

DEPRESSION:

It is entirely to be expected that a chronic illness will cause a degree of depression at some time, whether in the patient or his/her nearest and dearest.

Patients should feel able to discuss these problems, but first, they need to admit the problem to themselves. This may even involve recognising that depression or anxiety is factors that make pain and other symptoms worse.

Doctors should be reassuring: so many patients will have been told that their problems are "all in their head" or that they are showing "abnormal illness behaviour" for so long that they start to believe it!

You can feel isolated because you can no longer keep up with your peers: you are alone in a world of people whizzing along in the fast lane, people who cannot comprehend your limitations.

You may feel that no one understands: and maybe this is to a large extent true and inevitable, so that the only way through this problem is to accept it.

You may have lost so many things: job, financial security, self-esteem, socialising, hobbies (especially active sports), relationships, independence: when you live with a chronic illness, you live with loss each and every day.

Adjusting to limitations can be an arduous mental and emotional process. There will almost certainly be times when you feel you are losing your way in a fog of pain and fear.

Step 4: Facing up to the Psychological Problems

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