

Emotional resilience



Working together for better patient information

Long-term conditions like chronic kidney disease (CKD) can affect different areas of your life as well as your health. Emotional resilience is about coping with your problems and finding a way to continue to live well, even when under considerable stress.

This leaflet offers an introduction to emotional resilience and how it can help you to cope with the stresses you may experience in your life.





How can emotional resilience help me?

Being resilient will not stop you from feeling stressed or experiencing difficult emotions. However, it can help you to cope with difficult experiences without letting them become overwhelming.

How can I become more emotionally resilient?

Think about who and what matters most to you.

Start by asking yourself:

- Who are the most important people in my life?
- What sort of parent, friend, partner or colleague do I want to be?
- What are my most important values?

For example, you might realise that being kind, creative, loving and active are really important to you. These values then act like a beacon to help you make choices about where you invest your time and energy.

When you are diagnosed with a long-term condition like CKD, you may temporarily lose your sense of purpose and direction. Thinking about what is important to you can help you to get back on track and feel more in control, and less overwhelmed, by the changes that are taking place in your life.

Accept your situation

It is important to focus your energy on the things that you can change and try to be more accepting of those you can't. You can't change your history or certain aspects of your health, such as having CKD. However, you can change how you respond to these things.

Make room for feelings

Living with CKD can cause negative feelings such as anxiety, sadness and frustration. When difficult feelings like these occur, people are really good at trying to avoid them. For example, you might skip a hospital appointment if it's making you anxious.

This may make you feel better in the short term, but can have a long-term impact when you start to worry about things again, or feel guilty about wasting an appointment slot.

Rather than avoiding these negative feelings, it can help to try and accept them. Take time to consider your feelings and what they may be telling you about what really matters – your values.

Breathing exercise

To help you make room for your feelings, try this short breathing exercise. Think about how the different parts of your body feel as you breathe in and out. Try to slowly start to let go of any resistance or tension in your body, for example around your forehead, jaw, shoulders, hands and chest area.





Deal with unhelpful thoughts

Our minds bombard us with thoughts all day long, and sometimes through the night too. This can be exhausting, leaving you feeling disconnected and distracted. It can be hard to 'switch off' or control your thoughts, especially if you are worried or stressed.

Instead of trying to block negative thoughts, try acknowledging them and then moving on to think about something else. Just because you have a thought, it doesn't mean that it's true, that you will always think that way, or that you have to act on it.

If you find yourself having negative thoughts over a long period of time or have any thoughts about hurting yourself, it is important to seek help from a professional such as your GP or kidney team. Some kidney units have psychologists you can talk to.

Kidney Care UK also offer a free counselling service for kidney patients and their families. For more information go to www.kidneycareuk.org/counselling or you can contact us at info@kidneycareuk.org or call us on **01420 541 424.**

Other sources of help can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can help you to change the way you relate to your thoughts, which can have a big impact on your wellbeing. Start by simply taking a few minutes to explore the world through your five senses.

- What can you see, hear, smell, taste and touch at this very moment?
- How does that make you feel?

You have just created a moment of stillness. The thoughts are still there, but you have broadened your field of awareness to include other aspects of your experience.

Weaving these little 'pauses' into your day can help you to connect more with the present moment. Each time you do this, you are stepping out of your thinking mind and can move on with your day with a greater sense of awareness of what you're doing.

For more information, see our leaflet on **Mindfulness**.





Summary

Emotional resilience is about being open to your experiences (even the painful ones), living in the present, and acting on the values that matter most to you. Making an ongoing commitment to practise these things builds resilience and can help you to manage life with a long-term health condition.

It is important that you talk to your GP or kidney team if you are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed.




Where can I find more information?

- Kidney Care UK: Living with kidney disease:
www.kidneycareuk.org/about-kidney-health/living-kidney-disease
- NHS: Mindfulness:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness
- MIND: www.mind.org.uk
- Samaritans: www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan



Contact us



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