

# DEPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Depression has been classified by the World Health Organization as a major global health issue, and is quickly becoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> most disabling illness after heart disease.

The cause of depression involves a variety of factors, including biological, physiological, psychological, environmental, genetic, and familial influences. Recently, however, more studies are being conducted on the subject of **work-related depression**.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the workplace is always changing, disrupting the nature of work to the point where the employee is constantly adapting and evolving to fit new requirements. The pressure of these expectations is said to cause **work-related depression**, defined as:



*"A depressive disorder that is predominantly caused or evoked by stressful psychological circumstances in the workplace".*

A research study conducted at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia examined a group of 20 workers who suffered from work-related depression. The study used narrative interviewing to examine the worker's experiences within the workplace. Narrative interviewing allowed the employees to describe their workplace experience, changes in their workplace, and the effects the changes had on them. The results of the study were derived from an analysis of the employees' descriptions. The researchers concluded that there are four stages of workplace depression.

## First Stage - Internalizing

**Internalizing** is the longest and most complex stage where the employee experiences feelings of what the workplace had been in the past and what changes had recently taken place, leaving the employee with feelings of instability. It also brings about feelings of loss in regards to what had previously been valued in the workplace.

## Second Stage - Somatizing

The next stage, *Somatizing*, occurs as an outcome of the internalization process, and begins when internal feelings shift into changes in physical states and behavior. Symptoms of somatizing include an employee -

- Arriving to work late when they are usually a punctual person
- Taking regular sick leave
- Falling behind in workplace performance
- Isolating themselves or avoiding coworkers
- Had difficulty making decisions
- Is having trouble concentrating
- Is showcasing a lack of enthusiasm for work
- Is showing a decline in dependability



## Third Stage - Medicalizing

A direct result of the somatizing stage is the *Medicalizing* stage, when the employee seeks professional help due to the distress caused at work. This stage of workplace depression intertwines with the final stage.

## Fourth Stage - Pharmacologizing

The final stage, *Pharmacologizing* occurs when a distressed worker is transformed into someone whose condition is being managed through different treatment options.

### How to Recognize If You Are Suffering from Workplace Depression

Ask yourself if you are constantly thinking the following **I statements**

Internalizing Stage	Somatizing Stage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I feel totally naked</li><li>• I feel embarrassed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I have a headache</i></li><li>• <i>I can't sleep</i></li><li>• <i>I developed a rash</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I feel humiliated</li><li>• I feel degraded</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I can't concentrate</i></li><li>• <i>I can't eat</i></li><li>• <i>I think I am going mad</i></li></ul>

If so, you may be suffering from workplace depression and contacting your EFAP to be connected to a counsellor would be a good first step.

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Brown-Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055

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