



Emotional Support and Wellbeing

Overview

About this Document

This resource has been created to accompany our Emotional Support and Wellbeing webinar. Inside, you'll find practical guidance on coping strategies, the benefits of gentle exercise, answers to frequently asked questions, and a range of helpful resources. Our aim is to provide you with supportive information to help manage emotional wellbeing, whether you're living with kidney disease or caring for someone who is.

Previous Webinars

To watch our previously held webinars on topics such as; home dialysis, holiday dialysis, diet and nutrition, and current research. Please use the link below to head over to our YouTube channel.



[Click here for our YouTube Channel.](#)

Coping Strategies

1. Breathing & Relaxation Techniques

- Deep Breathing: Use the 4-7-8 technique — inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and release each muscle group from head to toe.
- Grounding Techniques: Use your senses—name 5 things you can see, 4 touch, 3 hear, 2 smell, and 1 taste.

2. Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- Exercise Regularly: Boost your mood naturally with physical activity, a simple walk or stretches can help your mobility, little and often can still help.
- Get Quality Sleep: Aim for 7–9 hours of consistent rest each night.
- Eat Well: Maintain a nutritious and balanced diet.
- Limit Stimulants: Cut back on caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.

3. Thought Management

- Challenge Negative Thoughts: Are they based on facts or assumptions?
- Practice Gratitude: Write down 3 things you're thankful for daily.
- Keep a Journal: Reflect on patterns in your mood and thoughts.

4. Social Connection & Support

- Talk to Someone: Share your thoughts with friends or professionals.
- Join Support Groups: Connect with others facing similar challenges.
- Monitor Social Media Use: Take breaks to avoid comparison or overwhelm.

Seeking Professional Help

Never be afraid to talk to your renal team if you are struggling and need support.

Exercise

Mental Health Benefits of Exercise for Kidney Patients

- Reduces anxiety and depression
- Boosts mood and self-esteem
- Improves sleep quality
- Increases energy levels
- Provides a sense of routine and control, which can help with emotional regulation
- Promotes social interaction and reduces isolation (especially in group or guided settings)

Recommended Types of Exercise

These are low-impact and adaptable for varying fitness and mobility levels:

Walking

- Frequency: 20–30 minutes most days of the week
- Benefits: Improves mood, circulation, and joint health; easy to start and track
- Adaptation: Indoor walking for those with mobility or weather concerns

Stretching and Flexibility Exercises

- Examples: Chair yoga, gentle stretches, Tai Chi
- Benefits: Reduces stress, promotes relaxation, and improves range of motion
- Adaptation: Can be done seated or lying down

Light Resistance Training

- Examples: Resistance bands, light hand weights, bodyweight exercises
- Benefits: Builds strength and improves physical confidence

Caution: Always consult with a renal physiotherapist or clinician before beginning

Exercise

Breathing Exercises and Meditation

- Examples: Diaphragmatic breathing, guided meditation, mindfulness apps (e.g., Headspace)
- Benefits: Reduces stress hormones, lowers blood pressure, helps manage anxiety
- Good for: Dialysis days or during periods of low energy

Stationary Cycling or Recumbent Bikes

- Ideal for: Dialysis sessions (intradialytic exercise) or home use
- Mental Boost: Releases endorphins, combats fatigue, encourages goal setting

Dancing or Movement to Music

- Light Activity: Dancing in a chair or standing
- Mental Health Benefit: Enhances mood and social engagement

⚠ Important Considerations for Kidney Patients

- Always get medical clearance before starting new exercise routines, especially if on dialysis or post-transplant.
- Be aware of fluid restrictions, blood pressure changes, and fatigue levels.
- Start slowly and gradually increase intensity.
- Avoid overexertion, particularly during or after dialysis days.

FAQ's

1. Is it normal to feel depressed or anxious after being diagnosed with kidney disease?

Yes, absolutely. Many kidney patients experience a range of emotions including shock, fear, sadness, and anger. Depression and anxiety are common reactions to chronic illness. It's important to acknowledge your feelings and seek support—mental health is just as important as physical health.

2. How can I cope with the emotional impact of dialysis or transplant?

Coping strategies include:

- Talking to someone: Whether it's a therapist, counselor, or support group, expressing your feelings can be incredibly healing.
- Routine and self-care: Keeping a regular schedule and focusing on small acts of self-care can build resilience.
- Mindfulness or meditation: Techniques like deep breathing, progressive relaxation, and meditation can help reduce anxiety.
- Education: Understanding your condition can reduce fear of the unknown and give you a sense of control.
- Connect with other kidney patients, sharing your experiences and listening to others in similar circumstances can help.

3. I feel like a burden to my family. What can I do?

Feeling like a burden is a common emotional struggle, but it's important to remember that your loved ones care for you because they want to. Open communication helps—share your feelings with them. You may also consider family counselling to create a supportive space for everyone to express and process emotions.

FAQ's

4. How can I stay hopeful and motivated during long treatment periods?

- Set small, achievable goals—whether it's walking a little further each day or learning something new.
- Celebrate progress, no matter how small.
- Find meaning or purpose, such as hobbies, volunteer work, or supporting other patients.
- Lean on support networks—whether friends, family, or peer groups.

5. Can kidney disease affect my brain or memory?

Yes, some people with kidney disease experience “brain fog,” memory lapses, or difficulty concentrating. This can be due to various factors like anemia, dialysis, or medication side effects. Speak to your healthcare provider if you're experiencing these symptoms—they may be manageable.

6. Are there support groups for kidney patients dealing with emotional challenges?

Yes. Many hospitals, clinics, and charities like Kidney Wales can help with support groups, online forums, or in-person meetings. These can be a lifeline, offering both emotional support and practical advice from people who understand your experience.

7. I'm struggling to accept my diagnosis. What can help with acceptance?

- Give yourself time. Acceptance is a process, not a single moment.
- Talk to a mental health professional—they can help guide you through grief, fear, or denial.
- Practice self-compassion and avoid self-blame.
- Read stories of others who've found strength and purpose through similar challenges.

FAQ's

8. How do I deal with the fear of the future?

Fear of the unknown is very common. Try:

- Focusing on the present. What can you control today?
- Developing a care plan with your medical team to feel more prepared.
- Building a support network—you don't have to face this alone.
- Exploring spiritual or philosophical beliefs that bring you comfort.

9. When should I seek professional mental health support?

You should consider seeing a mental health professional if:

- You feel you are struggling to cope.
- You feel persistently sad, anxious, or hopeless.
- You've lost interest in activities you once enjoyed.
- You're having trouble sleeping, eating, or functioning day-to-day.
- You're having thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

You are not alone, and there is no shame in asking for help.

10. What are some daily practices that can improve my mental wellbeing?

- Gratitude journaling: List three things you're thankful for each day.
- Gentle physical activity: If approved by your doctor, activities like walking or stretching can boost mood.
- Creative expression: Art, music, or writing can help process emotions.
- Stay socially connected: Regular phone calls or meetups can lift your spirits.

Remember you are not alone and your renal team is there to support you and help access the help you need.

Helpful Resources

[5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS](#)

[Hapus - online resource supporting mental wellbeing](#)

[Fresh Air Fridays](#) - monthly sessions creating space for people to explore different aspects of their lives and teaching tools and techniques that support mental and emotional wellbeing.

[Marie Curie – Bereavement Support](#)

If you are grieving after the loss of a loved one due to a chronic or terminal illness, Marie Curie offers:

- Up to six free counseling sessions with the same bereavement support volunteer
- Confidential, safe, and professional guidance
- Sessions lasting up to 45 minutes, available to adults aged 18 and over
- Also provide support for children struggling with grief.

[Carers Trust](#) - connect with local carer support groups or local carer centres offering respite and free emotional support.

[Grief disco](#) - connect with others to remember your loved ones, dance to remember.

[KCUK](#) - free counselling services for patients and carers

[Activate Your Life](#) - is a completely free online course, designed to complete in your own time and give you the tools to help manage anxiety & stress.

Helpful Resources

Diet

The Eat well guide

Cardiff Food Bank - www.cardiff.foodbank.org.uk

Fluid

Water, drinks & your health

Sleep

Every Mind Matters

Stepiau, for self-help resources around mental wellbeing concerns that might be impacting on sleep -

<https://www.stepiau.org/en/>

Exercise

Exercise guidelines

Fresh Air

Physical Activity & outdoors

Personal Hygiene

Stepiau, for self-help resources around mental wellbeing concerns that might be impacting on personal hygiene -

<https://www.stepiau.org/en/>

Helpful Resources

Alcohol

Entry to Drug and Alcohol Services (EDAS) -

<https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/our-services/e-das/>

Connected to others

For advocacy, befriending and counselling:

[community care & wellbeing](#)

Age Connects -

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services/>

Popham Kidney Support

www.pophamkidneysupport.org.uk

Living in the moment

For when anxiety and stress cause you difficulty in living in the present:

Mindfulness -

<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/mindfulness.htm>

Action for Living - <https://www.stepiau.org/en/action-for-living>

Stress Control - <https://www.stepiau.org/en/stress-control>

Social Media

Stepiau, for self-help resources around mental wellbeing concerns that might be impacted by social media -

<https://www.stepiau.org/en/>

Helplines

NHS 111 – Option 2

You can access urgent mental health support by calling 111, Option 2—a free, round-the-clock service connecting callers with trained professionals.

SANeline

If you're experiencing a mental health issue or supporting someone who is, at **0300 304 7000** (available 4:30 PM – 10 PM daily).

National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK

Provides a supportive listening service for anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts. Call **0800 689 5652** (open 6 PM – midnight daily).

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

For support with suicidal thoughts, call CALM at **0800 58 58 58** (5 PM – midnight daily) or use their [webchat service](#).

Shout

If you prefer texting over talking, text SHOUT to **85258** for 24/7 confidential mental health support.

Papyrus HOPELINEUK

For individuals under 35 struggling with suicidal thoughts, or those worried about a young person, call **0800 068 4141** (24/7 support), email pat@papyrus-uk.org, or text **07786 209 697**.

Switchboard (LGBT+ Support)

If you identify as LGBTQ+, call Switchboard at **0300 330 0630** (10 AM – 10 PM daily), email chris@switchboard.lgbt, or use their webchat service. All operators identify as LGBT+.

C.A.L.L. (Wales)

If you live in Wales, contact the Community Advice and Listening Line (C.A.L.L.) at **0800 132 737** (open 24/7) or text “help” followed by your question to 81066.

Samaritans

If you need immediate emotional support, help is available:
Samaritans – 24/7
Helpline: **116 123** (free to call)