

For People Managers: **WORKING WITH AN ANXIETY DISORDER**



What is an Anxiety Disorder?

Anxiety disorders go beyond normal stress. Anxiety disorders are common and treatable. In fact, nearly one third of U.S. adults will experience an anxiety disorder at some time in their lives. Employees with anxiety might experience heightened fear, avoidance, or difficulty focusing, even in routine situations. Anxiety can manifest differently in each individual.

How an Anxiety Disorder Can Show Up at Work

Anxiety disorders may be challenging, while many people who experience anxiety are also high performing and productive members of the team.

Anxiety can impact people in different ways, including the following:

- Focus and concentration
- Social interactions
- Decision-making
- Time management
- Energy level

However, learning to manage an anxiety disorder can help people develop or enhance important skills, such as:

- Empathy and sensitivity, contributing to inclusive and compassionate work environments
- Resilience and coping skills
- Self-awareness, leading to strong self-management
- Creative problem-solving
- Verbal and nonverbal communication skills



If you find yourself struggling with your mental health, remember that you are not alone. NAMI has a [HelpLine](#) you can call or text if you want help finding or understanding resources for yourself or a loved one. You can also call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline to be connected with a trained counselor who will offer compassionate and accessible support, resources and referrals to community care.

stigmafree.nami.org



NAMI HelpLine

How You Can SUPPORT an Employee With Anxiety



Remember: Do not attempt to diagnose or treat mental health conditions. You are not a mental health provider and are never expected to be one.

Your role is to support people in connecting to resources and creating a trusting, supportive culture by assigning workloads, checking-in, and ensuring awareness of available resources.

Create a Supportive Environment:

- Normalize conversations about mental health through leading by example, encouraging openness and offering check-ins.
- Ask open-ended questions like, *“What can we do to make things more manageable?”*

Recommend Resources, Not Treatment Advice:

- Encourage employees to use your company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or mental health benefits.
- If appropriate, share information about anxiety accommodations (e.g., flexibility with deadlines).
- Make sure employees know they are not alone but avoid offering therapeutic advice.

Offer Flexibility While Sharing Expectations:

- Temporary changes, like reduced meetings or adjusted workloads, can help.
- Clear expectations around performance and deadlines must still be communicated to maintain accountability.

Model Empathy and Understanding:

- Acknowledge their effort: *“Anxiety can be tough, and I really appreciate you sharing this.”*
- Avoid downplaying their experience. Phrases like, *“Just relax,”* or *“Don’t worry so much,”* are unhelpful. Learn more about communication techniques.

Ensure Accountability with Compassion:

- Check in regularly on performance without overwhelming. Collaborate with the employee to find a balance between support and accountability, and set realistic goals. Share positive feedback frequently to help employees know when they are on the right track.
- If you see performance challenges that don’t get better, engage with HR to ensure appropriate support is in place while maintaining performance standards.



Mental health is part of workplace well-being, and supporting your team will ultimately benefit productivity and morale.

MORE RESOURCES



NAMI HelpLine Call: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Text: "helpline" to 62640 | Chat: nami.org/help



Find Your Local
NAMI

[NAMI.org/local](https://nami.org/local)

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Available 24/7/365

Call, text, or chat

988lifeline.org

- [NAMI's Anxiety Disorders webpage](#) provide an overview of anxiety symptoms along with treatments and support available to those living with an anxiety disorder.
- [NAMI Peer-to-Peer Classes](#) are a free, eight-session educational program for adults with mental health conditions who are looking to better understand themselves and their recovery. Taught by trained leaders with lived experience, this program includes activities, discussions and informative videos. Find a Peer-to-Peer course near you via your [local NAMI Affiliate](#).
- [NAMI Connection Support Group](#) is a peer support group for people with mental health conditions. Groups meet weekly, every other week or monthly, depending on location. This program is also available at certain NAMI affiliates in Spanish, as NAMI Conexión. Find a NAMI Connection Support Group near you via your [local NAMI Affiliate](#).
- [Anxiety & Depression Association of America \(ADAA\)](#) offers in-depth information on anxiety, depression, OCD, and PTSD and co-occurring disorders, including treatment, resources, and support group information. ADAA also offers a [Support Group Locator](#) where you can search for in-person and online support groups for individuals and families of those living with the condition.
- [The Anxiety Network](#) provides resources, information and screening tools about panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and social anxiety disorder. They also offer online articles about anxiety-related topics and ways to cope.
- [Phobias Awareness](#) is a free, online community forum for people experiencing anxiety to connect with others to gain support and learn coping techniques.