

Workshop 17: Acknowledging and Managing Unhelpful Emotions

Life with a health condition brings challenges and changes. Often we are able to use our experience and ability to problem-solve, to adapt to and meet these challenges.

Sometimes the problems we face seem to overwhelm us. We begin to feel that all the effort we put in makes no difference. Our life, as we knew it, may feel as though it is over.

We know that a good self manager is aware of the impact their health condition has on the way they feel. They also know that the way they feel can sometimes impact on their health condition.

Describe a time when your condition has impacted on your emotion:

These feelings might be of sadness, anger, fear, frustration or guilt - they are very common and most people with a health condition have felt at least one of these at one time or another. When we experience feeling this way it can really affect our ability to self-manage.

If we experience these emotions over a long period of time and we also have all the other challenges of life with a health condition to deal with - things like pain, medication and limited mobility, it is not surprising that some people begin to feel a loss of hope, which can in turn make us feel depressed.

Feeling low and depressed makes managing our lives and our health condition even more difficult, this makes us feel even more depressed. This can become a downward spiral.

Sometimes identifying experiences like this can make us feel uncomfortable for a while. Most people find it helpful to share how they are feeling with someone who listens and tries to understand.

You might want to write down when you have felt like this.



Is there anything you can think of that may help you manage those feelings?

Here are some things others have used:

- Physical activity or exercise
- Mindfulness/relaxation
- Call a friend
- Focus on your abilities, not your disabilities
- Talk to someone
- Get out of the house – socialise
- Voluntary work
- Give yourself a treat
- Being thankful

Some people find sharing how they feel with someone else is really helpful, although it may not always be possible, and other people find it hard to open up about how they feel in front of someone else. Many people have found it helpful to write down their thoughts and feelings about living with a health condition; it may be that you would find this helpful too.

Recognising and managing unhelpful emotions can help us to become more effective self-managers.