

Coping with Illness

Use your Mind to Manage Illness.

There is a strong link between mental & physical health.

Unhappy feelings, depression & anger are normal responses to illness. Just like pain or fatigue, learning to deal with difficult feelings is important for learning to live with illness.



CAUTION:

Some people turn to alcohol & other drugs as a way to cope with illness or to relax.

Alcohol is a depressant & may add to feelings of sadness. It may also interact with certain medications.

Consult your doctor or pharmacist before drinking alcohol.



Positive Ways to Cope with Difficult Feelings:

- ❖ **Learn to communicate feelings** using “I statements”.
- ❖ **Know your limitations.** Realize you may not be able to do everything you did before but you can still do many things.
- ❖ **Focus on things you can still do** & on the things that make you feel good.
- ❖ **Continue daily activities** even if you don't feel like it (ex: get dressed, cook meals).
- ❖ **Visit or call friends & family.** Plan an outing with relatives or friends.
- ❖ **Volunteer** - Join a support group or get involved in the community.
- ❖ **Look to the future** & make plans for things you will enjoy.
- ❖ **Make a list of rewards** that you can look forward to each day.
- ❖ **Take care of yourself.** Exercise everyday, get enough sleep & eat healthy.
- ❖ **Practice Relaxation Techniques** - Deep Breathing, Stretching, Guided Imagery, Visualization, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Meditation.
- ❖ **Use Positive Self-Talk** – Say “I know I can” instead of “I just can't do...”.
- ❖ **Seek Professional Help** if you feel like hurting yourself or someone else or if unhappy feelings last more than a few weeks. Talk to your doctor about depression.



Information adapted from *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions*, 3rd Edition.

For more information or support, contact your local Mental Health & Addiction Services Office.

Mental Health Crisis Line 1-888-737-4668 NL Health Line 1-888-709-2929