

Take a moment ... to reach out and connect

If you break a bone, you go to a doctor. If your vision declines, you get an eye test. So why not seek help for depression or anxiety?

The answer, of course, is that mental health issues are often stigmatised. You're told that "it's all in your head," as if the very real emotional and sometimes related physical pain you feel is imaginary. Or you're told that you

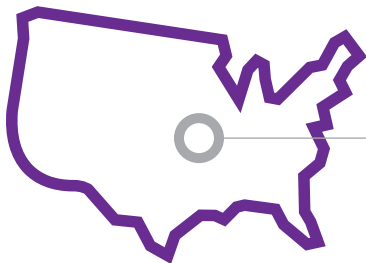
can simply make the pain go away through the power of positive thinking.

But depression and anxiety are real. They are common. And they are treatable. So why wouldn't you seek help?

Here are five tips that can help you take action.

1. Stamp out the stigma^{31,32,33}

People don't like to talk about mental health issues, so it can be easy to feel as if you're the only person suffering. But here's the reality:



322,000,000

322 million people around the world suffer from depression—that's nearly the population of the United States

264,000,000

264 million people around the world suffer from anxiety—that's roughly the population of all of Western Europe plus the United Kingdom

2. Keep a calendar

Sadness and nervousness are fleeting. Depression and anxiety are not. Keep track of when you feel depressed or anxious and what triggers those feelings. If you've felt depressed for more than two weeks or anxious for more than six months, it's time to get professional help. And if you're thinking about harming yourself, get help immediately.³⁴

31 <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254610/WHO-MSD-MER-2017.2-eng.pdf>

32 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population_\(United_Nations\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population_(United_Nations))

33 <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/western-europe-population>

34 <https://www.aetna.com/health-guide/infographic-depression-anxiety-guide.html>

3. Take baby steps

When you're feeling overwhelmed, you may not have the mental energy to pick up the phone and make an appointment with a counsellor or psychologist. That's OK. Just look up the phone number today. Then commit to making the call tomorrow.

Or download and use the Wysa app, which is free to Aetna International members through the Health Hub. Wysa lets you "chat" about your mental well-being via text 24/7 and offers more than 150 tools to help you stay positive and motivated.

Even the simple act of making a plan can enhance your well-being.³⁵



4. Get a friend to help³⁶

If you can't bring yourself to make an appointment, get a friend to help. Share your calendar, and ask them to make an appointment on your behalf. Your friend could even accompany you to the appointment, then take you out for coffee or a meal afterwards to celebrate this important first step in your recovery.

5. Embrace your diagnosis³⁷

While you should never let your diagnosis define you—you're far more than your condition—it's OK to accept and even embrace your diagnosis. It explains behaviours that otherwise don't make sense and helps your medical team plan your treatment.

Remember: depression and anxiety are common, real and treatable conditions. And the road to recovery begins when you reach out for help.

In our hectic lives, we often neglect our mental health. That's why it's so important to take a moment to think about this important aspect of overall health. At our Mental health resources hub, you can find the information to prevent and manage mental health conditions.

Also, Aetna International members can access the Health Hub—register if you haven't already—to quickly find self-care tools, professional services, member offers, and to submit and track claims and more. Within the Health Hub, you can learn more about the Wysa app, which offers instant access to AI-driven mental well-being support. The app is free for members to download and includes a free one-on-one session with a human coach. For more information about your health care benefits, contact your plan sponsor or one of Aetna International's expert sales consultants for group business or individuals and families.

Take a moment...Discover. Breathe. Heal.

Mental health support resources: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/workplace-mental-health-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

³⁵ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-007-9057-2>

³⁶ <https://www.bridgestorecovery.com/blog/how-to-ask-for-help-when-youre-depressed-5-tips-for-reaching-out-and-finding-treatment/>

³⁷ <https://www.optimumperformanceinstitute.com/mental-health-diagnosis/avoiding-becoming-your-diagnoses/>