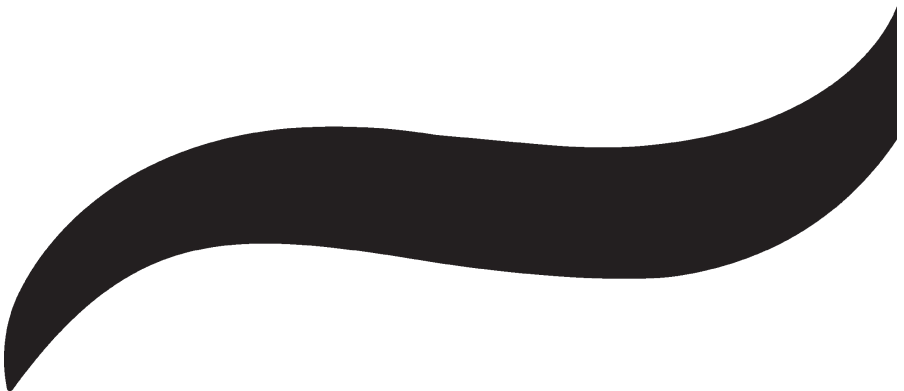




# Emotional Support & Adjustment

Advice & Support after a stay in Intensive Care  
Clinical Health Psychology & ACCEPT Service



## RECOVERY & EMOTIONS

You may feel tense or low, or have difficulties adjusting following an Intensive care stay. Your friends and family may also experience some challenging feelings.

Recovering from critical illness can affect everyone differently, so there are no set rules about how you should feel or how you should deal with emotions.

It can be common after care in an Intensive care unit (ICU) to experience some challenging emotional symptoms and changes to your mood. Sometimes these can be triggered by a sound, smell or something that you see. These symptoms usually subside with time. These symptoms may include:

- ❖ Intense, vivid dreams or nightmares that seem very real
- ❖ Disturbing, sudden, vivid memories of the past (flashbacks)
- ❖ Feeling more worried, or anxious than normal
- ❖ Feeling tearful or depressed, fears of the future
- ❖ Feelings of frustration and guilt
- ❖ Reduced confidence and vulnerability
- ❖ Worrying about getting ill again and the recovery process
- ❖ Becoming more short-tempered or snappy

These are normal and common responses to a very difficult physical health experience.

“Different people react in different ways. There is no set, linear path”

## RETURNING HOME

### Physical activity

It is unlikely there will be the same level of support at home as there was at hospital. This can be a difficult transition for both you and your relatives. It is normal to experience periods of low mood and frustration because you feel you are not progressing as quickly as you would have hoped. It can be helpful to set small goals in your daily routine to aid recovery, as well as show yourself that you are improving. A small goal could be something like making a drink for yourself, or walking a few steps further without needing to rest. It is important to be kind to yourself during this recovery process.

You are likely to be feeling tired and lacking energy. It will take time before you feel well enough to cope with everyday life and many more months to get back to full strength.

Set yourself small, achievable targets to help you get back to normal, and keep doing the exercises your physiotherapist gave you. Be mindful not to overdo your exercise as this can set back recovery.

### Relationships and family

You may find returning home overwhelming, especially if you experienced periods of isolation from family and friends. You may find your family make a fuss and might not understand why you seem different, or why you may not be so keen on the hobbies and interests you used to enjoy.

Your family and friends were afraid you might die, so they may want to do everything for you when you get home. If you feel this annoys you, it can be helpful to talk to them calmly about how you are feeling. It can be less helpful to bottle feelings up and become

angry.

It is quite common that people do not remember their time in hospital clearly, and this can be confusing and frightening.

Some people find it helpful to ask their family about what they remember about your stay in hospital, how they felt when you were ill and the things that happened while you were there. If your relative kept a diary while you were in the ICU, it can be helpful to look at this with them.

Some people prefer not to hear about their time in the ICU and just want to focus on their recuperation. Everyone responds differently; do what feels most helpful for you.

### **Daily routine**

It can be a daunting time coming home from the hospital and it is normal to wonder whether you will be able to cope. It may be helpful to share your worries and concerns with your family and think about how you can adapt things at home to help ease the transition.

Quite often people report difficulties with concentration and memory. To support recovery it can be helpful to adapt your environment to ease the pressure of remembering important things, such as:

- ❖ Using a notepad, noticeboard
- ❖ Special place for objects for example keys, reading glasses
- ❖ Memory aids like a diary/calendar, lists, watches/alarm reminders, pill boxes

Recovery takes time, and you will not be able to do everything you used to straight away. It is ok to ask for help, until you are feeling strong enough to do things yourself.

### **Sleep Disturbances/Challenging memories**

It can be common for people who have been in an ICU to experience hallucinations or nightmares. You may experience vivid dreams or feelings of being tortured, trapped in bed or felt as if you were being held captive. This may be due to medical interventions that were used to treat and support your body's normal functions and to monitor your condition.

The feelings of fear and confusion remain with some people for weeks after discharge, but do normally pass with time. The following short exercise can be helpful to reduce overwhelming feelings or memories to stay present in the moment.

#### **Grounding exercise**

When your mind is racing, grounding brings you back to the here-and-now and is very helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or flashbacks. It is an effective way to calm down quickly.

Sitting comfortably, take a few slow, deep breaths, in through your nose (count to three), out through your mouth (to the count of three).

Name 5 things you can see

Name 4 things you can feel

Name 3 things you can hear

Name 2 things you can smell

Name 1 thing you can taste

Take a further few deep breaths to end.

## SELF-CARE

Steps that can help support your emotional wellbeing and mental health as you return home to continue your recovery:

- ❖ Talking to someone who understands - Share your feelings and thoughts with someone like a friend, family member or someone you turn to for spiritual guidance. Talking with someone else can help you gain another perspective.
- ❖ Be kind to yourself. Try to eat healthily - Pace yourself. And, most of all, don't blame yourself or beat yourself up if you feel you're not coping as well as you'd like.
- ❖ Take time to do the things you enjoy. Watch, read, listen. Play games. Look after yourself.
- ❖ Stick to a good sleep pattern – Sleep aids recovery. It can take time to get back into a normal sleep routine. You may find it harder to fall asleep, or you may often wake during the night. If you have trouble sleeping, try a milky bedtime drink but avoid tea and coffee as the caffeine in them can keep you awake. Reading, or listening to relaxing music before you go to sleep may also help. Relaxation or mindfulness recordings may help to settle the mind for sleep.

*"Sometimes we need someone to simply be there, not to fix anything, or to do anything in particular but just to let us feel that we are cared and supported".*

- ❖ Stay in touch with people you like and trust if you can. Reach out by phone, message or video call.



- ❖ Remember that alcohol and drugs are never good coping strategies. Even if they feel it in the short term, they very quickly cause problems to mount up.
- ❖ Relaxed breathing: Take a slow breath in for five seconds, hold it for another five, and then breathe out slowly for five seconds. Don't rush the breaths, and repeat for a minute or so. Repeat this exercise twice a day. This will help you to relax your mind and body. NHS relaxed breathing available on Youtube.
- ❖ Mindfulness practice can help reduce anxiety, depression, irritability, exhaustion and pain. More information at [www.franticworld.com](http://www.franticworld.com) or download the app 'Headspace'.

### **Mindfulness Taster Exercise**

#### Leaves on a Stream

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Imagine a stream, with leaves floating along. As thoughts appear, place them on the leaves and let them float past. If you seem to get caught up in your thoughts (hooked), notice this (unhook) and gently come back to the stream and carry on. Sometimes thoughts dry up, but sooner or later they return. Try this once or twice a day for three to five minutes.

*“Resilience can come from our own inner strength, key relationships or key beliefs that we hold”.*

### **INS:PIRE PROJECT**

You may be contacted about attending InS:PIRE. This is a programme to help you and your carers/family continue on your road to recovery.

The programme team is made up of different health professionals who all specialise in recovery from critical illness. They will be able to assist with any challenges that you may be facing. These challenges may not just be physical, they may be about: medications; ongoing medical questions; difficulties with sleep, memory, or other emotional factors.

You can find more information at: [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/inspire/](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/inspire/) or please ask one of the critical care staff members for more information.

### **USEFUL WEBSITES:**

[www.criticalcarerecovery.com](http://www.criticalcarerecovery.com)

[www.icusteps.org](http://www.icusteps.org) – the intensive care patient support charity including helpful information leaflets and an online supportive community forum.

### **Supportive Resources**

The Health and Wellness Hub provide a holistic approach to health and wellness by creating affordable, accessible and inclusive weekly health and wellbeing activities in Lanarkshire. More information is available on their Facebook page or website.

<http://www.thehealthandwellnesshub.org.uk>

Telephone: 01698 262437

### **Lanarkshire Mind Matters**

This new website is run by NHS Lanarkshire Adult Psychology Services. It aims to link you to mental health information, advice and help, wherever you live in Lanarkshire. The Calm Distress course looks at developing tools and strategies for managing symptoms of stress. The course comprises of five short 20 minute sessions which can be completed at a convenient time for you. No referral is needed and it can be freely accessed at [www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk)

## SilverCloud Online Therapy

SilverCloud is a new range of CBT evidence-based courses that can help with a variety of different problems, including physical health difficulties. The idea is that they teach you strategies to manage your emotions and 'make some space' around your problems.

### Self - Referral courses

- ❖ Money Worries
- ❖ Positive Body Image
- ❖ Self Management Toolkit
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Sleep
- ❖ Stress

### Healthcare professional referral

- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Anxiety/ Depression
- ❖ Chronic Pain
- ❖ Chronic Heart Conditions
- ❖ Diabetes
- ❖ Health Anxiety
- ❖ Lung conditions
- ❖ MS
- ❖ OCD
- ❖ Panic
- ❖ Perinatal Care
- ❖ Phobia

- ❖ Rheumatoid Arthritis
- ❖ Social Anxiety

To see further information on these courses please visit. at <https://www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk/silvercloud-online-therapy/>

### Drop in classes:

- ❖ Stress Control:

This six-week course will help you develop skills and techniques to manage stress, anxiety, low mood, low confidence and many more of the challenges of day-to-day living. **The class is free, and there is no need to register.**

To view the upcoming timetable and venue please visit the Lanarkshire Mind Matters website.

- ❖ Reclaim your life:

A five-week wellbeing course for people with long-term physical health symptoms. **The class is free, and there is no need to register.**

**Signs that you may need more support:** It is difficult to generalise how struggling to cope can make you feel or act, but if you think these symptoms sound like you and seem to be prolonged and persistent, you may benefit from further emotional support:

- ❖ Lacking energy or feeling tired
- ❖ Feeling restless and agitated
- ❖ Feeling tearful
- ❖ Not wanting to talk to or be with people
- ❖ Not wanting to do things you usually enjoy
- ❖ Using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings
- ❖ Finding it hard to cope with everyday things

*“Sometimes our thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us to the point where it becomes difficult to cope with everyday life”.*

**In a crisis, support is available from:**

- ❖ Samaritans - Tel: 116 123 (UK) free to call 24 hour support or online at [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- ❖ Breathing Space - Telephone 0800 83 85 87

**Opening hours:**

Weekdays: Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am

Weekend: Friday 6pm-Monday 6am

- ❖ Contact your GP, or ring NHS 24 by dialling 111 - medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**Useful Apps**



**Mind Shift** is a mental health app designed specifically for teens and young adults with anxiety. Rather than trying to avoid anxious feelings, Mind Shift stresses the importance of changing how you think about anxiety. It can encourage you to take charge of your life, ride out intense emotions, and face challenging situations.



**Self Help for Anxiety Management** might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behaviour over time, and learn 25 different self-help techniques. You can also use SAM's "Social Cloud" feature to confidentially connect with other users in an online community for additional support.



**Happify**, Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts.



The **Headspace** app makes meditation simple. Learn the skills of mindfulness and meditation by using this app for just a few minutes per day. You gain access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus. The app also has a handy "get some headspace" reminder to encourage you to keep practicing each day.



**Calm** provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music. This app is truly universal; whether you've never tried meditation before or regularly practice, you'll find the perfect program for you.



**Smiling Mind** is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. Smiling Mind is a unique tool developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to your life. This is really helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind.

There are many other apps you could try which could be helpful; you might find your own that you like better. You can find a list of mental health apps recommended by the NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/appslibrary/category/mental-health>

## **Information on local community resources**

### **North Lanarkshire:**

[www.locatornl.org.uk](http://www.locatornl.org.uk)

South Lanarkshire

[www.vaslan.org.uk](http://www.vaslan.org.uk)

[www.locator.org.uk](http://www.locator.org.uk)

### **Healthy Reading**

All Lanarkshire Libraries now have a Healthy Reading Section, with a wide range of mental health and well-being self-help leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. You will also find a wide range of

information for mental health and well-being at the element

(eLanarkshire Mental Health Resources) website:

<http://www.element.org.uk>

### **Spiritual Care and Wellbeing**

NHS Lanarkshire is committed to supporting the spiritual and religious needs of all patients and carers. This support is offered to those who belong to a particular faith group and equally to those of no particular faith. Although chaplains come from a specific faith background, they will be pleased to support people of all faiths or no faith and will respect the wishes and beliefs of individuals who seek their help.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE USE OF PATIENT INFORMATION

NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk) or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

NHS Lanarkshire General  
Enquiry Line: 0300 30 30 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland.  
[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)  
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please e-mail: Translation.  
[Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)



[www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)

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