



# Adult Critical Care Unit

Support Information for Relatives

Adult Critical Care Unit



Having a loved one who is seriously ill can be a distressing and challenging experience. It is often a sudden and unforeseen event. You may find that you are responding to this event in a different way than you would normally cope with a stressful situation.

We hope this leaflet will provide you with information and some practical advice to help you during this difficult time. Please ask a member of staff if you have any questions or if you are unsure about anything that is happening.

How you are feeling is personal and there is no right or wrong emotion to feel. We know that people often go through a range of emotions such as:

## **SHOCK /DISBELIEF**

### **You may feel:**

- ❖ Confused - the sudden onset of illness can be hard to understand like you are in a “bad dream “
- ❖ Numb

## **FEAR/WORRY**

- ❖ You may be frightened about your relative getting worse or not surviving
- ❖ You may be frightened about how you are going to cope
- ❖ Concerned about other family members, work situations and finance

## FRUSTRATION/ANGER

- ❖ You may feel angry about events that lead to your loved one becoming so ill
- ❖ You may feel it is unfair and it shouldn't have happened
- ❖ You may feel frustrated that you are not able to get the answers to all of your questions
- ❖ If your relative has a long stay you may feel annoyed that they are not getting better quicker
- ❖ You may get angry with yourself as you feel you are not coping as well as you want to

## SADNESS

- ❖ You may feel sad or regret things you have said or not said
- ❖ You may even feel guilty for being the “well one”
- ❖ You may just feel totally overwhelmed.

**ALL THESE FEELINGS ARE NORMAL.**

## Family and Friends

It is often helpful to talk to close friends or family as you try to make sense of what is happening. You will find that you need to talk about how you are feeling and get support for yourself. This does not need to be in person but can be by phone call or even a text. It is important that you acknowledge how you feel and realise you can't be "strong" all the time. Crying is also a way to let out how you feel and relieve some of the stress. Sometimes you may just need time alone in quietness. This too can be helpful.

## NURSING STAFF

Speaking to a member of the nursing team can often help. They can help you understand your relative's illness and they also appreciate how difficult you will be finding this experience.

**The Senior Charge Nurse** will be available to offer you guidance and support.

**Your GP** - You may feel completely overwhelmed and find you are struggling to deal with your feelings despite getting support. If talking and support groups are not enough you should consider arranging an appointment to see your GP to see what other help is available.

## GETTING PRACTICAL

When your loved one is in Adult Critical Care you may be so focused and concerned for them that you forget to look after yourself. It can be an exhausting experience having a seriously ill relative. It is extremely important that you look after yourself too.

- ❖ Try and eat as well as you can. It is important you give your body fuel to cope with all the increase in activity both mentally and physically.
- ❖ Sleep is vital. Although sleeping might be difficult as you are so worried; it is important to try and rest when you can. Be reassured that there is always a nurse with your relative and they are being well cared for.
- ❖ Think about getting a relative or friend to act as your spokesperson. You may be faced with many enquires about your relative's progress. This can be very tiring. Ask a family member to contact people with updates on your behalf or even to field your calls.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

### Living Life – [www.NHS24.com](http://www.NHS24.com)

Living Life is a free telephone service available to anyone over the age of 16 who is suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety.

You can access Living Life either by:

- ❖ GP referral
- ❖ Phoning our free, confidential phone line on **0800 328 9655 (Mon-Fri 1pm to 9pm)**. You will be asked to provide some details and then an assessment appointment will be arranged to discuss the service and how help can be provided to you. (Note - some mobile phone operators may charge for calls so please ask if you are calling from a mobile and would like us to call you back).

### Breathing Space – [www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

A confidential phoneline for anyone in Scotland feeling low, anxious or depressed.

#### Opening hours

**Weekdays:** Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am

**Weekend:** Friday 6pm-Monday 6am

Tel No: 0800 83 85 87



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