

FIBROIDS & YOUR MENTAL & HEALTH

When we think of fibroids and the impact they have, we tend to think about physical symptoms like heavy bleeding, abdominal pain, fatigue and back pain. The emotional and psychological impact of fibroids are not at the forefront of women's minds or even their doctor's, but it is very important that this is addressed to ensure a complete recovery. At times women may not realise their emotions are being impacted or may not be able to articulate why they feel a certain way, which can obstruct the healing process.

This fact sheet aims to help women identify, understand and address the emotions that may be associated with having fibroids.

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

In psychology emotions are defined as:

“A complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour.”

Emotions can be pleasant and unpleasant and are capable of affecting you in profound and sometimes undesirable ways.

HOW DO FIBROIDS AFFECT YOUR EMOTIONS?

Before your diagnosis

- It may have been many years before you realised you had fibroids. During this time you may have experienced a number of symptoms that neither you nor your doctor could explain. This may have led to a **fear of the unknown** which created **anxiety** and **worry** about your health and future.
- You may have been feeling a **loss of control** as your symptoms seemed to be linked to the unknown so you were **unsure** how to plan your day, week or year.
- The physical symptoms themselves may have affected your emotions as you dealt with them, tried to hide them or **worried** about whether they would get worse.



- When you visited your doctor there may have been the anxiety associated with waiting for test results.
- Your doctor may have conducted a vaginal examination, which may have left you feeling exposed. It could have also brought back memories of a traumatic sexual experience leading to further distress.

Having a stressful life may cause some of the above feelings too and this can overshadow the fact that these feelings could be linked to your fibroids. If you are not aware of the cause of these emotions you cannot deal with them properly.

After your diagnosis

- Receiving a diagnosis can be a good thing for your emotions, particularly if you've had symptoms for a long time. Having an explanation for your symptoms can give you some peace of mind and a bit of closure. At the same time you may experience some **fear** about the future and become concerned about the fibroids. Will they grow? Will more develop?
- You may have **concerns** about your fertility and **worry** about how your employer may respond to your situation as you may have to take time off work for treatment or if your symptoms are particularly bad.
- Decisions about treatment can be confusing and overwhelming. If you've had treatment, particularly surgery, there are all the emotions associated with the recovery process, including worrying about the success of treatment, side effects and whether the fibroids will come back. With surgery there may be some feelings of loss and you could go through a grieving stage – that is grief associated with losing that part of your body.

GENERAL AFFECTS

All of the above may result in any of the following:

- Loss of focus
- Mood swings
- Panic attacks
- Lack of self esteem
- Irrational emotions
- Disbelief
- Shock
- Body image issues
- Anger
- Depression





FIBROIDS & YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Your fibroids may have an effect on your relationships. For example, you may be too tired to spend time with your children, husband or partner. You may find sex uncomfortable or not feel like engaging in sex. Symptoms like pain and heavy bleeding may stop you being able to fulfil your responsibilities at home and from socialising with friends and extended family or enjoy the activities that you used to. All of this can put a strain on your relationships leading to tension, arguments, general misunderstanding and in extreme circumstances cause your relationships to breakdown.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

You may have experienced some or all of the above emotions without realising it. You may have experienced these emotions but did not understand why you were feeling that way or struggled to explain your feelings.

These emotional experiences are commonly shared by many women with fibroids. Unresolved emotions can, however, hinder your recovery and affect your wellbeing. Therefore, dealing with your emotions is very important.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

● Acknowledge and process your emotions

Ask yourself: What am I feeling? What has triggered it? Where do I feel my emotions?

● Talking therapy

Sharing your experience with a professional can be helpful as this will be non-judgemental, in a safe space and you have the time to air all your feelings.

● Writing as therapy

Writing about your experiences can be used as a tool to acknowledge your feelings as you can express on paper what is challenging to say out loud.

● Grounding techniques

These can help bring you into the present and keep you grounded to what is happening in the moment. This can be a tool to reduce worries, trauma, negative experiences, pain and concerns.

● Positive thinking techniques

By monitoring your negative thoughts you will be able to analyse what is going on in that moment. Use a monitoring sheet to monitor your negative thoughts and think of a way to deal with these thoughts in a positive manner the next time they come up.

"Do not compare yourself to others. Everyone has their own journey and will react differently to healing. The comparison will therefore never be fair."

Olivia Haltman, Accredited Integrative Humanistic Counsellor, OH Services





- **Relaxation and breathing techniques**

This can help you manage any stress and anxiety that you are feeling.

- **Talking to your partner, friends or family**

Talking to someone you trust and feel comfortable with can create a way to channel your emotions.

- **Healthy eating**

The food we eat does affect our mood so it is important to be aware of what you eat and monitor what food affects your mood and adjust your diet accordingly.

- **Holistic lifestyle**

A balanced lifestyle is important for our wellbeing. Be aware of your physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing in order to get the right balance.

MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

If you would like to talk to somebody about your situation or are looking for support, please contact OH Counselling Services. Some of the free resources they can provide include:

- A monitor sheet if you'd like try positive thinking techniques.
- Breathing techniques to help you manage any stress and anxiety you may be experiencing.
- Exercises to get you started on getting the right balance for your mind, body and spirit.



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For information on fibroids in general please contact Lake Health and Wellbeing. We have the following information and resources which you may find useful:

[Fibroids Ask the Expert Panel](#)

[Fibroids Booklet](#)

[Fibroids Blog Series](#)

[Fibroids Fact Sheets](#)



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