

Depression & Anxiety: Signs & Awareness Guide

DISCLAIMER:

This guide is intended for **general mental health awareness and early identification support**. It is not a medical diagnosis and does not replace professional mental health care. Symptoms can vary widely between individuals. If signs of depression or anxiety are severe, persistent, or interfere with daily functioning, professional support from a qualified mental health practitioner should be sought. Bilnor Staffing Solutions accepts no liability for actions taken based on this guide.

Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health challenges affecting individuals across South Africa. Economic pressure, job insecurity, trauma exposure, safety concerns, and ongoing stress can contribute to emotional strain. Understanding the **early warning signs** helps individuals, families, and workplaces respond sooner, reduce stigma, and encourage timely support. This guide focuses on **recognition, awareness, and practical next steps**.

Understanding Depression

Depression is more than feeling sad or tired. It is a persistent condition that affects mood, thinking, behaviour, and physical health.

Common Signs of Depression

Emotional Signs

- Persistent sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Irritability or emotional numbness

Physical Signs

- Ongoing fatigue or low energy
- Changes in sleep patterns (too much or too little)
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Unexplained aches or pains

Behavioural Signs

- Withdrawal from family, friends, or work
- Reduced productivity or motivation
- Neglecting responsibilities or self-care
- Increased absenteeism

Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety involves persistent worry, fear, or tension that can feel overwhelming and difficult to control, even when there is no immediate threat.

Common Signs of Anxiety

Emotional & Mental Signs

- Constant worry or fear
- Racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- Feeling on edge or restless
- Fear of losing control

Physical Signs

- Rapid heartbeat or shortness of breath
- Muscle tension or trembling
- Sweating or dizziness
- Stomach discomfort or nausea

Behavioural Signs

- Avoidance of situations or responsibilities
- Difficulty relaxing or sleeping
- Reassurance-seeking behaviour
- Over-preparation or perfectionism

When Depression & Anxiety Overlap

Depression and anxiety often occur together. Individuals may experience:

- Exhaustion combined with constant worry
- Low mood alongside panic symptoms
- Difficulty coping with everyday demands

Co-occurring symptoms may increase distress and should not be ignored.

Practical Self-Check Checklist

Use this checklist as a reflection tool. Experiencing several of these signs for **more than two weeks** may indicate the need for support.

Mood & Thoughts

- Persistent sadness or fear
- Feeling overwhelmed most days
- Negative or self-critical thinking

Body & Energy

- Ongoing fatigue or tension
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical symptoms without clear cause

Behaviour

- Withdrawing from people or activities
- Difficulty functioning at work or home
- Avoiding situations due to fear or stress

Supporting Yourself or Others

If signs are present:

- Start conversations with empathy, not judgement
- Encourage rest, routine, and small achievable goals
- Reduce isolation by maintaining social connection
- Avoid minimising feelings or offering quick fixes

Listening and support can make a significant difference.

When to Seek Professional Help

Professional support is strongly recommended if:

- Symptoms persist for weeks or worsen
- Daily functioning is affected
- There are thoughts of self-harm or hopelessness
- Anxiety or panic interferes with normal activities

For Depression and Anxiety help in South Africa, use crisis helplines like SADAG (0800 567 567)

Early intervention improves recovery outcomes.

Workplace Awareness

Employers and colleagues can support mental wellbeing by:

- Encouraging open, stigma-free conversations
- Watching for behavioural changes
- Offering reasonable adjustments where possible
- Promoting access to support resources

Depression and anxiety are **common, treatable, and not a sign of weakness**. Awareness leads to understanding and understanding leads to support. **Seeking help is a positive step toward recovery.**

Bilnor Staffing Solutions

Promoting awareness, compassion, and mental wellbeing in South African workplaces and communities.