

Dealing with Chronic Fatigue (CFS/ME) in Young People

Understanding feelings



We need to understand our feelings because often, they use up energy – especially anxiety.

People who are anxious or depressed about something are often tired, even without having CFS/ME.

Using up energy or feeling worried and stressed slows down getting better from your CFS/ME. In some cases, it can stop someone getting better altogether.

So we must tackle it.

This leaflet will help you begin to understand your feelings, and once you can recognise the beginnings of anxiety and stress, you will learn to do something positive to help yourself.

With thanks to Professor Paul Stallard, The University of Bath, for his original work, from which this has been adapted.

This is one of a series of information leaflets on managing CFS/ME in children and young people. These are also available on our website at www.rnhrd.nhs.uk.

For more information on our service, please contact Heather Hill on **01225 473425** at the Specialist Paediatric Chronic Fatigue/ME Service, Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases (NHS Foundation Trust), Upper Borough Walls, Bath BA1 1RL.

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How can feelings affect us?

We all have feelings, even though we may not be aware of them at the time.

We all get excited, worried, happy, anxious, sad, elated, uptight, angry and lots of other feelings too.

The way we feel about things affects what we do about them.

Remember the CBT link.

So....

- if we feel **scared** because we think we will never catch up on school-work, we might decide not to take our exams
- if we feel **worried** because we think that our friends think we are 'making up' being ill, we will avoid contacting them and get more isolated

This shows how important our feelings are. They can take over our lives and it is not always that helpful!

You may find that you have unpleasant feelings like these, which stop you from doing the things you would like to do. At these times it may be useful to learn how you can beat your stress and worries.



What happens to your body when you are stressed?

When people become anxious or scared they often notice a number of changes in their body.

This is called the **FLIGHT** or **FIGHT** reaction. Your body prepares itself to run away or to face and fight the scary thing.

The main **signals** are listed below:

- light headed/feel faint
- red face/feel hot
- headache
- dry mouth
- blurred eyesight
- lump in throat
- shaky voice
- butterflies in tummy
- heart beats faster
- sweaty, shaky hands
- difficulty breathing
- tense muscles
- jelly legs

Understanding which of these signals are strongest will help you to become better at noticing when you are getting wound up.

Once you learn to recognise that you are feeling stressed or unhappy, then you are already on the road to beating these unhelpful feelings!



Tackling unhelpful feelings

Now you need some ideas on how to go about tackling these.

We will cover this in the leaflet **Managing Feelings and Emotions**, which will give you lots of things to try out at home.