



# **WORKPLACE DEPRESSION**

**HOW TO RECOGNIZE IF YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM WORKPLACE  
DEPRESSION**

SPRING 2025



# CLINICAL DEPRESSION



Once known as melancholia, now simply referred to as **chronic or clinical depression**, depression has been called **the common cold of the emotional disorders**. While this emphasizes its widespread nature, it diminishes the significance of its impact. Depression is a profoundly distressing and debilitating condition that can overwhelm individuals emotionally and, in some cases, lead to fatal outcomes.

Clinically depressed individuals describe themselves as feeling discouraged, hopeless and apathetic. This dejected emotional state is usually accompanied by a variety of unpleasant thoughts, including a distorted sense of self. Depressed individuals often experience intense guilt and remorse over ordinary, even trivial events, and tend to view their environment through a negative lens, interpreting everyday experiences and social interactions in a harshly critical manner.

Rates of depression have steadily climbed over the last 50 years, with the average age of onset of a first depressive episode steadily decreasing. The onset now occurs in the mid-20s where it once was mid-30s. The cause of depression involves a variety of factors, including biological, physiological, psychological, environmental, genetic, and/or familial influences. Recently, however, more studies are being conducted about **work-related depression** – a **depressive disorder that is predominantly caused or evoked by stressful psychological circumstances in the workplace**. According to research there are four stages of workplace depression.





# STAGES OF WORKPLACE DEPRESSION

## 1. Internalize



Internalizing is the longest and most complex stage, where the employee comes to terms with what the workplace once was and the changes that have reshaped it. This stage often leads to a sense of instability and evokes feelings of loss related to previously held workplace values.

## 2. Somatization



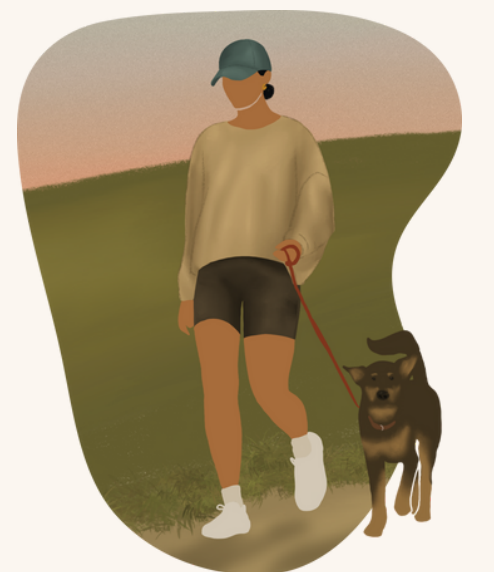
Somatization emerges as a result of the internalization process, beginning when emotional distress starts to manifest through physical symptoms and changes in behavior. Symptoms of somatization include an employee arriving to work late when they are usually a punctual person, taking regular sick leave, falling behind in workplace performance, or isolating themselves and avoiding coworkers.

## 3. Medicalize



The medicalizing stage arises as the emotional strain becomes too overwhelming to bear alone. Following the somatization phase, the employee turns to professional help in response to the persistent distress rooted in the workplace. This stage often intertwines with the final phase of workplace depression, reflecting both the depth of emotional exhaustion and the first step toward seeking relief and understanding.

## 4. Therapeutics



The final stage marks a profound shift as the struggling employee begins managing their condition through medical treatment. It reflects not just a clinical response, but a deeply personal transition—where emotional pain is acknowledged and addressed through ongoing support and intervention.

To determine whether you might be experiencing workplace depression, reflect on whether you often find yourself thinking the following “I” statements. If so, contact your EFAP to be connected to a counsellor.

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**“I can’t  
concentrate”**

**“I have a  
headache”**

**“I feel  
embarrassed”**

**“I feel  
humiliated”**

**“I can’t sleep  
through the  
night”**