



If you are looking at this resource, then you have probably been unwell with the virus or have someone close to you who has. Maybe you were in hospital. This information explores how you might be feeling, what impact being poorly may be having on your life, and the kinds of things that might help.

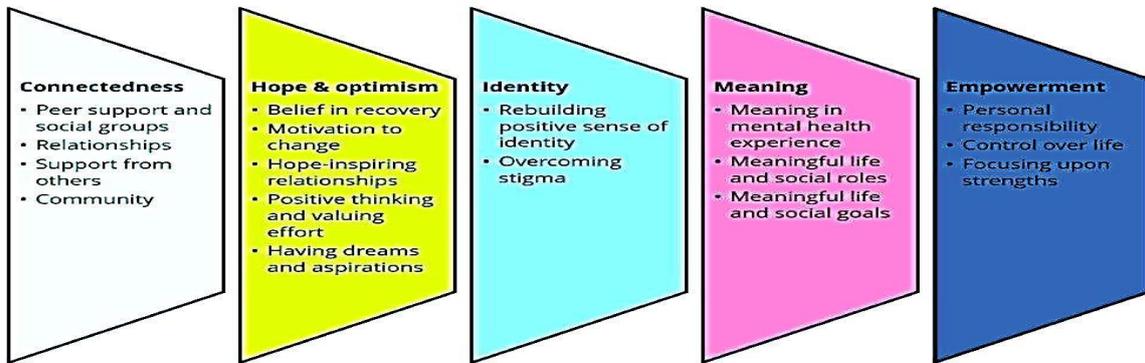
Whilst most people are expected to get the virus, only a minority are expected to become seriously ill. Most will make a full physical recovery, but for those with long term underlying conditions they will continue to have to deal with these conditions once they have recovered from the virus. Additionally, for those who have been admitted to an Intensive Care Unit, they may also have a period of ongoing recovery that includes respiratory issues, heart problems, pain and difficulties with memory, concentration and processing information. Being very ill or having a hospital admission can be traumatic sometimes and have a psychological impact. You may find this link helpful if you or your relative have been admitted into an Intensive care Unit. It is entitled 'Intensive Care - a guide for patients and relatives': <https://icusteps.org/assets/files/booklet/languages/english.pdf>

Information within this guide on intensive care may help you to understand some of common physical and psychological events that you may be experiencing following a stay in an ICU. Briefly, the guide includes information, guidance, practical help and tips including:

- What procedures and treatment were administered in ICU and why.
- What happens when you leave the ICU. Returning home - getting back into daily routines and relationships.
- How a critical illness can affect your body and ways to help the healing process. This includes weakness and weight loss, breathing, voice, skin and hair, bruising, changes to hearing, taste, touch and smell, problems going to the toilet and smoking.
- How might you feel after being in the ICU? This includes mood changes, vivid dreams nightmares, flashback, increased worry and anxiety, lack of enjoyment in most things.

There are various generic factors that are usually important for psychological wellbeing:

The CHIME framework for personal recovery



Leamy et al. 2011

A range of possible thoughts as we recover from the virus:



Which thoughts do you recognise in yourself?

You might find that these reactions change over time. There is no right or wrong way to react. However each reaction may impact on your coping. Some of these may have positive benefits. The table below outlines what these behaviours may be and also what to watch out for that may be less helpful.

Emotion	Positive behaviour	Behaviour to watch out for
Elation	Doing lots of new things. Making the most of life. Counting your blessings.	Doing too much and burning out.
Feeling indestructible	More Confidence	Taking risks
Guilt at surviving	Helping others	Not looking after your own needs
Self-blame for becoming unwell	Being realistic and kind on yourself: Forgiveness? Reassessing your lifestyle.	Internal criticism or self-punishment. Obsessive handwashing that makes skin too sore.
Anger at others	Assertiveness. Doing things to make things better for other people. Putting yourself in others shoes.	Ideas of harming others. Threats. Conspiracy theories. Being controlling.
Feeling Vulnerable	Looking after yourself. Asking for help when needed.	Hiding away. Loss of confidence.
Relieved	Settling in to a routine.	Withdrawing from others or from usual activities
Fear for others	Looking out for others. Meditation.	Over-protectiveness. Compulsive rituals that you think may keep others safe but which are not based on science.
Intrusive memories	Diaries. Grounding/ being in the moment/ mindfulness.	Avoiding triggers. Watching too much news.
A sense of loss	Find ways of mourning. Focus on what you can do. Ask for help to rebuild.	Blaming self, crying all the time, feeling worthless or hopeless about the future.
Confusion	Seeking facts about what happened to you (especially if in ICU). Learn about bodily Post Traumatic Stress	Interpreting strange sensations with unusual or idiosyncratic (peculiar) explanations
Why me?	Acceptance of randomness of fate	Blaming or persecuting self or others. Trying to over control things

Recovery is not just a physical thing

Do what usually helps

It may be stating the obvious but if you have tried and tested ways of managing your mental wellbeing now is the time to put them to good use. Whether that's using distraction, relaxation, mindfulness, stress management skills or grounding techniques that keep you in the present moment to prevent your thoughts from wandering back to when you were ill. All of these will be of benefit. You are going to have the best idea about what works well for you.

If you are struggling to do what usually helps, maybe because you feel mentally unwell, then it's important to think about other ways to manage your mental wellbeing. There are lots of different ideas and strategies available on sites like the recovery college online.

<http://www.recoverycollegeonline.co.uk/>

Here is another document titled '*Meeting the psychological needs of people recovering from severe coronavirus (Covid-19)*'. It has lots of practical information and advice that you may find useful if you want to know more about recovering from severe COVID-19. [Meeting the psychological needs of people recovering from severe coronavirus.pdf](#)

Keep connected

One of the most important ways of managing mental wellbeing is to maintain or develop connections with others and to make use of them. There may be times when you cannot meet with people face to face but that doesn't mean you are unable to keep connected with them. Speaking on the phone and writing a letter are good ways to keep connected.

Brace yourself for more change

By being prepared with the knowledge that things are going to change in your daily life helps when this does happen. Already there are many changes that have taken place within society to try and prevent the spread and impact of the disease. There may be more change to come in the future as well. Maybe there will be some things that you can do with others to give them hope.

Coping when you are not fully fit

It can be challenging to keep up with daily living when you are not physically fit. If you are struggling to manage, make sure to maintain your basic needs first and foremost - eating, staying hydrated, keeping warm/dry and sleeping as much as your body wants. If you can, allow others to help you.

When to seek more help for your mental wellbeing

Watch out for these things becoming persistent for more than four weeks



<i>Drinking too much alcohol or using drugs</i>
<i>Eating too much or not enough</i>
<i>Emotions that overwhelm your ability to cope for a long time</i>
<i>Memories of what happened plaguing your mind</i>
<i>Feeling numb or empty</i>
<i>Being irritable, overly critical or controlling of people (or yourself)</i>
<i>Not being able to sleep well enough; maybe nightmares</i>
<i>Developing obsessions or rituals that make you feel safer even though they seem excessive to others or take up a lot of time</i>
<i>Having strange or unusual ideas</i>
<i>Mistrusting others</i>
<i>Hearing or seeing things that other people may not be</i>
<i>Your relationships with others have deteriorated</i>
<i>Your concentration is causing risks to safety.</i>

There are charities and helplines that are offering support and advice. There are also local talking therapy services that can be accessed either via your GP or you can self refer yourself (see below).

If you have ideas, that you feel you may act on, of hurting yourself or others, please seek help from your GP or your mental health care team.

Screening for mental health conditions that persist over time:

Some people may notice no particular emotional or psychological impact after their illness or time in hospital. Other people who had pre-existing adversities may find that the impact of this has worsened their mental health or it may have retriggered past losses or fears. Many people who have been very unwell with covid-19 will experience a range of possible psychological reactions, which may be severe and distressing at some point. This is common in such extreme circumstances. However, it can be useful to monitor whether things are getting easier or worse for us by tracking our reactions over time. In the long run, it is important to have hope that things can heal. For some, it may even become a time of positive change, although going through such trauma rarely feels like that at the time. You can complete these brief questionnaires which you can use to see how your mental health is developing. Or keep a diary.

Trauma Screening Questionnaire (TSQ). Scoring the TSQ: Total score > (more than) 5 indicates likely post-traumatic stress disorder.



Trauma Screening
Questionnaire.pdf

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ 9) and scoring

Direct link: <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/uploads/score-sheet-gad-7-anxiety-and-phq-9-depression.pdf>



GAD 7 AND PHQ
9.pdf

It is common when in a crisis to have high scores on these. Mostly this will resolve itself with time. There are sources of self management advice and coping on:

The Recovery College Online: <https://www.recoverycollegeonline.co.uk/>

Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

However if high scores persist then you can find and refer yourself (or via your GP) to local psychological therapy services: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/>