

# Is It OK to Reveal Your Anxiety or Depression to Your Boss?

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Workers everywhere are having a tough time. Should they ask for help on the job?

The share of adults reporting symptoms of anxiety or depression ballooned during the pandemic, according to [data from the U.S. Census Bureau](#), rising to 40.9% by mid-July. A similar national survey from the first half of 2019 put that number at 11%.

For many, 2020 has ushered in fears of falling sick and losing a job, tension over the coming election and racial inequality, and a feeling of being overwhelmed by an untenable work-life juggle.

Meanwhile, some bosses are revealing vulnerabilities—such as a personal story from the CEO during an all-hands meeting or a crying child on a Zoom call—and asking, “How are you?” in a way that indicates they don’t expect a rote upbeat response.

So, should you answer honestly? And, if you are struggling with a mental-health issue, should you seek an accommodation such as a different schedule, extended remote work or a leave of absence?

“In some ways, the current crisis gives people cover,” says Jill Hooley, a psychology professor at Harvard University. But Dr. Hooley is still leery of her patients broaching such conversations with their bosses.

“There’s more stigma out there than we would like to think,” she says. “Less is more.”

Talk of emotional health was already [seeping into the office](#) before the novel coronavirus sent many workers home. Requests for [accommodations linked to mental illness](#) were up, according to employment lawyers. Companies built departments devoted to improving [workers’ well-being](#), offering meditation, [on-site therapy](#) and resiliency training. And young people entering the workforce from schools where they chatted about anti-anxiety medicine or received extra test-taking time for attention-deficit disorder often weren’t afraid to speak up.

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