

Heart Surgery: Common Emotions During Your Hospital Recovery

Recovering from heart surgery can be difficult both physically and emotionally. During your hospital stay, you have gone through the stresses of the actual surgery, and now have the anxiety of recovery ahead of you.

“One day I woke up and I’m just like I am so sad, I am depressed, I am anxious.”

“Well, after surgery being home I actually experienced a lot of sadness and depression.”

After a serious event like heart surgery, feelings such as sadness, depression, irritability and anxiety can be common. You’ve been through a stressful event. Being in the hospital and away from the comforts of home, combined with lack of sleep, new medications and the change from your normal routine can all add to those feelings.

The good news is that all of these feelings are common and should go away with time. But do not ignore how you are feeling. You don’t want depression, anxiety and any other emotions you are feeling to get in the way of your recovery. Talk to your cardiac care team about ways you can cope with your emotions while you recover.

Prayer meditation, and moments of quiet relaxation can also do wonders for your spirit. And just because you’re in the hospital does not mean you can’t get this kind of spiritual guidance. Many hospitals have a chapel available. Ask about chaplain services where the chaplain comes to you if that is easier.

“My priest has been to see me. My deacon’s been to see me. I’ve been back to church now once or twice, and uh that’s an important part to me, to my recovery, and, uh you know, that- just to know that there is someone- someone looking over me.”

And of course, talking to family members, loved ones and friends can always help. Be honest about how you are feeling. They love you and only want to help. Sometimes just getting your emotions out can relieve the stresses and anxiety you are feeling. Recovering from heart surgery can take time. One thing that can help you through the frustrations of recovery is setting reasonable goals for your progress.

Completing your breathing exercises, getting out of bed and walking a little, taking your medications, and performing activities of daily living can all be examples of goals you can set. When you reach a goal feel positive. This is a job well done. When recovery does get frustrating and overwhelming, take some time to highlight all the successes you have had during recovery – no matter how small. Keep focused on working toward discharge and moving toward the next step of your recovery.

Heart surgery is scary. It is common to feel many different emotions during your recovery in the hospital. The important thing is not to let those emotions get in the way of your recovery. Reach out for support to deal with your emotions in the way that is best for you and begin to look forward to each successful step you take during your recovery. Your progress may amaze even you.

“You know, we talk about the heart being the center of our emotions and our feelings, so after having major heart surgery, it’s not real surprising that there would be damage to that part of your heart, too, that needs to be dealt with.”

“It only was a couple of weeks until, you know, I felt much better and today I can say that I’m pretty much back to my normal self.”