

Seven Steps to Supporting Heart Patients' Emotional Adjustment

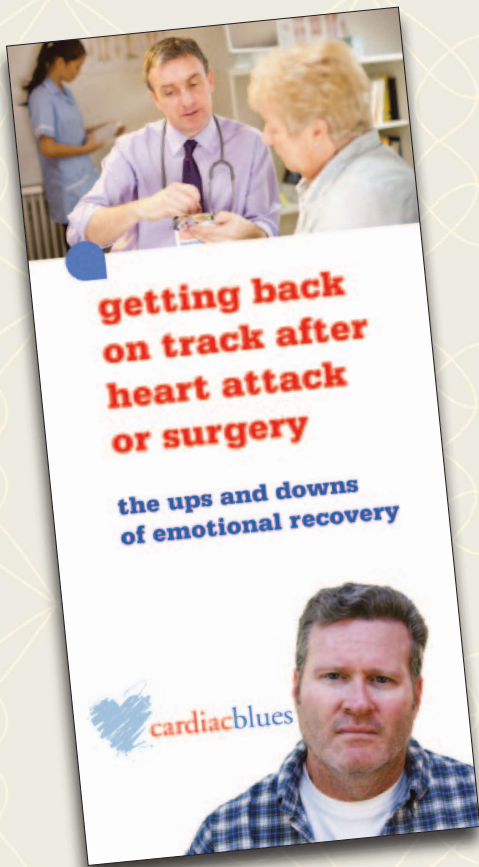


Step 1	O	<p>Outline likely emotional responses and accompanying symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that a heart event is an emotional experience not just a physical one • Outline the range of possible emotions such as sadness, anger, worry etc • Outline the accompanying symptoms such as tearfulness, withdrawal etc
Step 2	N	<p>Normalise these emotions and symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that almost all patients go on an emotional roller coaster • Explain that it is normal to feel these emotions and symptoms
Step 3	T	<p>Talk to the patient about their emotions and symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the patient about their emotional reaction to the heart event • Acknowledge what the patient is going through
Step 4	R	<p>Reassure that these emotions and symptoms are likely to resolve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform patient that early distress usually resolves in the first few months • Tell patients that this is true for four out of five patients
Step 5	A	<p>Alert patients to potential risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that one in five patients develop depression after a heart event • Help patients to identify whether they are at risk of depression
Step 6	C	<p>Check that patient has strategies for dealing with emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with the patient how they are managing their emotional wellbeing • Encourage physical activity and attendance at cardiac rehabilitation
Step 7	K	<p>Know your referral options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients with depression may require additional support • Encourage the patient to talk to their doctor • Inform patients of services and supports in the local community



cardiacblues

'A heart event is an emotional experience, not just a physical one.'



This evidence-based ONTRACK tool has been developed for health professionals to use with people who have had a heart attack or heart surgery. Psychological recovery is best achieved when patients' emotional responses to a heart event are acknowledged and normalised, and when patients are supported with appropriate coping strategies and referral when required.

Patients can be given the cardiac blues brochure 'getting back on track after a heart event or surgery' to further support their emotional recovery.

To find out more about the cardiac blues, to access the cardiac blues resources or to make a referral to the Cardiac Counselling Clinic visit www.australianhearthealth.org.au



Australian Centre for
Heart Health