

MIGRAINE AT WORK

Discussion Guide

Do you ever feel like no one at work *quite* understands your migraine or what you actually go through every time you experience one? Has anyone ever equated your migraine to ‘just a headache?’ Unfortunately, those who have never suffered from migraine disease have a difficult time understanding just how much it can affect a person’s life.

That’s why the *Migraine at Work* campaign strongly believes those suffering from migraine should start a conversation in their workplaces. Starting a dialogue is an effective first step to helping those at work understand how migraine disease impacts your life.

Approaching a boss, supervisor, or even a human resources representative can be a daunting task, especially with the stigmas that surround discussing health issues and chronic conditions in the workplace. Colleagues, supervisors – even friends – often have no idea about the realities of living with migraine disease. But, with the right tools and resources, anyone living with this disease can start a productive conversation at work. So, where do you begin?

1. Know your goals

Before sitting down with your boss or an HR representative, it’s important to think through what you’re going to say and also what you’d like to get out of the conversation. Are you asking for accommodations at the office? Do you need a flexible schedule? Or are you simply explaining how you cope with migraine disease? Deciding what your goals are in advance will help you prep for your meeting and provide clear, measurable outcomes that you’d like to get from the conversation.

2. Devise a plan

When you sit down with your boss or human resources representative, it's important to explain how you are proactively working to manage the disease (see *Migraine at Work's* key steps for success in the workplace). It's helpful to have documentation (i.e. a journal or data from a migraine tracking app) to help explain how migraine can affect you and impact your work. We recommend devising a plan with the steps you will take in instances where a migraine attack hits while you're at work. While this plan is unique to the person suffering from migraine and their work environment, we recommend including a few key steps, like giving as much notice as possible if you need to miss work, identifying a colleague who can help cover your workload, and sharing a strategy for how you will make up any work you may have missed.

3. Be thorough

Migraine disease is the third most prevalent disease in the world, but you've probably noticed that not many people understand its full effects. Often, this stems from a lack of knowledge about the disease and the varying effects it has on those who suffer from it. That's why it's important to be thorough and informative when speaking with your boss or HR. Remember – they're not doctors. Providing background information on migraine disease, the effects it has on your health, and how it may impact your work can be beneficial to helping others understand. We also recommend providing a note from your doctor if you have one. This can help legitimize migraine disease in the eyes of your employer even though it's an 'invisible disease.' You may also consider downloading *Migraine at Work's* Letter of Support to share with your employer.

By setting goals ahead of time, establishing a migraine contingency plan, and thoroughly explaining your migraine disease, you will have all the tools necessary to start a productive conversation. Approaching your boss or HR representative isn't always easy, and talking about migraine disease can be challenging, but by following these steps, you can better control your situation and proactively work towards a more migraine-friendly workplace.