

Tip sheet

Navigating poor health

Life can often throw curve balls our way, with one of the most daunting being poor health for a friend, family member or ourselves. However, it's important to remember that a positive outlook can make a difference in your recovery.



Initial responses

Stay informed

Take the time to educate yourself about your condition and treatment options – using reliable sources. Being well-informed can reduce anxiety and empower you to make better decisions. However, if it feels like too much, it's okay to stop and take things slowly.

Prioritise self-care

Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine. Whether it's practicing mindfulness, getting enough rest or eating nutritious meals, taking care of yourself is essential.

Get the right support

It's always important to speak to a professional when it comes to changes in our health. Ask your GP about anything out of the ordinary - they may refer you onto a specialist who can ensure you get the care you need.

Short-term vs chronic conditions

Acute health issues

Remember that this will pass

Many injuries or acute conditions will be resolved with time and care, so try not to feel too disheartened. Cultivating a positive mindset can boost your physical health in turn.

Don't force yourself through recovery

While it can be difficult to wait, recovery often comes sooner when you avoid overexertion. If in doubt, ask your healthcare professional for some guidelines.

Monitor any changes

Even if your condition is temporary, it's important to watch out for any negative changes and report these to your doctor.

Chronic or terminal conditions

Accept your diagnosis

Coming to accept a long-term diagnosis looks different for everyone. There's no right way to feel, but being aware of your response now can help you move towards acceptance and making the most of this time.

Practise stress management

Feel these feelings but try not to let them overwhelm you. Meditation and mindfulness can help you process things in a healthy way.

Lean on friends or family members

Reach out to friends and family for emotional support. Sharing your feelings can provide comfort during difficult moments.

Connect with others

Consider joining support groups. Connecting with those going through similar challenges can provide a sense of belonging and understanding. Keep as socially connected as you can.

Set realistic goals

Establish achievable health goals and milestones. Celebrate small victories and use them as motivation to keep moving forward.

Accept limitations

Recognise that you may need to adjust your expectations and routines. Accepting your limitations is crucial for finding peace.

Stay active

Within your limitations, try to incorporate some form of physical activity into your daily life. Even gentle exercises like stretching or short walks can improve your overall wellbeing.

Supporting friends or family

Listen and learn

If the person dealing with poor health is a friend or family member, let them guide the support you give and always be open to change.

Give yourself grace

It's normal to experience negative emotions or feel drained from providing care. Be kind to yourself and take breaks whenever possible. If you're lashing out unfairly, apologise and practice self-care to renew your energy.

Seek support

Remember that you're only human, and you may need help in giving care. Even emotional support can take its toll.

With the permission of the ill person, let others take turns helping. If you need to talk, share your feelings with someone who understands.

A Vitae counsellor offers confidential and impartial support for anyone going through poor health, a terminal diagnosis or supporting a friend or family member. You can contact our team any time to arrange counselling through your workplace and gain the care you need during this difficult time.

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