

DEPRESSION AT WORK • ARTICLE 5

# SHOULD I TELL MY EMPLOYER THAT I HAVE DEPRESSION?

A COMPASSIONATE EXPLORATION

BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



## Introduction

One of the biggest questions people ask when they're struggling with depression at work is:

"Should I tell my employer?"

There isn't a simple yes or no answer.

For some people, telling their employer leads to understanding, support and reasonable adjustments that make work more manageable. For others, the decision feels much more complicated. They may worry about being judged, treated differently or damaging future career opportunities.

If you're facing this decision, it's important to remember that you're not alone. Many employees experience uncertainty about whether to disclose a mental health condition.

The most important thing is that your decision is informed, considered and based on what feels right for your individual circumstances.

## Why People Choose Not to Tell Their Employer

There are many reasons why someone may decide to keep their depression private.

Some people worry that colleagues will see them as less capable or less reliable. Others fear being overlooked for promotion or being treated differently by their manager.

You may think:

"People will think I can't do my job."

"I'll be seen as weak."

"My manager won't understand."

"Everyone else seems to cope."

These concerns are understandable. Mental health stigma still exists in some workplaces, and deciding whether to disclose can feel like a significant step.

## Why Some People Choose to Talk

For others, sharing what they're experiencing can bring relief.

If your depression is affecting your attendance, concentration, energy or performance, having an open conversation may help your employer understand why you're struggling.

Many employers genuinely want to support their staff but may not realise there is a problem unless someone tells them.

Opening the conversation can create opportunities for practical support rather than leaving you to cope alone.

## You Don't Have to Share Everything

Some people worry that telling their employer means explaining every detail of their mental health. It doesn't.

You are entitled to privacy.

You may choose to simply say that you're experiencing a health condition that is affecting your wellbeing and your ability to work. You can share as much or as little information as feels appropriate.

The focus can remain on how your symptoms affect your work and what support might help you perform your role more effectively.

## Thinking About Reasonable Adjustments

If your depression is affecting your work, it may be helpful to consider whether adjustments could reduce unnecessary pressure while you recover.

Examples might include:

Temporary flexibility around start and finish times.

A phased return after sickness absence.

Reduced workload for a short period.

Regular wellbeing check-ins with your manager.

A quieter workspace where possible.

Flexibility for medical or therapy appointments.

Clear priorities and realistic deadlines.

The right adjustments will depend on your role, your symptoms and your workplace.

The aim isn't to remove responsibility but to create an environment where you can work safely and effectively while managing your health.

## Preparing for the Conversation

If you decide to speak to your employer, it can help to prepare beforehand.

Consider:

What do I want my employer to understand?

How is depression affecting my work?

What support would genuinely help?

Who is the most appropriate person to speak to?

Do I want someone to accompany me to the meeting?

Planning the conversation can help you feel more confident and ensure your main concerns are communicated clearly.

## Reflection

### Rather than asking yourself,

"Should I tell my employer?"

you might instead ask,

"What support do I need to do my job well, and what information would help me access that support?"

This shifts the focus away from disclosure itself and towards your wellbeing and ability to work.

## Key Takeaway

Deciding whether to tell your employer about depression is a personal decision. There is no right answer for everyone.

If your symptoms are affecting your work, sharing appropriate information may help you access understanding and practical support. Whatever you decide, remember that asking for help is not a sign of weakness - it is a proactive step towards protecting both your health and your ability to work.

## **A gentle reminder**

This resource offers general information and reflection. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individual medical or therapeutic care. If you are worried about your safety or someone else's, seek urgent professional support.

Maggie Learoyd  
Psychotherapist | ADHD, Autism & ARFID Specialist  
Founder of Space to Breathe Therapy