



Your Health. Your Decisions.



Are You Anxious or Depressed? Know the Signs to Find Relief

Depression and Anxiety at Work

Depression and anxiety don't discriminate. They can affect us at home, with our friends and family, and on the job. Mental health illnesses have been associated with absences from work, performance issues and unemployment ([study](#)).

Maybe you've been showing up late for meetings (or missing them altogether) and avoiding eye contact with others in the hallway. Misunderstandings with co-workers, doing less than expected, and making careless errors are ways that depression and anxiety affect our work. If you recognize the symptoms of depression and/or anxiety in your daily life, reach out for help before they have a negative impact on your job (and the rest of your life).

If you feel anxious or depressed, you are not alone. Everyone feels down or anxious from time to time. It's a normal response to stress and other situations that arise in our lives. But ongoing feelings of depression and anxiety may signal a problem. In 2017, an estimated 17.3 million U.S. adults had at least one major depressive episode.

About a third of the population will experience an anxiety disorder at some time in their lives ([NIH](#)).

Being anxious and/or depressed is draining. It can affect everything: your mood, view of the world, appetite, sleep, family relationships, social life, and job. The good news is that knowing the signs is the first step towards finding relief and regaining control of your life.

Depression is a mood disorder that affects how you feel, think and act. It's not a matter of just "snapping out of it." It is not a weakness, but rather a condition that can make doing everyday activities difficult. The signs of depression include:

- Feeling sad, tearful, empty, hopeless, worthless, guilty.
- Loss of interest in activities.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Anxiety, anger, agitation or restlessness.

- Unexplained physical problems like back pain and headaches.
- Tiredness and lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions.
- Stress eating or lack of appetite.
- Thoughts of death.

If you recognize these symptoms in yourself, it's time to act. Depression is highly treatable with a combination of self-help efforts, therapy, and sometimes, medication.

As you may have noticed, anxiety is one of the signs of depression. Likewise, people with anxiety often suffer from depression. Anxiety is a normal reaction to life's stressors. It can be motivating at times, for getting things done or to alert us to dangers. Occasionally feeling nervous or anxious is different from having an anxiety disorder, which involves strong fears or anxiety that interferes with the ability to function. Common signs of anxiety include:

- Feeling nervous, restless or tense.
- Having a sense of impending, doom, panic or danger; difficulty controlling worry; trouble with sleeping.
- Avoiding things that trigger anxiety.



Helping Co-Workers and Others

If you see co-workers, friends or family struggling with anxiety and/or depression, check in with them. Asking someone how they are doing can help them identify and cope with stress and sadness.

Your kindness may remind the important people in your life that they are not alone. Listening to someone's concerns or bringing them a (healthy!) snack is a great way to show you care and give them a boost. You may even be able to help them problem-solve ... or join them for a fun activity ... or be an exercise-buddy.

Encourage co-workers and friends to renew their interest in activities they once enjoyed. Dusting off a musical instrument, picking up a knitting project, taking a bike ride, or engaging in some other activity can help lift mood and manage stress.

Remind friends that it's okay to ask for help, and better to seek it than to continue to suffer. Sometimes people need to know that someone won't judge them for needing help.

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- An increased heart rate, breathing rapidly (hyperventilating), sweating, trembling.
- Feeling weak or tired, difficulty concentrating on anything other than the present worry.
- Experiencing nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

Taking the First Step

If you have symptoms of depression and/or anxiety, the first step is always the hardest — the things that help the most are often the things that are the most difficult to do. Start by talking to someone you trust, like your doctor, therapist, friend, religious person, or family member. Tell them how you are suffering and ask them for their support. They don't have to "fix" you, but just be a good listener. Next is to try some of the tried and true self-help techniques below. Let your trusted person(s) in on the strategies you are trying so they can back you up.

Stay in contact with people. Meet an old friend for coffee, join a club or help someone else by volunteering. People contact helps you keep perspective and boosts mood. Minimize contact with negative people.

Do things you enjoy (or used to). Even if you don't feel like it, push yourself to do things you used to enjoy, or something new. Pickup a sport or hobby, visit a museum, create your own art or start a journal. Doing enjoyable activities focuses your energies.

Set yourself up for success with sleep and stress reduction. Practice good sleep hygiene so you sleep 7-9 hours a night. Turn off screens, darken the room and lower the temperature. Try stress management techniques like spending time in nature, taking a bath, playing with a pet or listening to music.

Get moving. Exercise is powerful depression medicine. You can do something physical right now and

see an improvement in your mood! Start with small goals and work up to 30 minutes a day. You can spread the 30 minutes out into three 10 minutes sessions. Take the stairs, dance, garden or walk at break time (BTW, fresh air and sunlight add to the benefits of exercise).

Eat depression-fighting foods.

Foods rich in B vitamins like folic acid and B12 are helpful for fighting depression. Citrus fruit, leafy greens, beans, chicken and eggs are vitamin B-rich. Omega-3 fatty acids found in salmon, herring, anchovies, tuna and flaxseed help stabilize mood too. Avoid sugary snacks, baked goods, pasta, fries and other "feel-good" foods because they cause a drop in mood and energy. Remember that alcohol is a depressant and caffeine can contribute to anxiety. Eat something every 3-4 hours to avoid getting tired and irritable. Stay hydrated!

Know when to seek professional

help. You may need some help along the way to push aside negative thoughts and lift the cloud. You have many options. Your employer may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) staffed by trained professionals who can guide you through difficult times. You can reach out to your provider, see a counselor or therapist, and/or join a support group (in-person or online). Depending upon your situation and health history, you may benefit from taking an anti-depression medication. Talk with your provider to explore whether this is an option for you. If you are thinking about death and suicide, call a trusted person or 911 immediately. Or, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800/273-8255.

KnovaSolutions can help too. Our clinicians will listen with an empathetic ear, help you make some changes and share useful resources. Let us help! Give us a call at **800/355-0885**, Monday to Friday, 8 am-8 pm, Mountain Time.