

COPING WITH Congestive Heart Failure

There is a high prevalence of congestive heart failure within the South East Indian population, which has many contributing factors, such as biology, food/ alcohol intake, and exercise (Nag & Ghosh, 2013). Given genetic factors cannot be changed, it becomes important to know that many times mental health factors can be altered to change one's health. This can help to change an individual's attitude for the better, ultimately contributing to a better physical health (Mills, 2015).

Mental health and biological factors are more related than people may perceive. Lack of attention to one's mental health can impact physical health, contributing to worsening (health) conditions (Nag & Ghosh, 2013). Once a person has been diagnosed with a physical illness, concerns around depression and anxiety tend to increase. This can often be overlooked due to a large focus solely on physical symptoms (Nag & Ghosh, 2013).

Learning to take control of one's life, after a life-changing diagnosis has been made can be stressful. Managing all of these changes can cause an increase in anxiety, putting a strain on one's mental well-being. Using a treatment plan which can be implemented by a team of health professionals (including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, kinesiologists, and mental health therapists) can help with this change. Learning to manage one's own life can be both empowering and can help to build the confidence required to make positive changes in your life.

Learning new coping strategies can be very useful in helping to ease one's stress. Examples of these can include spending time with family or friends, games nights, or going to the movies with others, as a way to enjoy your time. Another proven technique is called a gratitude journal, where thankfulness and reflections are practiced (Mills, 2015). Positive reflection for things we are thankful for can help decrease depressive and anxious symptoms one may be experiencing (Mills, 2015).

Mindfulness is another excellent way to help ease stressors. This coping strategy can be practised at anytime, and at your own pace! Here is an example of how to use one type of Mindfulness:

♥ Take a moment to sit outside and observe something in nature, this can be a tree or a flower, or the clouds in the sky.

♥ Breathe in and out, and take some time to focus on this object (take about 5-7 breaths to focus). Look at the details of this object. Examine the colors, the textures, and the placement of this object.

♥ Spend a few moments breathing in and out, and really focussing on the beauty of this object. Allow yourself to concentrate on this object, and glorify the object as if you are watching it for the first time.

♥ Enjoy the few moments of breathing and try to continue concentrating to help calm the stressors you may be facing. With each breath in, take in the beauty of the object, and with each breath out, try and let go of any negative thinking you may have.

♥ Take a few breaths in and out, and continue to do this at your own pace for a few moments.

♥ Repeat as needed (a few times a day)

Mindfulness and using a gratitude journal are a few of the many tools which can be used to help with relaxation. The team of Mental Health Therapists at Mosaic Primary Care Network can help individuals to find strategies that work for their needs during short-term counselling (up to six sessions). Please contact your Doctor for a referral to speak with one of our many compassionate Mental Health Therapists, many of whom speak Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu.

