

# Seven Steps to Supporting Heart Patients' Emotional Adjustment



Step 1	<b>O</b>	<p><b>Outline likely emotional responses and accompanying symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain that a heart event is an emotional experience not just a physical one</li> <li>• Outline the range of possible emotions such as sadness, anger, worry etc</li> <li>• Outline the accompanying symptoms such as tearfulness, withdrawal etc</li> </ul>
Step 2	<b>N</b>	<p><b>Normalise</b> these emotions and symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain that almost all patients go on an emotional roller coaster</li> <li>• Explain that it is normal to feel these emotions and symptoms</li> </ul>
Step 3	<b>T</b>	<p><b>Talk</b> to the patient about their emotions and symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the patient about their emotional reaction to the heart event</li> <li>• Acknowledge what the patient is going through</li> </ul>
Step 4	<b>R</b>	<p><b>Reassure</b> that these emotions and symptoms are likely to resolve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform patient that early distress usually resolves in the first few months</li> <li>• Tell patients that this is true for four out of five patients</li> </ul>
Step 5	<b>A</b>	<p><b>Alert</b> patients to potential risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain that one in five patients develop depression after a heart event</li> <li>• Help patients to identify whether they are at risk of depression</li> </ul>
Step 6	<b>C</b>	<p><b>Check</b> that patient has strategies for dealing with emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with the patient how they are managing their emotional wellbeing</li> <li>• Encourage physical activity and attendance at cardiac rehabilitation</li> </ul>
Step 7	<b>K</b>	<p><b>Know</b> your referral options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients with depression may require additional support</li> <li>• Encourage the patient to talk to their doctor</li> <li>• Inform patients of services and supports in the local community</li> </ul>