasons were in the past, we are no longer tolerating this issue being ignored.

Our work at GenM is focused on normalising conversations around



After spending decades building a business and raising my kids as a single parent, I was ready for some me time

menopause. Our research shows that 75% of menopausal women feel that it is still a taboo subject that cannot be openly discussed.

There are so many ways that companies can support menopausal employees, and this depends on the context – there isn't necessarily a one-size-fits-all policy.

For example, Modibodi, one of our Founding Partners, offers 10 days paid personal leave per year in addition to the organisation's existing sick leave entitlements. Normalising the conversation is the most important thing we can do to help transform the menopause experience. As the menopause is demystified and understood throughout society, everything else will fall into place.

Interviewed by Sloane Caetano