

## Make small goals

It can sometimes feel overwhelming to plan and do things when you have been unwell or when you are feeling worried or afraid. But when we feel the world is an uncertain place, setting small achievable goals can reassure us and help us focus and give us a sense of control. Often, making a list of very small goals you want to tackle can be a good starting point. When you make goals small, they become more manageable and achievable and therefore give us a small boost and some reassurance that not everything is outside our control. Develop your social connections. Research shows that when people feel part of a community; they have a better sense of wellbeing than those who live in isolation. Social engagement and feeling part of a group or tribe has positive benefits for our health. This can include family support but if that is not available to us, than other social groups can be very beneficial.

## Use the ACE approach

A helpful strategy to help manage your mood and activity levels is to monitor your activity on a daily basis. Using the acronym ACE, we can review our activities and score them (on a scale of 0 -10), on how they give us a sense of achievement, connection to others and enjoyment. Some of our activities will score highly on all 3 aspects, but other activities or experiences may only score highly for us on 1 or 2 of these domains. What matters is that we are engaging in a range of activities that offer us a variety of meaningful experiences across these domains. Asking ourselves "How did I do on my ACE score today?" can help us keep track of our behaviours and feelings, which means we are actively managing our own wellbeing.

## ACE your day



Never be afraid to reach out and ask for help!

### Our sincere thanks to :-

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and is not a substitute for medical advice.

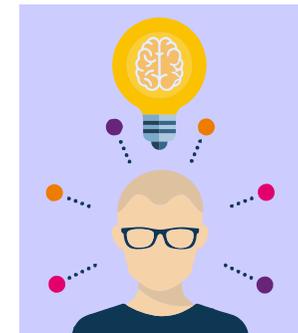


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Look After Your Mind  
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## Look After Your Mind

Psychological aspects  
of recovery after a blood clot



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# Look After Your Mind

## Psychological aspects of recovery after a blood clot: what you need to know.

For many people, being diagnosed with a blood clot or a coagulation disorder is a sudden illness event. In addition to the physical impact; such an event can make us feel unsafe and uncertain about our future. It's a normal reaction, and increased worry and anxiety symptoms can be experienced in the aftermath of such an illness experience. In addition, if you are on anticoagulation treatment, you may have to change aspects of your lifestyle and adhere to a new medication regimen. All of this can lead to increased feelings of worry and anxiety.

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal human response to stress. We all feel anxious at times but it can be particularly noticeable when we have been ill or diagnosed with a long term health condition. When we are anxious we may worry more and we can experience physical symptoms such as muscle tension, nausea, light-headedness or a racing heart rate. It can be difficult to decipher physical symptoms that are attributable to anxiety from other causes, especially if we have been medically unwell. So it is important to check in with your medical specialist on these symptoms. But if they are diagnosed as being anxiety based then the good news is that you can help yourself to self-manage them. We all need to develop our own individual "Tool Kit" of coping strategies to help us manage worry and stress in our lives.

### The Mind / Body connection

It is important to remember that recovery from any illness event involves both our bodies and our minds. People often believe that the mind and body are separate things. But research has shown that the

mind and body are closely connected and have a direct effect on each other. Our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical sensations are all related. For example, we blush when we feel embarrassed and alternatively we can feel calmer when we think about a nice experience we have had. Our emotions can be directly felt in our body; e.g. if we are low or sad, it can make us feel more sensitive to pain or tension in our body.

## Top tips to manage our Psychological recovery

### Notice when you are anxious or worried

The first step to managing anxiety is to notice when you are feeling anxious, worried or afraid. You can do this by noticing your thoughts, and also how you are feeling physically. It is important to know that just because you have had a thought; it does not mean that it is true or that it is a fact. We can often get very upset by our thoughts and it is helpful to label your thoughts and remind yourself that they are not always facts, they are just thoughts. Some people find it helpful to acknowledge that they are having the thought and say to themselves 'I am having the thought that....' especially if it is a stressful or upsetting thought.

Our minds tend to make lots of judgments so rather than trying to stop this judging; instead tune into the part of your mind that notices; "I am noticing that....". This helps us challenge our more unhelpful thoughts or worries and look for the alternative more helpful thought. This does not mean we get rid of our worries, indeed the more we try and push worry away the more it tends to stick around! So just practice the skill of challenging thoughts that are unhelpful, and try and generate an alternative more helpful thought.

Also bring your attention to the words you are using in your thoughts, are they provoking more fear? Can you replace language that promotes fear with more helpful language? For example "I am terrified, this is a crazy time" to "Yes, I can feel the fear because the world is so

uncertain, but let me focus on what I can do right now to help me feel more steady".

### Share your worries with someone you trust

Talking to someone you trust about your thoughts and worries can really help to alleviate stress and anxiety. Sometimes when people keep their thoughts and worries inside and don't share them, those thoughts and worries can seem much bigger than they are. Talking to someone who can give support and reassurance can really help some people to feel better, especially if there is little they can do in that particular moment about their worries or fears.

### Keep a journal

Some people find it helpful to write down their worries when they notice they are worrying. This can be particularly helpful before you go to sleep if you find that's a time you worry a lot. Writing down worries helps people to understand what they are worrying about and can also help them to get some perspective on their worries. Writing down daily small things you are grateful for is also helpful in managing our mood. Research shows that practicing gratitude on a daily basis, no matter how small, has a positive benefit on our wellbeing.

### Be active

It can be difficult to get back to being active after feeling physically unwell. Nevertheless being active and doing as much exercise as recommended by your physiotherapist or medical team can be an excellent way not only to help you physically recover but research shows that exercise / physical activity is helpful in managing anxiety and worry. Be kind to yourself with exercise also, and set small targets that are achievable and manageable.