

Emotions

- **Emotions can help us adapt to changes**
- **It is important not to push down emotions**
- **There is help available for dealing with difficult emotions, anxiety and depression**

The Late Effects of Polio can change the way the body looks and functions. This can affect the way you think and feel. Weakness and fatigue may affect the independence you worked so hard to achieve, causing feelings of grief and loss. The Late Effects of Polio may also bring up painful childhood memories.

When we experience loss, some sadness is usual and helps us move through changes. However, sometimes the way we manage emotions can leave us feeling stuck. We may not talk to the people around us, because we fear they won't understand, or don't want to burden them. We may want to just "get on with it". Avoiding emotions often leads to [depression](#) and [anxiety](#) and can make it harder to adapt.

What you need to know:

- Anger, frustration, loss and grief are common feelings with declining health or physical function
- When you push away feelings of sadness and pain, it becomes harder to feel joy and adapt to change
- Working hard to meet goals and overcome difficulties are characteristics of the "polio tradition" and may make it harder to get help
- While anxiety and depression are common in people with physical disability, there are approaches/treatments that can help
- Individuals who experience depression may have more severe physical deterioration/lower levels of coping; this impacts [quality of life](#)

Coping with change

People who are coping well with change focus on what they *can* do, instead of what they can't. They play an active role in their lives. They participate in things they see as worthwhile and meaningful. They may have problems, but they are not overwhelmed by them.

Some helpful tips:

- Recognise that emotions help us deal with problems
- Don't push down emotional responses to your disability; let them out e.g. crying or yawning
- Appreciate your accomplishments – don't judge yourselves for not meeting some "normal" standard as well as you used to
- Stay connected to friends and/or family
- Participate in valued activities and enjoy doing so
- Make changes in your physical and social environments, such as removing barriers in your home and making new friends
- Expand your available personal and external resources
- Be open with family and friends, and inform them of the type of support you need and prefer
- Sometimes seeking help from professionals can help you get back to a high quality life more easily

What is Depression?

Clinical depression is a condition that significantly affects the way one feels, causing a persistent lowering of mood. Depression is often accompanied by a range of other physical and psychological symptoms that can interfere with daily function.

Symptoms may include: persistently feeling extremely sad or tearful; disturbances to normal sleep patterns; loss of interest and motivation; feeling worthless or guilty; loss of pleasure in activities that are normally enjoyable; anxiety; changes in appetite or weight; loss of sexual interest; physical aches and pains; and impaired thinking or concentration.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction when we are confronted with danger, threat or fear. It is often referred to as the “fight or flight” response, and normally reduces when the threat has passed. However, for many people, everyday situations can be seen as threatening, and lead people to experience anxiety repeatedly throughout their day. Over time, constant anxious feelings can lead to the development of an anxiety disorder, panic attacks, or phobias.

Symptoms can include: persistent, excessive or unrealistic worries; compulsions and obsessions which you feel you can't control; intense excessive worry about social situations; panic attacks; or an intense, irrational fear of everyday objects and situations.

Other symptoms of anxiety disorders may include a pounding heart, difficulty breathing, upset stomach, muscle tension, sweating or choking, or feeling faint or shaky.



Treatment

Getting treatment is particularly valuable for someone who has a chronic physical condition. Treatment for depression, for example, can also improve an underlying chronic health condition.

More Information

- To access treatment, see your general practitioner for a **Mental Health Care Plan** and referral to a **psychologist or other mental health professional**
- Look for a support network
- If you need urgent mental health assistance, contact **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**

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