

For People Managers: **WORKING WITH DEPRESSION**



What is Depression?

Depression is a common and treatable mental health condition that impacts mood, thinking, and behavior. Employees with depression may not always appear sad; depression often shows up through behaviors like fatigue, disengagement, or difficulty concentrating.

What is Major Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern?

Seasons can impact people's experiences with depression. Some people find that they are more likely to experience depression during late fall and winter seasons, although people can experience depression in any season.

How Depression Can Impact an Employee's Day-to-Day:

Depression can be challenging and impact work in these ways:

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

Many people who live with depression do quite well at work and are productive team members. Learning to manage depression 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.



How You Can SUPPORT an Employee With Depression

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 Safe Environment:

- Foster a psychologically safe space where employees feel comfortable sharing challenges.
- Avoid making assumptions; instead, ask open-ended questions like, *“How can I support you?”*

Refer to Resources:

- Remind your employee about their mental health benefits and, if your company offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), share information about it, including that it is a confidential and free resource.
- Encourage making time for self-care but avoid suggesting options. Even well-intentioned recommendations can overstep into treatment planning.

Offer Flexibility Without Sacrificing Accountability:

- Explore temporary adjustments, like flexible deadlines or reduced workloads, and maintain clear performance goals.
- Schedule regular check-ins without overwhelming.

Depression is treatable.

Giving a person the space to prioritize recovery can help them more effectively perform their job, return to work sooner after leave, and reduce costs due to lost productivity.

Model Empathy:

- Acknowledge the challenges they might be facing without judgment.
- Phrases like *“I appreciate your openness”* or *“Let’s figure this out together”* can go a long way.
- Avoid saying phrases that downplay or dismiss the employee's experience, like, *“You should exercise,”* or *“Other people have it worse, you have so much to be grateful for.”* Learn more about communication techniques.

Set Boundaries and Expectations:

- Empathy is essential, and maintaining accountability is just as important. Be clear about expectations and timelines to ensure active collaboration around any necessary adjustments.
- If helpful, work with HR to develop a plan that provides structure, support, and additional assistance in helping the employee gain access to resources.

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 [Depression](#) and [Major Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern](#) webpages provide an overview of depression symptoms along with treatments and support available to those living with a depressive disorder. Also see the NAMI blog, like [The Reality of "High Functioning" Depression](#).
- [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 \(ADAA\)](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment and cure of depression and other mental health disorders; they offer information on the condition, treatment, resources, and a support group directory. Search the ADAA [Support Group Locator](#) for a group near you.
- [Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance \(DBSA\)](#) is a national organization offering peer-based, wellness-oriented support, services and resources for people who live with mood disorders, including information on treatment, resources, and support groups for individuals living with mood disorders and their loved ones. Search the DBSA [Support Group Locator](#) group near you.
- [Depression Looks Like Me](#) is a program – sponsored by the Johnson & Johnson Company and supported by an alliance of other partners – that aims to educate and empower LGBTQ+ people with depression.