

Care of the mind

Dealing with the shock of diagnosis

It can be devastating for you and the people closest to you to be told that you have a health condition that cannot be cured. People can experience a range of reactions at this initial stage of shock and disbelief.

There is no right or wrong way to react:

- You may find it difficult to take in the information you have been given or to remember past information.
- You may feel confused and disoriented and find it difficult to focus and think clearly.
- Physically you may experience exhaustion, unexplained aches and pains or find it difficult to sleep or eat.
- Emotionally you may feel distressed, shattered, overwhelmed and full of questions like “why me?”
- It is common for people to experience mood swings, emotional fragility and spiritual distress.

If you are at the initial stage of shock and disbelief you might find something of help in the following suggestions:

Give yourself time to adjust

Allow yourself time and space to adjust to your changed life circumstances. Each person’s timeframe for processing distressing information is different, as is their way of coping with the situation. Some people respond by being task focused and just getting on with the practical implications whereas others focus more on exploring and expressing their emotions.

Allow for time alone

You may feel a need for some time alone to gradually process the information in your own way, and to reflect on what it will mean.

Talk to people

Talk to close family, trusted friends or someone you could connect with who is going through a similar experience. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, you could speak to your GP or another healthcare provider. There are services you can call, including Karuna. Talking to others can help you make sense of your experience by clarifying your thoughts and feelings.

Care of the mind

Stay connected

Whether you want to talk about your situation or not it is helpful to stay in contact with others and not isolate yourself. Accept and or ask for help from friends and family who may feel devastated and helpless. Allowing them in to share emotionally or practically in your journey may benefit both of you as you all come to terms with your changed life circumstances.

Delay major decisions

Shock affects our ability to think clearly so, as far as possible, take time before making any major decisions.

Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:
07 3632 8300 or karuna@karuna.org.au



This is a **Support and Learning** resource. More resources available at www.karuna.org.au/resources. Karuna is affiliated with www.fpmt.org



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons

[Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

SLID 1001 V3