

Psychological Reactions to Heart Disease

The Patient and Their Family



Lifespan Cardiovascular Institute

Rhode Island Hospital • The Miriam Hospital
Newport Hospital

Delivering health with care.®

Center for Cardiac Fitness

Cardiac Rehab Program

The Miriam Hospital

Areas Impacted

➤ Affect

- Emotional reactions

➤ Role changes

- Behavioral reactions

➤ Goals

- Commitment shifts

➤ Expectations

- Partner intimacy

Ingredients for Success

- Acceptance
- Flexibility
- Patience



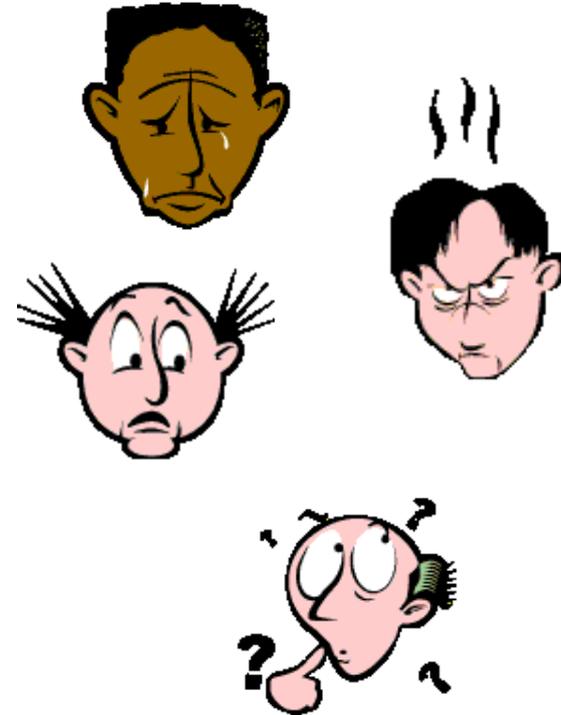
Emotions

➤ Anger

➤ Anxiety

➤ Fear

➤ Depression



Managing Emotions

- Normalize
- Gather the facts
- Acceptance of current health
- Productive expression of emotion
- Seek help

Impact of Heart Disease on Others

- Heart disease impacts more than just the patient
- Individuals want to support each other
- What may be supportive to one is not to another
- Effective communication can help meet each other's needs and be supportive

Changing Roles

- Home
- Work
- Relationships



Coping With Changes

- Flexibility
- Focus on what you can do
- Pace yourself
- Communication

Expectations

- REALISTIC
 - Of self
 - Of others
 - Patience!

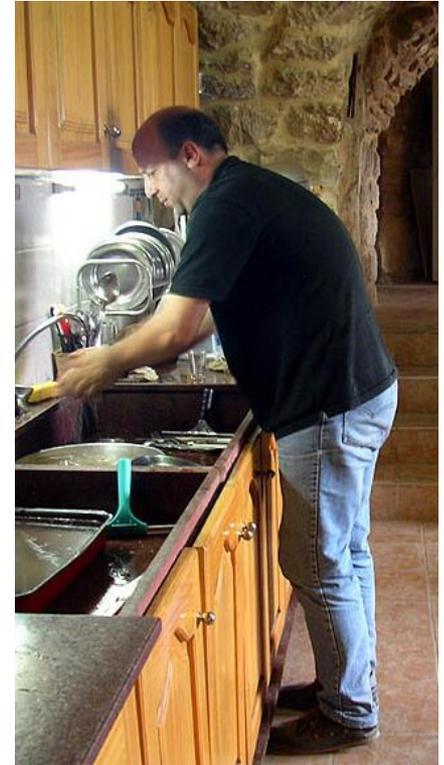
Behavioral Strategies

- Taking a break
 - Pleasurable distraction
- Being informed
 - Seeking as much info as possible
- Talking it out
 - With outside support
- Planning
 - For any and all “what-ifs”



Role of Family and Commitment Changes

- Taking on more household responsibilities
- Change in work effort/commitments
- Attending to healthcare needs
 - Appointments
 - Treatment regimens
- Need to have more time “available”



Needing Support

- Caregiver distress > patient distress
- Information on caring and managing CVD
- Isolation
 - Caregiving duties
 - Perceived need or fear of being away
- Reduced hobbies or activities
- Don't want to ask for help



Ways to Help Family Members

- Make them partners in your health care
- Learn warning signs of cardiac events
- Take a CPR course
- Promote new health habits (e.g., quitting smoking, exercise)



Ways to Help Family Members

- Open discussions
- Acknowledgement
- Expand support network (e.g., support groups)
- Encourage self-care
- Seek out professional help



Types of Communication

- **Passive**: withholding your opinions, feelings, and wants.
 - This style can make you feel as though you have no control over a situation.
- **Aggressive**: honestly stating your opinions, feelings, and wants, but at the expense of others.
 - This style offends others, and their negative reaction to you can lead to stress.
- **Assertive**: stating your opinions, feelings, and wants openly, but in a respectful, considerate, tactful way.
 - This style may help reduce stress in specific situations

Communicate Effectively

- “I” Messages have a different impact on the listener
- Less defensiveness by listener
- Communicates your feelings and needs without placing blame on others
- Facilitates problem solving



Enhanced Relationship

- Increased closeness
- Increased solidarity
 - Both engaged in lifestyle changes
- Appreciation for each other
- Appreciation for life

