Newly Diagnosed

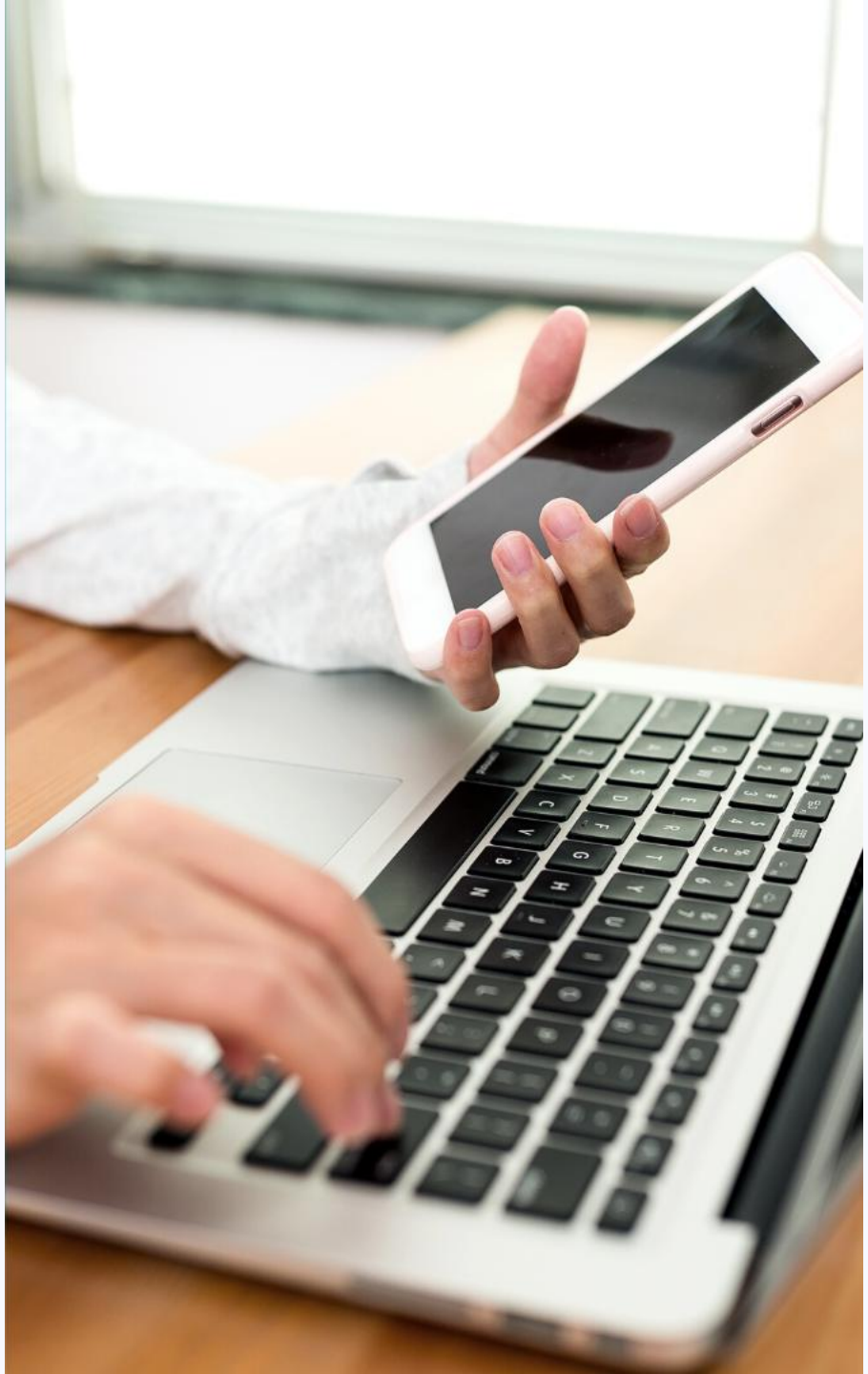
MEETUP

The Emotional Side of MS

CAN DO MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

For
TECH SUPPORT
Call

P: 1-800-367-3101



YOUR COACHES



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Your Feelings are Valid

POLLING QUESTION

Since your diagnosis, which feeling has shown up the most for you?

a) Worry about the future
b) Sadness or grief
c) Frustration or anger
d) Overwhelmed
e) Relief
f) Something else! - write it in the chat

There is not a "Right" way to feel

Feelings like grief, fear, anger, numbness, stress, and relief are all normal

Some everyday moments can bring up hard feelings:

- Choosing a treatment
- Deciding who to tell, when, and how much to share
- Hearing other people's ideas about MS, their stories, and their advice

Emotions...

- come and go
- can be replaced by different emotions
- may increase or decrease in intensity
- can help you evaluate a situation or relationship

Learning to embrace, or at least live with, uncomfortable emotions can help your well-being

Research: Distress in the first year after MS diagnosis

One study followed adults newly diagnosed with MS for 1 Year

- Symptoms of anxiety and depression were common, but fluctuated throughout the year
- Many people experienced less distress as the year progressed
- Quality of life remained high for most people

Write in the Chat: how are these findings similar or different from your own experience?

Grief

Grief is the physical, cognitive, and emotional reaction to a loss or unwanted change

Grieving in MS

- What you expected from life
- Your body or health
- What could have been

Grief can come and go based on things like new symptoms, doctor visits, MRI results, anniversaries

The old view was stages in order, ending in closure

We now know grief isn't a straight line

People learn how to move forward with grief as part of their experience

Write it in the Chat

Have you experience grief due to MS?

If so, what did it look like for you?

Is it Grief or Depression?

- Grief comes in waves
- Depression often feels constant
- With grief, moments of joy still break through
- With depression, things you used to enjoy can go flat
- Grief and depression can overlap.



Group Discussion

What has been the most challenging emotional adjustment since your diagnosis?

Group Discussion (Alternative)

What has it been like telling people? How do you handle their reactions or advice?


Living with Uncertainty

Where to Start: Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, without judgment
- It's hard to cope with a thought or emotion you haven't observed with some distance
- It's not about emptying your mind
- Start small: one breath, one minute, feet on the floor

Start small:

- Notice one breath
- Slow down eating and notice how your food tastes
- If you walk, what does each step feel like
- If you feel pain, can you find one part of your body that feels comfortable or neutral?

Learning to Live with Uncertainty

You may try to google new symptoms, reread your MRI, or join MS Facebook groups to feel more in control

This often only brings temporary relief, but may increase anxiety

It helps to sort out what's in your control vs. what isn't

Not in your Control:

The disease process of MS

How other people react to your diagnosis

Your biological risk for other conditions, like diabetes or depression

In your Control:

Taking your DMT and going to appointments

How much you share, and with whom

Sleep, exercise, what you eat, and how you talk to yourself

POLLING QUESTION

When you hear the word "acceptance," what comes to mind?

a) Being ok with, or at peace with the diagnosis
b) Giving up
c) I’ll never accept this
d) Something else - write it in the chat

Radical Acceptance

- Acceptance does not mean you have to like or be ok with MS
- You can still have feelings of sadness, grief, frustration, and more.
- Fighting reality causes suffering on top of pain
- Acknowledging the present reality frees us space for what you can change



Practice Radical Acceptance

Start with thinking about things that are easy to accept

The sky is blue, grass is green

Write down the facts of your current situation

List out how resisting reality might be negatively impacting you emotionally or physically

How would your behavior change if you did accept the facts?

Identify what is and isn't in your control

Notice when you are fighting reality:

- Unhelpful thoughts "It shouldn't be this way"
- Ignoring medical recommendations

Practice acceptance with your body,

- relax muscles
- "willing hands"


Lets Practice-
Loving Kindness Meditation

Group Discussion

Share your experience with the Loving Kindness meditation!

Group Discussion

What is one way you cope with uncertainty?




When to Seek
Professional Help

Depression and Anxiety Are Common in MS

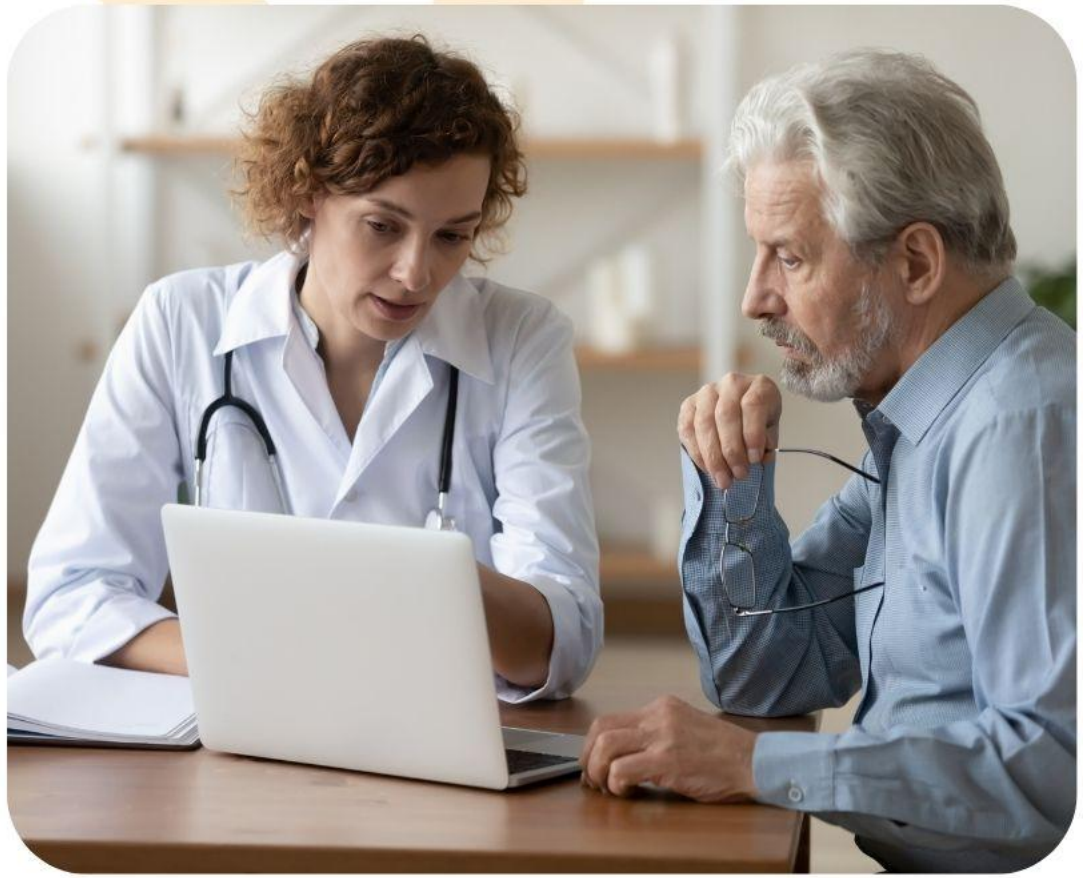
	General Population	Multiple Sclerosis
Anxiety (prevalence)	29%	22-36%
Depression (prevalence)	10-12%	20-30%

Causes:

- MS inflammation and brain changes
- The impact of MS on daily life
- Genetic and biological risk factors

Common does not mean untreatable

When to Reach Out



- Low mood or loss of interest most days for two weeks or more
- Feelings getting in the way of work, school, relationships, activities that are important to you, everyday responsibilities, sleep
- Worry that won't turn off and feels out of control
- Pulling away from people and things you care about
- If you have thoughts of death or self-harm, call or text 988, visit your nearest emergency room

Treating Mood Symptoms: What Works

Psychotherapy, talk therapy, like CBT, ACT, and more

Medication is another option to discuss with your MS team or primary care

Often a combination works best

For more severe symptoms consider outpatient options like DBT or Intensive Outpatient Programs can be helpful

If you are waiting for treatment start with:

- Exercise
- Online treatment manuals such as dialecticalbehaviortherapy.com
- Books like the Treatments that work series

Who Can Help?

Try to find a mental health professional that knows MS or chronic illness

- NMSS directory, Navigator program
- MS Center, don't be afraid to call others around the country for telehealth options
- PSYPACT directory
- Divisions 22, 40, or 28 of the American Psychological Association

Ask other people living with MS for recommendations of who they have worked with

Write in the chat! If you have a therapist that you've worked with (and liked), how did you find them?

Group Discussion

Have you sought mental health support? Was it helpful? If not, or what's held you back?

Please Take Today's Survey

Thank you!
We Appreciate Your Feedback!



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