



Effectively coping with stress continued . . .

- Avoid putting yourself down or pushing yourself too hard.
- Talk to other caregivers about how they cope successfully.
- Seek support and help from trusted friends and family members and ask them for feedback about how you are handling stress.
- Share the burden of care giving with trusted family and friends and consider respite care services.
- Remember that you will run the risk of emotional collapse and health problems if you do not take breaks.
- Keep up a healthy lifestyle by exercising, eating right, and avoiding caffeine, alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Take time for yourself and do something enjoyable, for example listen to soothing music, take a long bath, go for a walk or read a book.
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a pleasant situation.
- Talk to your doctor about worrisome symptoms to help sort out their cause and possible need for treatment.

Everyone struggles and feels stress at times. Realize that you can cope better by taking breaks and seeking support from others.

How to contact us

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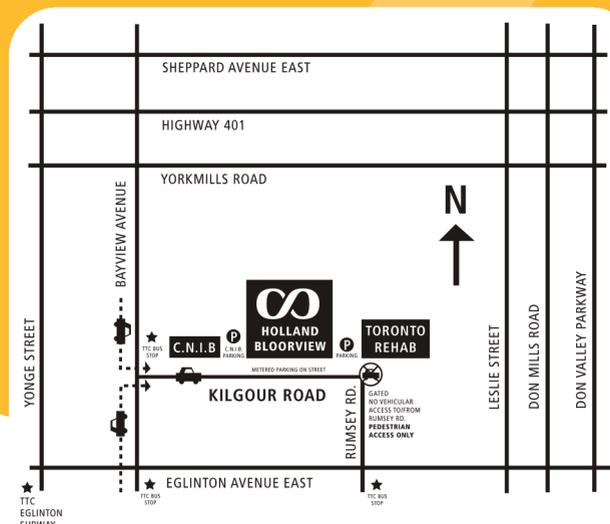
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About Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital is Canada's largest children's rehabilitation hospital.

Our vision is to create a world of possibility for kids with disability. We pioneer treatments, technologies, therapies and real-world programs that give children with disabilities the tools to participate fully in life.

Holland Bloorview serves about 7,000 children each year, with about 600 inpatient admissions and 58,000 outpatient visits. Holland Bloorview is a world-class teaching hospital fully affiliated with the University of Toronto. We train future health-care specialists in the field of childhood disability. The Bloorview Research Institute is located onsite, allowing us to integrate cutting-edge research and teaching with frontline care to improve children's quality of life.



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Stress Management

The help you need

A guide for family and friends of a loved one recovering from a neurological illness or injury

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What is stress?

The word stress is used often and in many different ways. Psychologists define stress as an emotional and physical response to a frightening or unpleasant situation. Feeling your muscles tighten and your heart beat faster or feeling like you have little control over your emotions, are sure signs of stress. Stress is worse when you feel pressured to solve a problem immediately, but don't see any solution.

What are the common causes of stress

Neurological injury or illness can bring on a period of intense and prolonged stress for clients, their family and friends. Behavioural, physical, cognitive and emotional changes in your family member or friend recovering from a neurological illness or injury may be overwhelming or difficult to deal with. Impatience and frustration with slow progress are common. In addition, many changes, concerns, fears and difficulties may emerge, including:

- Dramatic and sudden life and role changes
- Financial hardships
- Significant increase in responsibilities
- Worries about your loved one's recovery and ability to resume prior roles, work or education
- Difficulties obtaining necessary medical care and other services

The 13 item stress test

To help you understand how much stress you are facing, check True or False for each item below.

	True	False
1. I have a lot to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have more to do than I can handle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I'm not being productive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I'm trying really hard but getting nothing done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My symptoms are getting worse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I can't afford to take breaks or time off.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I'm pushing myself too hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I don't sleep very well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Too many people are telling me what to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I am not treating people the way I want to be treated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I feel totally exhausted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Nobody is happy with what I do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I can't stand living like this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scoring: the more true responses you circle, the greater the stress and pressure you're feeling

How can stress be harmful to you?

After neurological illness or injury, family and friends often play key roles in the recovery process. Your role is vital and often quite demanding. Managing stress is very important, as high levels of stress can lead to other problems, including:

- Decreased ability to think and solve problems efficiently
- Headaches
- Heart and digestion problems
- Sleep troubles
- Low energy and motivation

- Feeling hopeless, helpless, worthless, sad and blue
- Decreased productivity
- Anxiety and nervousness
- Relationship problems
- Irritability, short temper, impatience and withdrawal from others

How can you effectively cope with stress?

- Be patient. Realize that recovery is a long process and solving big problems takes time.
- Focus on accomplishments and progress instead of failures.
- Try to view your progress on a daily basis.
- Avoid comparing current behaviour with the way your loved one was before the injury or illness.
- Set reasonable goals by reviewing your loved one's recent progress.
- Have a back up plan in case your first plan does not work.
- Check your *pressure gauge* often and ask yourself how much stress you are feeling.
- Make a *to do* list, rank order the items by priority, start with #1, and work down the list.
- Remember that taking on too much too soon may lead to failure.
- Think positive thoughts and try to keep a good sense of humour.
- Recognize that a negative or angry emotional response may push away family, friends, and health-care providers.