

Getting Help with Stress and Emotional Difficulty

The stress of prolonged illness and hospitalization affects both your physical and emotional health. The way you cope with stress plays an important role in your overall recovery. If you are not coping well, your stress will continue at its current level or increase. High levels of stress cause the release of chemicals in the body that influence your heart and immune system and can complicate healing if they occur over a long period of time. For example:

- Stress raises blood pressure and levels of blood fat and cholesterol, all of which are risk factors for heart disease and stroke.
- Stress raises blood sugar levels which slow down healing, especially in diabetics.
- Stress causes an increase in negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or anger. Such negative emotions further challenge our coping, interfere with our participation in therapies, and worsen our physical stress reactions.
- Stress interferes with sleep which is needed for healing and recuperation.

To get help with stress, emotions and coping, let your nurse or doctor know how you are feeling emotionally as well as physically. Whatever your concern, we are committed to helping you get the assistance you need for your recovery.

How Can I Tell if I Need Help?

Many people need help coping with prolonged illness and hospitalization, while others manage on their own. Other times, stress gets the best of us and we may need help. Here are some signs that you may need help learning how to better cope with stress:

- Anxiety or sadness that interferes with your ability to participate in therapies.
- Persistent or frequent feelings of sadness, depression or hopelessness.
- Loss of interest or motivation in usual activities, even if not depressed.
- Persistent loss of appetite or sleep problems.
- Anger that interferes with your relationships with family and staff.
- Any strong emotion that causes you significant emotional or physical distress.
- Frequent or intense desire to give up, including wishing to die or thoughts of suicide—even if you would not carry them out.

What Will People Think if I Ask for Help?

Some people are concerned about what other people may think if they seek help for coping with emotions and stress. At Drake Center, we find that getting help with coping is a normal part of your care and rehabilitation—no different than seeing your doctor or therapist. Know that the mind and body are not separate. What affects the mind affects the body. Both need treatment for a good recovery.

Resources at the Drake Center

The Drake Center has a variety of health care professionals that can help you with stress, emotional distress and coping. Some of your Drake team members help with practical matters that may cause you concern. Others help with the emotional distress caused a prolonged hospitalization. Team members who can help with practical concerns include:

- **Case Manager** – Coordinating your care with your insurance company will hopefully take away some of your financial worries.
- **Social Worker** – Helping coordinate any services you may need after discharge and seeing that your transition from Drake goes smoothly will help take away stress.
- **Therapy Team** – Preparing you and your family to handle situations you may face when you leave Drake will hopefully give you confidence in your ability to cope.

Other Drake team members who can help you with the emotional aspects of your recovery include:

- **Psychologist** – At the request of your Drake doctor, a medical psychologist or neuropsychologist can work with you to:
 - Reduce stress
 - Adjust to disability or limitations
 - Cope with and reduce frustration, anxiety, depression, and anger
 - Evaluate and address any changes to memory or problem-solving ability.
- **Psychiatrist** – At the request of your Drake doctor, a psychiatrist can evaluate and treat prolonged anxiety and depression by prescribing medications. They can also evaluate and treat more serious psychiatric conditions when needed.
- **Chaplain** – At your request, our hospital chaplain can provide spiritual support and help address spiritual concerns, regardless of your religion or denomination. The chaplain can also arrange visits by clergy of your faith.

Who Do I Tell That I Need Assistance with Coping?

You can get help with stress and emotions by telling any member of your health care team, and especially your Drake Center physician about how you are feeling emotionally as well as physically. Whatever your concern, the Drake Center staff is committed to providing you with the assistance that you need to successfully complete your recovery.