

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Effective Accommodation Practices (EAP) Series

Job Accommodations for People with Depression

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ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

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JAN'S EAP SERIES

JOB ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION

Depression is an illness that involves feelings of sadness lasting for two weeks or longer, often accompanied by a loss of interest in life, hopelessness, and decreased energy. Such distressing feelings can affect one's ability to perform the usual tasks and activities of daily living. This is considered to be clinical depression. It is very different from a temporary case of "the blues" triggered by an unhappy event or stressful situation. Depression affects the mind, but this does not mean "it's all in your head."

Depression is a medical illness linked to changes in the biochemistry of the brain. Depression is not a weakness of character. Being depressed does not mean a person is inadequate. It means the person has a medical illness that is just as real as diabetes or ulcers. Like other medical disorders, clinical depression should not be ignored or dismissed. A clinically depressed person cannot simply "snap out of it" any more than a person with an ulcer could simply will it away.

The following is a quick overview of some of the job accommodations that might be useful for people with depression. For a more in depth discussion, access JAN's publications at <http://AskJAN.org/media/atoz.htm>. To discuss an accommodation situation with a consultant, contact JAN directly.

Stamina During the Workday:

- Provide flexible scheduling
- Allow longer or more frequent work breaks
- Allow employee to work from home during part of the day or week
- Provide part-time work schedules
- Move closer to frequently accessed office equipment

Concentration:

- Reduce distractions in the work area
- Provide space enclosures or a private office
- Allow for use of white noise or environmental sound machines
- Allow the employee to play music and use a headset
- Increase natural lighting or provide full spectrum lighting
- Plan for uninterrupted work time and allow for frequent breaks
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and goals
- Restructure job to include only essential functions

Memory Deficits:

- Allow the employee to tape record meetings and provide written checklists
- Provide type written minutes of each meeting
- Provide written instructions and allow additional training time
- Implement color coding scheme for priority projects

Difficulty Staying Organized and Meeting Deadlines:

- Make daily TO-DO lists and check items off as they are completed
- Use calendar to mark meetings and deadlines
- Remind employee of important deadlines
- Use electronic organizers
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and goals

Difficulty Handling Stress and Emotions:

- Provide praise and positive reinforcement
- Refer to counseling and employee assistance programs
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Allow the presence of a support animal
- Allow the employee to take breaks as needed

Attendance Issues:

- Provide flexible leave
- Provide a self-paced work load and flexible hours
- Allow employee to telework

Resources Specifically for People with Depression**Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation**

Boston University
940 Commonwealth Avenue West
Boston, MA 02215
Direct: (617)353-3549
Fax: (617)353-7700
psyrehab@bu.edu
<http://cpr.bu.edu/>

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
730 North Franklin
Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60610-7225
Toll Free: 800-826-3632
Fax: 312-642-7243
Email: questions@DBSAlliance.org
<http://www.dbsalliance.org/>

International Foundation for Research and Education on Depression (iFred)

P.O. Box 17598
Baltimore, MD 21297-1598
Fax: (443)782-0739
Email: info@ifred.org
<http://www.ifred.org>

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