



Waitemata  
District Health Board  
Best Care for Everyone

# Positive coping after a heart event

---

*What you need to know*

---

## Common feelings after a heart event

**Shocked...** Angry... Irritable... Sad...

Relieved... Grateful... Lucky... Worried...

Frightened... Loss of control... Down...

Guilty... Cared for... Loved... Motivated...

Over-protected... Restless... Blue...

Numb... On edge... Helpless... **Hopeful...**

There is **no right or wrong** feeling after a heart event. Every experience is **unique**.



*"Feelings are much like waves, we  
can't stop them but we can choose  
which ones we surf..."*

## What can you do?

### Be kind to yourself

- What you would say to a friend if they were in your position?

### Make time for fun

- Do things you enjoy
- Aim for balance in your life

### Relax and unwind daily

- Take slow deep breaths
- Relax your muscles
- Find what relaxes you

### Practice helpful thinking

- List the things you are grateful for
- Try positive self-talk:

*"This is hard, but I can deal with this"*

### Connect with others

- Being around others can lift your mood and help you deal with stress
- Reach out to other people
- Join groups

### Set goals & put in place stepping stones

- Take things one step at a time
- Focus on what is important at the moment

## **Pace yourself**

- Spread out activities so you don't get too bored or too tired

## **Know your stress levels & when to seek for help**

- Feelings of depression and anxiety are common after heart events. Often these resolve over time. If they go on for more than two weeks or they interfere with your life, it's important to seek help.

## **Why see a psychologist?**

Living with a heart condition can sometimes be worrying and distressing. It can take some time to adjust to what has happened. Everyone's experience is a very personal one, and we all cope in different ways. However, sometimes individuals can feel overwhelmed and can benefit from professional help to cope and develop strategies to deal with these stresses.

Psychologists have training in how people behave, think and feel and how this interacts with their body's functioning.

Seeing a psychologist can help with both understanding and relieving the stresses of having a heart condition as well as making a positive lifestyle change.

***Talk to someone in your medical team about getting a referral to the cardiology health psychologist***

## **Recognizing the signs**

### **Depression or low mood:**

- Loss of interest in things
- Feeling low or hopeless most days – or mood swings
- Being irritable or crying easily
- Changes to your sleep, appetite, energy or concentration
- Feeling guilty or bad about yourself
- Thoughts that life is not worth living

### **Anxiety or worry:**

- Restless or on edge most days
- Uncontrollable worry or fears
- Difficulty relaxing
- Easily annoyed or irritable
- Excessive focus on your heart
- Sudden rush of fear or panic

### **Other things you can seek help for:**

- Ongoing upsetting memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- Fear of leaving home or doing certain activities
- Feeling numb, distant or cut-off from other people

## **Useful self-help resources**

[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

[www.calm.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.calm.auckland.ac.nz)

[www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing)

[www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)

[www.anxiety.org.nz](http://www.anxiety.org.nz)

[www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)

## **Other resources**

Lifeline: 0800 543 354 (free 24/7)

Alcohol & drug services: (09) 263 2000

Community mental health team: If you have urgent concerns, call (09) 486 8900



**Waitemata**  
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone