

IS IT DEPRESSION ... OR IS IT ANXIETY?

(IT'S HARDER TO TELL THAN YOU THINK)

If you've been feeling down or anxious lately, you're not alone; right now, millions of Americans are struggling with their mental health. But you can arm yourself with knowledge that helps you feel better faster — and that starts by knowing what you're dealing with. Is it depression, or is it anxiety? The answer may surprise you, as sometimes even doctors find it challenging to spot the differences. Here's what you need to know:

1. Depression and anxiety have many of the same symptoms. At first glance, depression and anxiety seem like complete opposites. Depression makes you slow and sad, and anxiety makes you keyed up and nervous, right? In some people, yes. But others can display symptoms that are common in both depression and anxiety, like irritability, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, excessive worrying, tearfulness, appetite and sleep disturbances, body aches and pains, and isolating from friends and family.

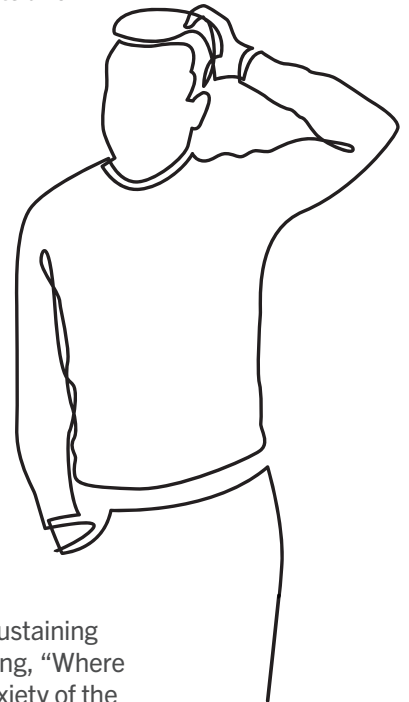
2. Many people have both. Depression and anxiety are often co-occurring conditions, meaning they often strike at the same time. Again, this seems counterintuitive. How can you feel down and up at the same time? This may look like:

- Feeling lonely but also too anxious to socialize.
- Feeling numb but also overwhelmed.
- Waking up exhausted but also being unable to sleep when the night comes.
- Feeling unproductive but also scared to fail.
- Working to escape but unable to concentrate.
- Not caring about anything but also somehow worried about everything.

3. They have the same causes. Everyone on the planet is born susceptible to depression and anxiety. Some people may be *more* susceptible due to their genetics, their history, their past traumas or their age. But put anyone under enough stress and they'll eventually develop depression, anxiety or both. How much stress it takes is not a matter of mental toughness; it depends entirely on the brain you were born with.

4. They can feed each other. Left untreated, depression and anxiety can form a vicious, self-sustaining loop. For example, someone going through a divorce may feel anxious about the future, asking, "Where will I live? What will custody look like? How will I support myself?" The ongoing stress and anxiety of the divorce can then cause them to slide into a depression where they feel hopeless about the future and the possibility of finding love again. That depression can cause them to develop more anxious thoughts, like, "What if this is my new normal? What if I'm broken and I feel like this forever?" ... and so on. It's important to recognize these patterns in yourself and the people you care about so you can take steps to break the cycle.

5. They have the same treatments. Thankfully, depression and anxiety both respond to the same treatments. These can include a combination of talk therapy, anti-depressant medications like SSRIs or SNRIs (which are also proven to lessen anxiety), rest and relaxation, exercise, and spending time with people you enjoy. Everybody responds a little differently to treatment, so work with your doctor to find the combination that's right for you.



IT IS OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY ... AND YOUR STATE OF IOWA BENEFITS CAN HELP.

If you're struggling with depression, anxiety, stress or any other mental health concern, you have broad access to care when you use your State of Iowa health plan, administered by Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield®. Visit [Wellmark.com/Finder](https://www.wellmark.com/Finder) to search for mental health providers in your network, or use [Doctor On Demand®](#) to schedule a virtual visit.