

Major Trauma Centre

Coping with your Emotions following Traumatic Injury

This leaflet describes common emotional reactions following traumatic injury and how you can manage these. It contains information that you may find helpful during your stay at St George's Hospital and when you have been discharged. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Immediate reactions

After experiencing a major injury, accident or assault you may notice:

- feeling tearful or upset
- feeling anxious, on edge or jumpy
- feeling irritable or angry
- poor sleep or loss of appetite
- having poor concentration
- having thoughts, memories or dreams about what happened
- feeling disoriented or that things do not feel real
- feeling emotionally numb.

These reactions are common. They tend to settle down naturally in the days and weeks following the event. They tend to become less frequent and less distressing over time.

These reactions are not a sign that you are losing control or not coping. They are part of the adjustment process.

What can I do to help myself?

- Remind yourself that what you are feeling is common.
- Remind yourself that it can take some time for thoughts and feelings to settle down.
- Ask ward staff if you have questions about your injuries, physical health, pain, medication, mobility or rehabilitation. This may put your mind at rest and help you to focus on what you can do to support each stage of your recovery.
- If you know what kind of support you want from friends or family then let them know.
- Set yourself rehabilitation goals to focus your mind on what you want to work towards.
- You may notice feeling tired or have less energy or strength than before. Allow yourself to take things slowly.
- Try to notice the progress you are making. Small changes are all part of moving forward with your rehabilitation.
- Some people keep a diary of their experience and progress.
- Imagining a calm scene can help to relax the mind and body. It can also provide a brief distraction away from the ward.
- Tell staff if you experience nightmares, high levels of anxiety or any other symptoms that worry you – sometimes a change in medication can help.
- If you have problems with concentration or memory, try using your mobile phone or pen and paper to record things you wish to remember (such as questions for ward round or physiotherapy advice).
- Think about times in the past when you have managed a difficult situation. What was helpful then? Can you use these ideas now?
- Distracting activities such as reading, watching television, or doing a puzzle may reduce the boredom of being in hospital and keep your mind active.
- Some people find listening to music helps them to relax a little.

- Keep an eye on your caffeine (tea and coffee) intake. Caffeine can lead to sensations of anxiety and affect sleep.

Can anyone else help?

If you are an inpatient at St George's Hospital and would like to speak to somebody about your emotions, you can see the **Major Trauma Centre clinical psychologist**.

The clinical psychologist can help you to think about how you are coping emotionally.

She may suggest some additional coping strategies that could be helpful for you.

Tell the ward staff if you would like to speak with the clinical psychologist and she will come to visit you. She works as part of the major trauma centre team and general information is shared to try to improve your care. Please ask if you have any questions.

If you would prefer religious or spiritual support, then ask the ward staff to refer you to the hospital chaplains.

What about coping with emotions when I leave the hospital?

It is common for people to feel anxious about their discharge. It can help if you are clear about your rehabilitation plan. You will be given information about movement, exercises and medication to help your recovery. If any of these things do not make sense then speak to your physiotherapist, occupational therapist or doctor before you are discharged.

Physically you will probably be slowed down and depending on your injuries you may need to learn to do things in a different way. It can be useful to think about what will help you to be patient with yourself during this time.

If you meet with the psychologist while you are an inpatient, they may make recommendations about further psychological support for you. Your GP will get this information as well. As your rehabilitation progresses you may find that your emotional reactions change. If you would like to discuss this with the Major Trauma Centre clinical psychologist, please ask about this at your medical follow-up appointment(s) or use the contact details below to make an appointment. You can also speak to your GP to ask for further support.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Clinical Psychology for Major Trauma:

020 8725 1214 (Monday to Friday).

Email: MTCPsychology@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Clinical Psychology for Major Trauma
Gunning Ward
St James Wing
St George's Hospital

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact

patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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