

Krames

Nurturing Your Mental Health

After a Difficult Diagnosis



Nurturing your mental health after a difficult diagnosis

Being diagnosed with a physical illness or disease can leave you feeling many different emotions. Maybe you are angry, confused, overwhelmed, sad, or stressed. You may even feel relieved that you now know the problem. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Your response is as unique as you are.

As you learn more about your condition, you may need some time to adjust. That's OK. Be patient and kind to yourself. Use the information and strategies in this booklet to help you nurture your mental health while you take care of your body.



Your body, your mind: A powerful connection

How you feel mentally can have a direct effect on your physical health. That's why taking care of both is important to your overall well-being. In fact, strong emotions, like feeling angry, anxious, or stressed, can manifest as physical symptoms. They can trigger:

- Headaches
- Body aches
- Fatigue
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Upset stomach
- Heart palpitations
- Problems falling or staying asleep (insomnia)
- Loss of appetite

However, mental well-being can bolster your immune system, too. You may be less likely to get colds, the flu, and other illnesses. Healthy emotions can also motivate you to do things that can help you feel better, like being more physically active or socializing with family and friends.

Managing anxiety

If you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, mindfulness may help. This practice focuses on being present in the moment, instead of replaying events from the past or worrying about the future. Mindfulness helps you embrace your thoughts and emotions without judgement.

One mindfulness technique is RAIN. Use RAIN to help calm your mind and body.

- **Recognize.** When you are having uneasy thoughts or feelings, stop and recognize them. Give them a label, such as anxiety or grief. This simple act can help you disengage from them.

- **Allow.** Let your thoughts and feelings exist without judgement. Try not to see them as good or bad. Having emotions is part of being human. They don't define you.
- **Investigate.** Consider how your thoughts are making you feel. Do you have tightness in your chest? Or tense muscles? Ask yourself what triggered your reaction.
- **Nurture.** Respond with self-compassion. Tell yourself it's OK to think or feel this way. Offer yourself a gesture of comfort, such as placing your hand on your heart or giving yourself a hug.

3