



## Emotional Bruises, Strains and Breaks

Emotional health is just as important as physical health!

I imagine most of you will easily recognise when you feel physically unwell. Our emotional health is just as important as our physical health and like recognising when we have a sore head or feel sick, it is equally important to recognise when we are feeling emotionally unwell. Most of the time, like a minor physical injury, we can feel emotionally unwell and recover perfectly well by looking after ourselves and talking to friends and family.

By following some very simple guidelines, we can stay emotionally healthy and prevent emotional ill-health. What makes it even more simple is that some of the things you already do to ensure you are physically healthy will also have a positive impact upon your emotional health. Such as:

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet
- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Avoiding toxins eg nicotine
- Being active
- Spending time each day doing something you love
- Resting / learning to relax
- Maintaining a healthy routine
- Connecting with people you love
- Talking to people and sharing experiences and feelings
- Setting goals

### Stamp out the STIGMA!

There is so much stigma around mental or emotional ill-health but we believe that if we can think about our emotional health in the same way we think about our physical health, this can help us acknowledge our feelings and seek the appropriate support at the right time. We use the analogy of bruises, strains and breaks to help us make sense of our feelings and to consider how we might look after ourselves.



## EMOTIONAL BRUISES.

Just like a bruise on your knee, sometimes we might feel a bit emotionally bruised by the experiences we have. This is normal. Like a bruised knee these feelings might last a few days.

### Experiences that can emotionally bruise us include;

1. Splitting up from your boyfriend
2. Falling out with your best friend
3. Failing a test at school
4. Watching something on TV that makes us feel sad or worried

### During these times

we might need a bit of extra TLC from friends and adults around us. We might need to talk with people around us about what has happened, we might need to rest, we need people to listen to our feelings, we might need an extra big hug or some reassurance. Like a bruise, at the time, it can feel like the most painful thing that has ever happened but over time our feelings change.



## EMOTIONAL STRAINS

Sometimes the way we feel, feels much worse than a bruise. Sometimes our emotions feel more like a muscle strain. Like straining a muscle, we might feel wobbly. We might find it harder to do the things we usually do. Our feelings at these times have a greater impact on our lives and we might need something or someone to prop us up, like crutches. Again, this is normal. This is our body's way of responding to significant events in our lives.

At these times, we might feel our emotions more strongly than usual. You might feel worried, tearful, anxious and these feelings last longer than usual

### Experiences that can cause emotional strain include:

1. Experiencing a traumatic event
2. The death of a loved one,
3. Experiencing something that leaves us feeling unsafe



## During these times

We might be able to carry on with our normal routine or we might need to take some time out to recover, just like you would if you had a muscle strain. It is very important at these times that you find someone you trust to talk to about your experience and the feelings you have. It will be important to be around people who care about you and who can look after you until you feel strong enough to return to normal.

You might find you need more rest or you might feel you can't rest. You might go off your food for a while. You might feel emotionally stuck. These feelings are associated with your body finding a way to process your experience.

- **Talking about your feelings** is the most important thing you can do to move through your experience. This might feel almost impossible to begin with as it can feel frightening to talk about something that causes us such emotional pain but this is what will enable us to release some of the internal pressure that often builds up when we suppress how we feel. Like the shaken fizzy juice bottle, slowly releasing the pressure will prevent an explosion
- **Take Time Out** Like a physical injury, it is important that we respond to our emotional health in a similar way. Sometimes it is important to take time out to recover.
- **Connect with people you love**
- **Look after yourself.** Consider the things you love doing and do more of them. Offering yourself some TLC is so important – have a bath, read, give your mind space, try deep breathing and relaxation – there are lots of apps that might help you with this.
- **Stay Active**
- When you feel emotionally stuck, **you might feel like you need a bit of help from a professional.** Like a strained muscle, you might want to visit the doctor to ask them to assess your injury and suggest some strategies for moving forward. This is an option for you but may not be necessary depending on how much support you are getting from the adults around you. This is your choice.



## EMOTIONAL BREAKS

Sometimes our emotions leave us feeling broken. Like a broken bone, our emotions can leave us feeling completely immobilised and in considerable pain. At these times, we might feel like we will never feel “normal” again. Our feelings have become so big that they have a considerable impact upon our physical health. We might feel constantly lethargic and have no motivation, we might experience physical pain, we might have unusual experiences. Our feelings at these times take over and we can find it impossible to do anything.

At these times, our emotions can become **overwhelming** and we feel **stuck and unable to move forward**. Everything that presents itself in life can feel unmanageable and it might be difficult to ask for help. You may even feel like **life is not worth living**

### Experiences that might can cause emotional breaks include:

1. Repeated negative experiences that you cannot escape from
2. Past trauma that you have been unable to talk about
3. Being socially isolated with no one to turn to
4. Excessive substance misuse
5. We can also experience emotional breaks when we have ignored the bruises and strains and because of this, your injury has worsened or become more complicated.

During these times, like a broken bone, we will need a lot of support to heal. As well as surrounding ourselves with people who understand us and can offer support at home, we will need to seek professional help. We will need to give ourselves plenty of time to heal and we may need some time away from our normal activities. We might even need to have some time in hospital. It might feel like you won't ever feel better again but, like a broken bone, with the right help and support you can start to heal

- Consider who is there to support you?
- Consider, do you have a trusted adult you can talk to – a parent / teacher / social worker?
- Are your friends being helpful? Kind?
- What are you doing to **look after yourself?** (see above – emotional strains)
- **Seek professional support.**



- Visit your GP, just like you would for a strain or broken bone. Your GP will talk to you about how you are feeling and will be able to refer you to an emotional / mental health professional who will be able to support you.
  - The voluntary sector also provides support relating to specific feelings, such as CRUSE for bereavement for example.
  - **In an emergency**, you can access AGE like you would if you were physically unwell, or you can contact NHS 111 out of hours to explain how you are feeling
  - The Samaritans 0330 094 5717 and Childline 0800 1111 are also available at the end of the phone

**Look at our helpful websites resource for further support!**