

Prolonged Illness, Hospitalization, and You

People who come to the Drake Center have different reasons for being here. While your illness or injury involves challenges specific to your situation, everyone at Drake shares at least one thing in common – prolonged hospitalization. Being in the hospital for an extended period of time can be stressful for you and your family. At Drake Center, we are committed to helping you and your family cope.

What Makes Prolonged Illness and Hospitalization Stressful?

Stress is normal for patients and their family members. The following information can help you understand what may make your situation stressful and what you and your health care team can do to help manage your stress.

- **Discomfort** – Many illnesses, or the medicines and procedures used to treat them, may be painful or cause unpleasant symptoms or sensations. Let us know if you experience any discomfort; there may be something we can do to help reduce it. We can also teach you techniques to manage some of these sensations and help you cope.
- **Uncertainty** – Many people wonder: How soon will I get better? What are the doctors, nurses and therapists going to do next? Is my treatment working? Will I recover and be able to resume my life as before? Will I have limitations that will change my life in a big way? While feelings of uncertainty are often scary, they are normal and quite common. We will do our best to minimize the uncertainty by:
 - Answering your questions
 - Providing information so that you can make informed decisions
 - Treating your medical problem
 - Helping you set reasonable expectations
 - Helping you work toward your recovery
- **Limitations** – Many illnesses and injuries make it difficult for people to independently walk, talk, or care for themselves. If you are used to caring for yourself, you may find it hard to accept assistance, especially with basic needs like toileting, dressing, or managing personal affairs at home. We will do our best to help you:
 - Regain as much independence as possible
 - Learn how to modify activities or use tools to maximize self-care
 - Learn to accept needed assistance without loss of self-esteem
 - Learn to cope with things you cannot control to improve emotional well-being

- **Reliance on Others** – Medical problems involving hospitalization or an ongoing need for care are often frustrating because you may not be able to do what you want, when you want. For example, you may not be able to eat, sleep, toilet, or do therapies at the times you want. Even though we are caring for many people, our goal is to accommodate each patient’s individual needs. Please make your health care team aware of your preferences. For your emotional well-being, we encourage you to exercise control over what you can, and allow us to help you learn to cope with the things that you cannot control.
- **Life Changes** – Some illnesses or injuries require people to make major changes to their lifestyle, occupation and/or finances. Such changes can be difficult to accept and commonly lead to feelings of sadness, anxiety, and anger. Talk with your health care team about feelings and frustrations that you are experiencing. We are committed to meeting not only your physical needs, but also your emotional, social and spiritual needs as well. We want to help you prepare for the challenges you may face after discharge.

Healthy Coping Is Essential for Recovery

How you cope with stress plays an important role in your overall recovery. While stress is normal during prolonged illness and hospitalization, people differ in how they view and react to it. The way you cope with stress can affect your physical recovery. For example, stress causes the release of hormones which could affect your heart and immune system in ways that might complicate or slow down healing. The next two pages explore:

- Signs that you may need help coping with your illness or injury and services available at the Drake Center
- Things that you can do to help yourself cope better with prolonged illness and hospitalization.