

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



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Depression Rates Remain High



A recent Gallup poll revealed that over 18% of U.S. adults are currently experiencing or being treated for depression, amounting to nearly 47.8 million Americans. Depression rates have remained at historically high levels since 2024, with young adults and lower-income individuals being disproportionately affected. The poll, based on responses from over 11,000 adults across the United States, highlights a troubling mental health trend driven by a multitude of factors.

The poll identified the following contributors to the record-high rates of depression:

- **Unprecedented stressors for young adults**—Young adults are facing a unique combination of challenges that influence rising depression rates. These concerns include overwhelming student debt, the pressure to succeed in a competitive job market and economic instability that makes it difficult to plan for the future. Additionally, social media has intensified feelings of inadequacy and comparison.
- **Financial strain**—Economic hardship can be a major driver of depression. People struggling to afford food, housing and health care often experience chronic stress, which can severely impact mental health.
- **Loneliness and social disconnect**—Despite living in an era of digital connectivity, many people report feeling deeply isolated. The lack of meaningful, in-person social interactions and supportive relationships has been strongly linked to depression. Those who feel lonely for extended periods are significantly more likely to experience depressive symptoms, emphasizing the importance of genuine human connection.

Depression can show up in many ways, and it's important to recognize the signs early. Common symptoms include persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. If you or someone you know is experiencing these symptoms, seeking professional support is a crucial step toward feeling better. Consider exploring the resources available from your employer, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which often provides confidential counseling and support services at no additional cost.

Why Joyspan Matters

As organizations continue to prioritize holistic well-being, a new concept is emerging that reframes how we think about aging and emotional health: joyspan.

Introduced by gerontologist Dr. Kerry Burnight, joyspan refers to the duration and depth of joy experienced throughout life. While lifespan measures how long we live, and health span measures how long we live in good health, joyspan asks a more personal question: Are we enjoying our lives as we age?

Dr. Burnight outlines the following four foundational practices to help individuals expand their joyspan:

1. **Grow.** Engage in continuous learning. Whether it's professional development, creative hobbies or personal enrichment, intellectual growth supports emotional vitality.
2. **Adapt.** Embrace change with flexibility. Adjusting to new roles, technology and workflows with a positive mindset enhances resilience.

3. **Give.** Contribute meaningfully. Acts of generosity, such as mentoring, volunteering or simply offering support, can build a sense of purpose and community.
4. **Connect.** Foster relationships. Meaningful connections with colleagues, friends and family are essential to emotional well-being.

Joyspan is the time spent experiencing joy and fulfillment, emphasizing the quality of life. By consciously expanding your joyspan, you're not only enhancing your emotional well-being but also building a more resilient, engaged, productive and purpose-driven life, both inside and outside the workplace.

Small, intentional practices can lead to lasting improvements in how you experience each day, helping you thrive through change, connect meaningfully with others and find fulfillment in your personal and professional journey. Prioritizing your joyspan does require continuous effort, but you can start making strides today. If you need additional help getting started, consider consulting a mental health professional for further guidance.