

Seven Steps to Supporting Heart Patients' Emotional Adjustment



Step 1	O	Outline likely emotional responses and accompanying symptoms
		<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	Normalise these emotions and symptoms
		<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	Talk to the patient about their emotions and symptoms
		<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	Reassure that these emotions and symptoms are likely to resolve
		<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	Alert patients to potential risks
		<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	Check that patient has strategies for dealing with emotions
		<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	Know your referral options
		<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