

SADNESS OR DEPRESSION?

Sadness is a normal human response to hard situations in life. So, it's perfectly normal that a person waiting for transplant might feel sad a time or two during the wait. But how would someone know if they might be more than "just sad?" **How would someone know if they are depressed?**

- Sadness comes and goes. **Depression tends to hang around longer and be hard to shake off.**
- Sadness doesn't impact how you function. **Depression makes it harder to engage in life.** Being around people, getting work or other necessary things done, or enjoying life is much harder.
- Sadness doesn't affect other areas of your health. **Depression can change how you sleep and eat, your energy level, or your ability to focus.**

If you are wondering if you might be depressed, **talk to your Primary Care Provider or Transplant Coordinator.** They can help guide to you the right people to talk with to see if you are more than "just sad." If you are ever in crisis, you can reach out for help 24/7 by:

- Calling the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 (Press 1 at the prompt).
- Texting HOME to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line.
- Connecting to someone on the Lifeline Chat at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>.

If you are the loved one of a Veteran and want to support them in seeking help, you can visit <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/parents-family.asp>.



AM I TOO WORRIED?

Remember what you felt like before a big game, major test, or other important event? You were probably a little “keyed up” and thought a lot about this big thing coming up. That is normal. That little bit of anxiety and those thoughts likely helped you to get ready. They motivated you to practice, study, or plan. **Your body and mind are designed to prepare you for stressful situations.** And transplant is a potentially stressful situation. So, naturally, you’re likely thinking more and more about your health and transplant these days. **But how do you know if you’re thinking too much or are too worried?**

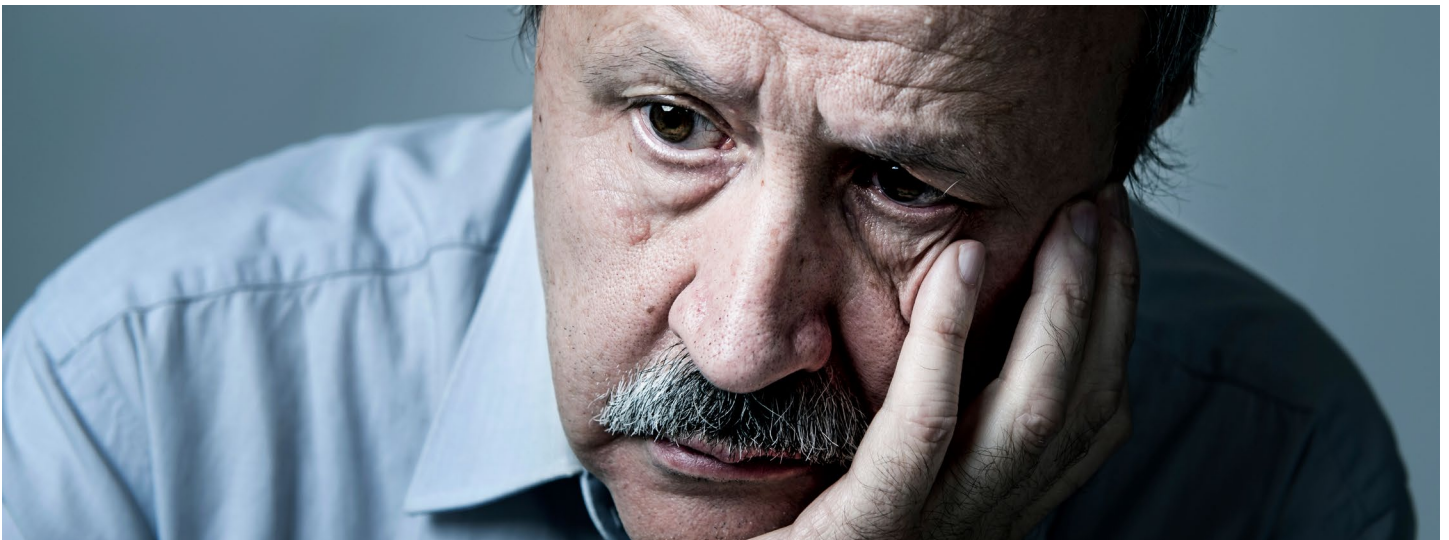
If your worry...

- **Keeps you up** at night.
- Makes you **feel tired all the time.**
- Makes it **hard to get other things done.**
- Makes your **body feel tense** all the time.
- **Keeps you from doing something that you know is important** (or causes you to avoid things).
- **Is hard for you to control.**

You should consider talking with someone about your level of worry. You can ask your **Primary Care Provider or Transplant Coordinator** to help guide you to the right people with whom to talk. If you are ever in crisis, you can reach out for help 24/7 by:

- Calling the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 (Press 1 at the prompt).
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MY QUIT-FOR-LIFE PLAN

Congratulations on quitting smoking! Your choice to stop smoking is a great health investment. By quitting, you are increasing blood flow and circulation, which are very important to help you stay healthy and heal after the transplant. Now, how do you stay away from tobacco for life? **Let's set you up for continued success by setting a Quit-for-Life plan.**

Let's start by identifying "triggers," the situations or feelings that make it more likely for you to smoke:

These were the situations in which I used to smoke (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling down or stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> While working on a project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling angry or frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> To keep myself from overeating / gaining weight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling bored or restless | <input type="checkbox"/> After waking up or right before bed at night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Around other people who smoke | <input type="checkbox"/> Something else (<i>write it here</i>): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With meals/coffee | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With alcohol or drugs | |

Now **let's discover ways to address those triggers.**

If feelings/emotions (frustration, stress, sadness, etc.) are your trigger:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Talk to someone about how you're feeling | • Do something new or challenging to avoid boredom. |
| • Do something that you enjoy to take the stress off. | • Do a deep breathing exercise for relaxation. |
| • Take a walk or engage in some other physical activity. | • If it's important to you, say a prayer or meditate. |

MY QUIT-FOR-LIFE PLAN

If other people are your trigger:

- Avoid activities that involve smoking.
- Find non-smoking people with whom to hang out.
- Ask friends/family to not smoke around you or give you cigarettes, even if you ask.

If doing some other activity (eating, working on a project, waking up) is your trigger:

- Find some other behavior to replace smoking during that activity. Some examples are: using music to help you focus while working on projects or healthy snacking on work breaks. Do what works for you!

If another substance (alcohol or drugs) is your trigger:

- Consider not using that other substance as well, which is a good idea for your health.

Your reasons to stop smoking are also bigger than transplant. Think about the more personal reasons you have outside of transplant for quitting, like being here for your family or saving money. Reflect on those deeper reasons to give you a motivation boost when the going gets tough.

If you need more help in quitting, you can text the word “VET” to 47848, visit www.smokefree.gov, or call 1-855-QUIT-VET. You can also ask your Primary Care Provider for a smoking cessation counseling referral. There also may be drop-in groups for you to attend at your VA, so you don’t need a referral. Ask around to staff at your VA about all your options. Here’s to quitting for life!

MOVING FORWARD IN RECOVERY

Congratulations in establishing your sobriety! Your choice to stop drinking or using drugs is a great health and life investment. We want to make sure you continue to move forward in your recovery by giving you a quick tool to prevent relapse. Relapse is when someone returns to drug or alcohol use. Relapses don't occur all of a sudden. There are often triggers that lead to relapse. Being aware of them can help you avoid them. **Let's set you up for continued success by setting your relapse prevention plan.** Some of this may be familiar if you participated in substance treatment already. But, it's a good idea to have this plan handy.

Let's start by identifying "triggers," the situations or feelings that make it more likely for you to use alcohol or drugs:

These were the situations in which I used to drink/use drugs (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling down or stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> feeling bad about myself or guilty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling angry or frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> around other people who use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling bored or restless | <input type="checkbox"/> with other substances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> something else (<i>write it here</i>): | |

Now **let's discover ways to address those triggers.** It's important to have a go-to plan to prevent a relapse.

If feelings/emotions (frustration, stress, feeling bad about yourself, boredom, etc.) are your trigger:

- Talk to someone about how you're feeling.
- Do something that you enjoy to take the stress off.
- Take a walk / engage in a physical activity.
- Do something new or challenging to avoid boredom.
- Do a deep breathing exercise for relaxation.
- If it's important to you, say a prayer or meditate.
- Keep a healthy routine or structured schedule to avoid boredom (examples of activities to put in your schedule include work, school, or volunteering; having self-care routine is also important).

MOVING FORWARD IN RECOVERY

If other people are your trigger:

- Avoid social activities that involve drinking/drugs.
- Find people who don't use with whom to hang out.
- Attend an AA/12-Step or SMART Recovery meeting in your community, or call your Sponsor if you have one.
- See if a group hosts sober social events in your area.
- Ask friends/family to not drink or use drugs around you or give you any, even if you ask.

If another substance (alcohol or drugs) is your trigger:

- Consider not using that other substance as well, which is a good idea for your health.

Your reasons to stop drinking or drugs are also bigger than transplant. Think about the more personal reasons you have for sobriety outside of transplant, like being here for your family or saving money. Reflect on those deeper reasons to give you a motivation boost when the going gets tough.

If you need more support, you can ask your Primary Care Provider or your Transplant Coordinator for a referral to substance use programs at your VA. Your PACT Social Worker may know of AA/NA or SMART Recovery meetings in your local community. You can also download the VetChange app for help with drinking. If you are ever in crisis, you can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988 for help.

TIPS FOR MANAGING MEMORY

Cognitive skills like planning, focus, and memory can be affected by organ failure. Here are some ways to manage your health if you experience these problems:

- **Use a pillbox organizer for your medications.** This way, it's easier to double-check whether you took your meds on the right days and at the right time. It's also easier for your support person to double-check.
- **Set reminders on your phone for appointments and medications.** While you may receive reminder calls for your appointments, it's helpful to have more than one reminder system.
- **Carry a small notepad to write down important information.** This can come in handy when providers call about medication or other changes you need to make right away.
- **Have a “spot” in your home where you always place important medical information.** You probably have a spot like this for your keys, phone, or wallet. Do the same for important medical information, like your transplant folder or meds list.

Your Transplant Team may regularly screen your cognition as a standard part of care.

But, if you or your support person are concerned about cognition being worse than expected, talk to your Primary Care Provider.

