

# MOOD AND FEELINGS



If you experience changes to your mood and emotions after a concussion injury, they do get better, especially when you start to see your friends more. If you are feeling down in the dumps and your mind is topsy-turvy here are some things which may help;

- Remember to do some fun things and be kind to yourself. Say nice things to yourself and tell yourself what a great person you are. Treat yourself like a loyal loving friend. Smile and laugh.
- Try not to focus on things that you can't do. If you do find that your mind keeps turning back to these things, do something to distract yourself (see the Headache Information Leaflet for distraction tips).
- Stay connected with your friends and classmates.
- Tell a parent or adult you can trust how you are feeling so they can try and help. You may also find teachers and school counsellors helpful.
- Don't be off school for more than a week; getting back to school and interacting with the outside world is a big part of recovery. Getting back to school initially can be more about keeping in touch with things than about the school work.
- Set realistic goals and don't be too hard on yourself. Take things one small step at a time.



- Celebrate and reward yourself when you do reach your goal, even if it is small. Give yourself a treat like; call a friend and tell them, have a break from schoolwork and watch a YouTube clip, paint your nails, shoot some hoops in the backyard. Acknowledge your successes!
- Remember that you will get back to the everyday things and sports you love. In the meantime do other fun things during lunch breaks and sports sessions and try get involved while you can't play. You can help the coach or organize the team for the weekend game. Watch your team play and cheer them on!
- Prepare for tasks and experiences that you think may be distressing or difficult. eg. sleep well the night before, eat healthy regular meals if you have a busy day.
- Try not to avoid things that make you worried or feel stressed.
- Download the Smiling Mind app (<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>)
- School worries are a common source of stress so remember to pace yourself and prepare for an upcoming big day. Read our Returning to School Information Leaflet for more tips.
- Make time for exercise

#### Tips for when you feel overwhelmed or things get too much

1. Practice box breathing (see page 3). You will find that you usually start to feel better after about 10 minutes of doing this so don't give up too quickly!
2. Go for a walk or talk to a trusted friend
3. If you are still feeling upset – please let a parent or teacher know.
4. If feeling overwhelmed happens a lot you may need to get some tips and advice from a counsellor or psychologist. Don't worry, you're not crazy as this happens to all of us.

Show your **parents** (and maybe your teachers and friends) this Information Sheet. Encourage them to help in the following ways

- talk calmly and not get angry with you
- not ignore your emotional changes
- provide you with plenty of opportunity to express your feelings
- reassure you that your feelings are real and important
- offer support and encouragement

**IF YOU ARE NOT GETTING BETTER SEE YOUR GP;  
THEY HAVE LOTS OF WAYS TO HELP YOU**



# BOX BREATHING

A technique called 'box breathing, can help to improve concentration and reduce feelings of stress and worry. To do it, sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your lap, focus on good posture, and do the following steps;

## Step 1

Slowly breathe out through your mouth and think about getting ALL the air out of your lungs.

## Step 2

Slowly inhale through your nose while (silently) counting to four. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until they are completely full and your abdomen expands

## Step 3.

Hold your breath for another slow count of four

## Step 4.

Breathe out through your mouth for the same slow count of four, and be aware of the feeling of ALL the air leaving your lungs and abdomen.

## Step 5.

Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before returning to Step 1 to repeat the process

**Practice box breathing every day**