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## Cardiac Rehabilitation: Emotional Issues



Having coronary artery disease (CAD or heart disease) can be stressful. You may worry about your health and future. If you ignore these feelings, they can slow your recovery. Get the help and support you need from family and friends. Support groups are also a good source of encouragement.

### Focus on your goals

Keep in mind that recovery takes time. Your heart and body may need time to heal from the stressful event of a heart attack, coronary stents, or surgery. Often your body needs a chance to adjust to new medicines that are often used to treat CAD. But with time, you should be feeling better. Focus on goals that are important to you. These may include returning to work, being active again, or spending more time with your family. Track your progress by keeping a record on a calendar or in a journal.

### Talk about your feelings

After having heart problems or surgery, it's normal to feel depressed and angry. You may have trouble accepting that you're ill. Your family or partner may feel some of the same things. Talk about your feelings openly. Talk about what you plan to do for yourself and how your family can help. Support each other through each stage of your recovery.

### Prepare to make changes

It's common to feel some denial, but the sooner you accept your health condition, the better. Unless you make some changes in your life, you are at high risk for more problems. At first, it may be hard for you to face making lifestyle changes. Your family and friends can work with you to help make these changes easier.

### Know that you are not alone

Making changes isn't easy. It helps to have a support system you can count on. Start with your cardiac rehab center. It's a place where people understand what you're going through. You can talk to others about your feelings and experiences. You can ask questions about goals and building a healthier lifestyle. And you can work with your cardiac rehab team to set goals and stay on track. Turn to your

family and friends for more support. Support groups are also in many communities. Open communication is the best way to find support in those around you.

### Are you depressed?

Feeling sad or overwhelmed at times is a normal part of life. But if sad feelings persist, you feel hopeless, or have lost interest or pleasure in doing things, you may be clinically depressed. Call your healthcare provider if you:

- Lose interest in food, sex, or other things that you enjoy
- Sleep much less or much more
- Have thoughts of suicide
- Feel hopeless about the future
- Are crying more than usual
- Can't get through your normal routine
- Don't want to go outside
- Feel like isolating yourself from your loved ones

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