

# Psychology following your Amputation

## Emotional support following an amputation

We recognise that having an amputation can bring up a range of different emotions, which can feel scary or overwhelming for you and your family or carers. These feelings can affect you immediately or many months or years after your amputation.

Although many people cope well and find a way to move forwards with their lives, others can find this extremely difficult and may need extra support.

## How do I know if I need extra support?

As part of your treatment with the prosthetic rehabilitation team, you will be asked to complete two questionnaires before every review meeting. One of these is called the 'PHQ-9' and measures low mood and the other is called the 'GAD-7' and is a measure of anxiety.

You will also meet the team psychologist during your review meetings with the team. They will ask you about your mood and how you and your family/carers are coping following the amputation.

The scores on the questionnaires and the discussion with the team will help you to recognise if you may benefit from some extra emotional support.

**Self-soothe** – Engage in an activity that you associate with pleasant, calm feelings. It can help to think about trying to use one of your 5 senses, for example:

**Smell** – spray or dab your favourite scent onto your pillow or into hot water and inhale.

**Sound** – listen to music or a relaxation CD.

**Sight** – Look at a picture of your favourite place or focus on a calming image.

**Touch** – hold or wear a comforting blanket or item of clothing.

**Taste** – take the time to savour your favourite food or drink or try something new.

**Mindfulness** Our modern lifestyle is often focused on being “busy, busy, busy” and we can often find ourselves dwelling over things that have happened in the past or worrying about things that might happen in the future. Mindfulness is a way of focussing on the here and now.

Several audio exercises are available to freely access via the Trust website. Either type 'PPSS service Cumbria mindfulness' into your internet search engine, or follow this link:

<https://www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/specialist-services/persistent-physical-symptoms-service/mindfulness-exercises>

One example is a mindful breathing exercise:

Sit in a chair and find a comfortable posture. Close your eyes. Allow your body to be held, supported by the chair. Notice the way the chair feels against your body. Become aware of your breath, tune into the sensations of breathing, wherever you feel them. You do not need to change the way you are breathing, just pay close attention.

Sometimes you will find that your mind wanders – and that's not a problem – it's what the mind does. Whenever you notice your mind wandering, notice this, and then gently return your attention to the breath.

### **What support can I get?**

If you feel that you are struggling to cope emotionally and would like some psychological support, the following resources are available:

**GP** – It can help to discuss your mood with your GP, who may prescribe medication to help you to manage difficult emotions and who may also refer you for psychological therapy.

**First Step** – This is a county-wide service offering talking therapy for individuals aged 18 and over who are experiencing depressed mood and/or anxiety. You can self-refer or ask your GP to make a referral on your behalf. Their contact details are: **0300 123 9122** or <https://www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health/our-mental-health-services/first-step>

**Team psychologist** – There is a part-time psychologist within the disablement services team, who you will meet as part of your review appointments with the prosthetic team at Cumberland Infirmary. You can request an appointment with the team psychologist by contacting the team administrator on: **01228 616868** or via one of the other team members.

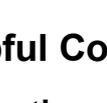
### **What does psychological therapy involve?**

You will be invited for an assessment appointment, during which the psychologist will ask you about your mood, significant life experiences, coping strategies and support.

You will then decide together whether further psychological therapy may be helpful. This can either be individual therapy (just you and the psychologist) or group therapy.

Psychologists use a range of different therapy models; however the most commonly used is cognitive behavioural therapy, or 'CBT.' This approach helps you to consider the relationship between your thoughts; feelings; physical symptoms; and behaviour, and to learn different coping strategies to enable you to move forwards with your life.

## Common emotions

	THOUGHTS	PHYSICAL REACTION	BEHAVIOUR
<b>Anxiety</b> 	'I can't cope' 'I'm in danger' 'I need to keep myself safe'	Increased heart rate Shallow breathing Sweaty, tense Difficulty concentrating Difficulty sleeping	'Fight or Flight' Avoid places/activities Run away Do things that make me feel safe
<b>Depression</b> 	'What's the point?' 'I'm a burden' 'I'll never be able to live the life I want to'	Loss of interest Appetite and sleep changes Difficulty concentrating and remembering	Stop doing things I used to enjoy Hide away – sleep more Cry
<b>Anger</b> 	'It's not fair' 'Why me?' 'It's all their fault'	Tense Energised Irritable, confrontational Difficulty concentrating	Argue, confront Shout, slam Sulk, snap at others Put others down or question others
<b>Grief</b> 	'Things will never be the same again' 'I can't carry on'	Loss of interest Appetite and sleep changes Difficulty concentrating and remembering	Avoid reminders or spend all my time going over and over the loss in my head Cry

## Helpful Coping Strategies

**Distraction** – Take your mind off negative or upsetting thoughts or images by engaging in an activity that requires some concentration, for example:

**Alphabet Game** – choose a topic of interest e.g. 'animals.' Now work through the alphabet from A to Z and try to think of as many things (e.g. animal names) related to that topic as you can, for each letter. If you are unable to think of anything for some letters, just move on.

**Counting** – Choose a high number e.g. 1,000 and count backwards in 2s, 3s or 5s.

**Music** - Put some music on and try to really focus on one aspect of the music e.g. words, tune, one of the instruments.

**Puzzles/crosswords** – **Concentrate** on a puzzle, word search, crossword or Sudoku etc.

**Colouring** – Concentrate on colouring in - There are now a range of 'adult colouring books' available.

If you have any questions please contact us at;

**Disablement Services Centre, Rehabilitation Department  
Lower Ground Floor, Cumberland Infirmary  
Carlisle, CA2 7HY  
Tel: 01228 616868      Mon – Friday: 08:30 – 16:30**

## **Transport**

**Transport is available, if you meet the eligibility criteria Otherwise you will need to make your own way to the DSC. Please phone 0800 032 3240 to book your own transport**

## **Confidentiality**

**‘The Trust’s vision is to keep your information safe in our hands.’**

We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the [Subject Access Coordinators](mailto:Subject Access Coordinators)  
[SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk) or [SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:SACWCH@ncuh.nhs.uk)

## **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the PALS team (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 01228 814008 between 10.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday or email [PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk](mailto:PALSCIC@ncuh.nhs.uk).

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio the PALS team will be able to assist you (contact details above)

ID: AMP020

Version: 1

Issue date: July 2019

Review date: July 2021