

## Wellness Insights with Patricia Kirven — Navigating Depression: A Therapeutic Journey

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October is Depression Education and Awareness Month, and to mark the occasion, Wellness Manager Abby Read interviewed Patricia Kirven, an event specialist in the business development department. They discussed Patricia's journey with high-functioning depression and the positive impact therapy has had on her life. Patricia highlights the firm's [partnership with Lyra Health](#) as an important steppingstone to her getting connected with a therapist who has greatly helped her manage her depression and prioritize her well-being.

**Abby:** When did you become aware that you were struggling with your mental health?

**Patricia:** In 2017, right after I started my job with Haynes Boone, I was diagnosed with a rare form of blood cancer called polycythemia vera. I kept a positive attitude about my diagnosis, but I was experiencing difficult side effects from the cancer treatments such as extreme exhaustion and memory loss, that made it difficult to function as well as I needed to for my job and with my children. This was the start to me experiencing a level of stress physically and mentally that I hadn't before.

**Abby:** What strategies did you find helpful for coping during this challenging time?

**Patricia:** I started working with a therapist on and off for a few years, but I had difficulty finding someone who I really meshed with and who I felt understood me. Outside of working with a therapist occasionally, I would distract myself with my children's needs and work to try and cope with the stress in my life. It worked for a while, until it didn't anymore.

**Abby:** At what point did you know that you needed better coping strategies to deal with your stress and prioritize your mental health?

**Patricia:** In January of 2022, my eldest daughter was going through severe depression and dealing with some traumatic events in her life, and I realized I couldn't handle the weight of carrying her stress and depression on my own, and I needed someone to talk to. I started working with a new therapist and realized that I was dealing with "high-functioning depression," where on the outside, I was able to get the things done that I needed to, but on the inside, I was tormented and struggling every single day to keep it together. The relationship with my therapist was good at the beginning, but then it started to taper off and not seem quite as helpful to me after six months or so.

**Abby:** When were you able to get in a good rhythm with therapy and make positive strides in managing your depression?

**Patricia:** In January of 2023, I was still dealing with a lot of the same issues with my daughter and the firm had just launched its partnership with Lyra Health. I decided I would give therapy another try so that I could really deal with my depression and mental health. What I loved about my experience with Lyra was that I was able to view the profiles of each of the therapists and select a Black female therapist who specializes in depression and trauma. Finding someone who understood a lot of intricacies of being a Black female made a huge impact on my therapy

sessions. I finally feel like I've found a therapist who has helped me develop strategies and build boundaries that have been hugely helpful in managing my mental health.

**Abby:** What advice would you give to someone who is worried about getting started with therapy?

**Patricia:** Don't be afraid of being judged. Therapists are not your family members, friends, or coworkers – they are a third party there to listen to you and help you work through your life challenges from an unbiased, clinical standpoint. Coming to this realization for me was helpful in learning to be vulnerable and open myself up to my therapist. Also, don't be afraid to be upfront with a therapist if you realize they aren't a good fit. I wish that I had made the transition sooner, because once I found someone who I felt understood me, that is when I really saw progress in my mental well-being. It can take patience and time, but I promise it is worth it!