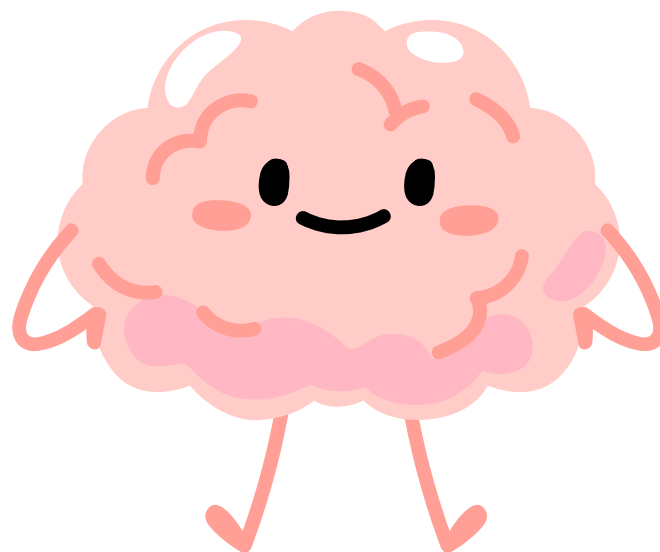


# A Guide to Post-Spinal Cord Injury Coping and Adjustment

Adjusting to life post-spinal cord injury (SCI) is a transformative journey that involves physical and emotional adjustments.

This guide aims to provide you with insights into post-SCI coping and adjustment, along with strategies for support and self-care.



## Common Experiences after Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

### Grief and Loss

After SCI, it is natural to grieve over the life you had before. This may involve mourning the loss of mobility and function or the way things used to be.



### Adjustment Difficulties

Adapting to a new way of life can be challenging. This may include changes in daily routines, living arrangements, and relationships.



### Body Image and Self-Esteem

After SCI, it is common to experience shifts in how you perceive your body. You might have mixed and unpleasant emotions about the changes and it is important to acknowledge them.



## Common Mental Health Challenges

Apart from the common experiences that one may undergo after a spinal cord injury, some individuals may also struggle with mental health challenges. These may include:

<b>Depression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or loss of interest in activities.</li><li>• Changes in appetite, sleep disturbances, and low energy levels.</li></ul>
<b>Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excessive worry, restlessness, and irritability.</li><li>• Physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, and sweating.</li></ul>
<b>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flashbacks, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts related to the SCI/surgery/incident that led to the SCI.</li><li>• Avoidance of reminders and heightened arousal (e.g., jumpiness).</li></ul>

Be aware of changes in your emotions and behaviour. Look out for persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, mood swings, or changes in sleep and appetite. If you notice any significant changes in your mental health, do not hesitate to reach out to your healthcare team. Early intervention can make a significant difference.

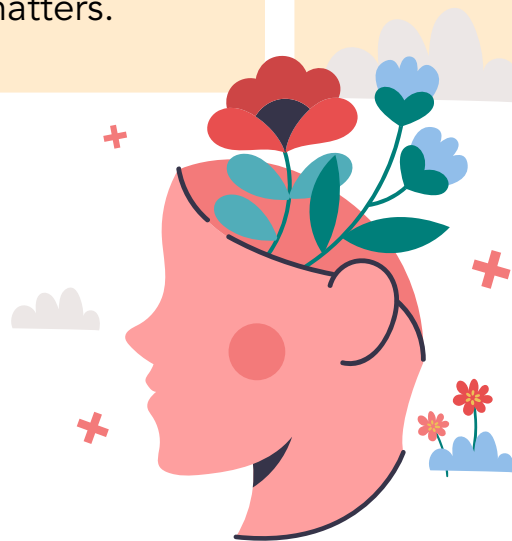
While it is natural to focus on the challenges and emotions that come with post-spinal cord injury rehabilitation, many patients also acknowledge the potential for positive change and new way of living. This might show up in the following ways:

### **New Perspectives**

The experience of overcoming significant challenges can lead to a shift in perspective. You may find a greater appreciation for life, a change in priorities, and a deeper understanding of what truly matters.

### **Greater Appreciation for Life**

Overcoming significant challenges can lead to increased awareness and gratitude for the simple joys in life.



### **Improved Relationships**

Going through a significant life event often leads to deeper connections with loved ones. It can foster a greater sense of empathy, compassion, and understanding.

### **Spiritual Growth**

For some, it prompts a deeper exploration of spiritual questions or questions about life. It can lead to a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper connection to one's spiritual beliefs.

## Available Support for Post-SCI Mental Health Challenges

There are different forms of support to aid in your recovery from the mental health challenges:

### Professional Help from Mental Health Professionals

Psychological service is accessible upon team doctor's assessment and referral. Psychological support aims to equip you with tools for managing emotional challenges.

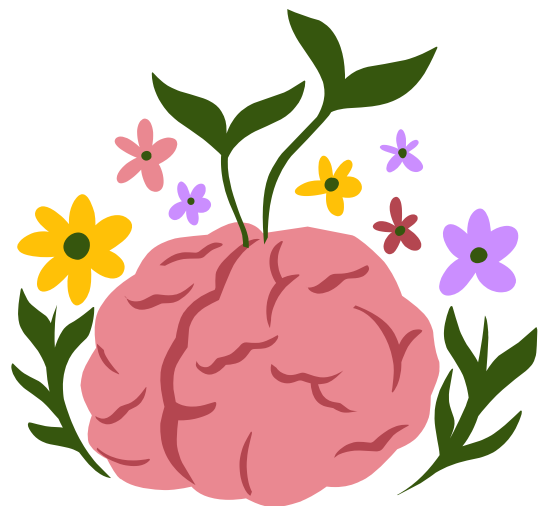
### Peer Support

Connecting with others who have experienced similar struggles can offer a sense of community and understanding.

### Medication

In some cases, medication may be recommended to address mental health concerns.

You and your healthcare provider will work together to determine the best approach for your unique situation. It is important to communicate openly with your provider about your progress and any concerns you may have.



Contributed by Psychology (Allied Health Service)

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