



My Health - Living Well with Long-Term Conditions

An introduction to self-management and living well with a long-term condition

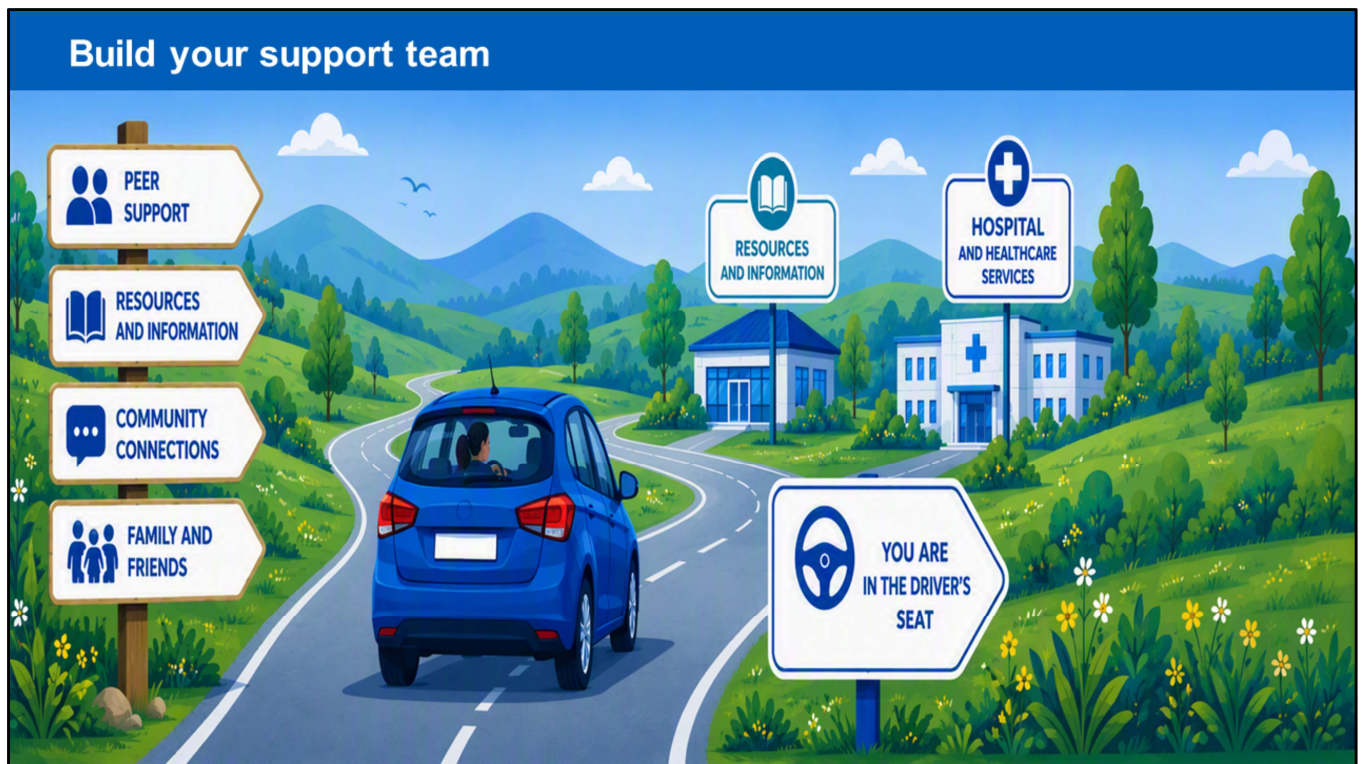
Patient education session | 30 minutes

Welcome everyone, and thank you for joining the programme an introduction to self management and living well with a long term health condition.

Over the next six weeks, we'll explore practical ways and ideas of how to live better with a long-term health condition.

This programme is designed to help you build confidence, develop useful skills, and discover practical strategies that work for your own life and circumstances.

This session will last from around 25 mins. You don't need to remember everything today. The aim is simply to take away one or two practical ideas that might be useful



Sometimes people think self-management means coping alone. It doesn't. It includes getting the right support from healthcare professionals, family, friends and community resources.

But recognising that you are the expert in your own daily experience. Think of yourself as being in the driving seat, with different people and resources there to support you along the way.

Healthcare professionals can provide advice, information and support, but much of living with a long-term condition happens out with healthcare setting.

For some people, there may still be ongoing input from healthcare professionals. For others, investigations may have been completed and medical teams may not have any further tests, treatments or specialist input to offer at this time. When that happens, it can feel as though there are no options left.

Supported self-management is about recognising that there are still things you can do to support your health, wellbeing and quality of life. Self-management is about building the right support around you and knowing when to use it. Family, friends, peer support groups, community groups and education can all play an important role.

Think about who is already part of your support team and where additional support might help.



Self-management is a skill, it considers the whole person, including physical health, thoughts and emotions, daily activities and routines, relationships and support.

There are three key parts:

- Looking after your health to include good sleep, gentle movement, nutrition and managing stressors.
- Getting the right support
- And Continuing to do what matters and is important to you

It is about understanding what helps manage symptoms, recognising challenges, and making every day choices that support your wellbeing. The goal isn't to become symptom-free. The goal is to become more confident in managing whatever symptoms show up. The aim is to help you do more of the things that matter to you and live as well as possible alongside your condition.

During this session we will explore how to:

Work with the day you are having

Focus on what matters to you

Take small, realistic steps

recognise when you may need to adjust your plan.

There is no pressure to do everything. One useful idea is enough.

Pause and reflect: Throughout this presentation I will be encouraging you to reflect - You might want jot down a few notes if that's helpful.

Which part feels easiest for you at the moment?

Which part would you most like support with?



Living with a long-term condition can bring ongoing challenges such as

We know from our patients that Symptoms and capacity often change from day to day.

Many long-term conditions are invisible to others. Patients often tell us they have felt misunderstood, judged, or not believed because their symptoms cannot be seen. This service gives you the chance to meet others who understand those experiences, offering a space where you can feel heard, supported, and understood by others who appreciate the challenges of living with hidden symptoms.

An important part of self-management is responding to the day you are having, rather than the day you wish you were having.

On some days that may mean doing less. On others it may mean doing a little more.

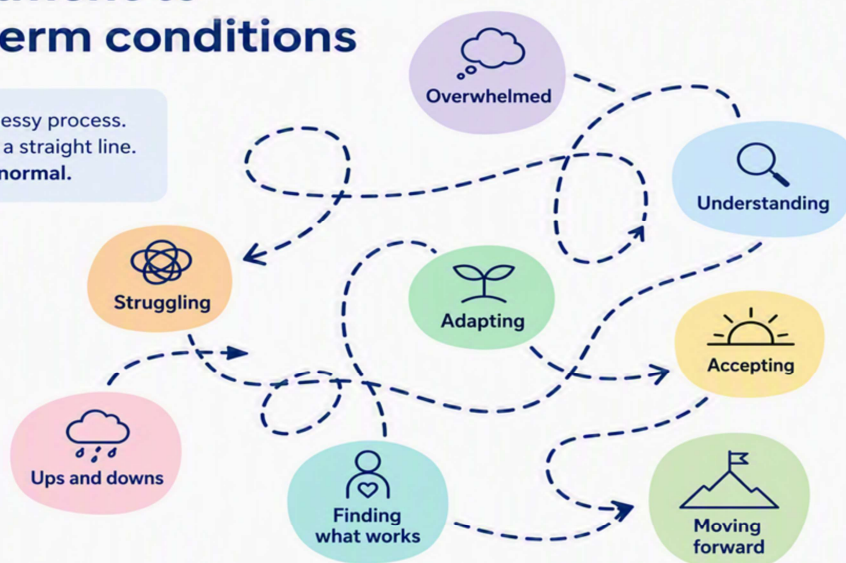
Because these challenges use up energy and attention, self-management needs to be flexible, supported and realistic. That is why adjustment is such an important part of living well.

Working within your current limits is not failure. It is a practical way of supporting health and wellbeing over the longer term.

Adjustment to long-term conditions



A messy process.
Not a straight line.
It's **normal**.



You may move
through different
stages.
That's OK.

As we've discussed, adjustment is a big part of living with a long-term health condition, and that process is different for everyone. It isn't a ladder or a straight line. People often move backwards and forwards between different experiences.

At first, you may be trying to make sense of what's happening, hoping things will return to how they were before. Or perhaps you know what might help, but putting it into practice can feel difficult.

Over time, many people begin to experiment with strategies, adapt to challenges, and find ways to manage their symptoms. The condition may still be part of life, but it no longer takes centre stage.

There will be good days and more difficult days. Setbacks are a normal part of the process and do not mean you're back at the beginning.

The aim of adjustment is not to give up hope or stop looking for ways to improve your health. Instead, it's about spending less energy fighting the reality of the condition and more energy focusing on what is within your control right now.

Although living with a long-term condition is difficult, many patients gradually find ways

to adapt, regain confidence and build a meaningful life. This does not happen overnight, and everyone's experience is different, but adjustment often comes through learning, experience and finding strategies that work for you.

This shift in mindset can then help you make practical decisions, adapt to challenges, regain confidence, and focus on what matters most to you despite ongoing symptoms.

Which of these experiences feels most familiar to you right now?

There is no right answer.

I'm still trying to understand what's happening

I'm experimenting with strategies

I'm adapting gradually

It changes from day to day

Pause and reflect

What helps on a good day?

What makes things harder?

Who helps you most?

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Reflection can help us learn from experience and identify strategies that support wellbeing. People often continue to learn, adapt and improve over time.

Over time, people learn more about what affects their symptoms, what helps, and how they respond.

Adjustment is not about liking the condition or giving up hope. It is about recognising the reality of the situation and working to stop struggling against it.

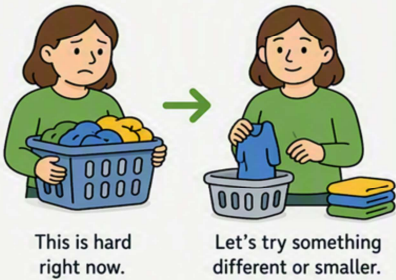
Take a moment to think about:

- What helps on a good day?
- What makes things harder?
- Who helps you most?

You do not need to answer every question. Choose the one that feels most useful.

Ways we can adapt to feel better and keep going

Sometimes we need to change **what we do**.



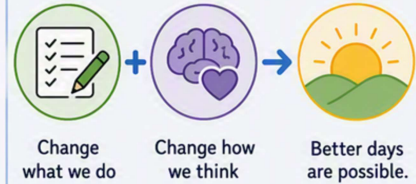
Different actions can make things more doable.

Sometimes we need to change **how we think** about the situation.



Changing our thoughts can help us feel more hopeful and in control.

Often we need **both**.



Small changes in what we do and how we think can make a big difference.

When circumstances change, we usually need to adapt.

Sometimes that means changing what we do, such as adjusting routines or pacing activities.

Sometimes it means changing how we think about the situation, for example reducing expectations of ourselves or focusing on what remains possible.

Often we need a bit of both.

Adapting is about finding the best way forward with the energy and symptoms you have on that day.

Throughout this programme, we'll explore practical ways to adapt, respond to setbacks, and still do the things that matter to you alongside a long-term health condition.



Symptoms are present but values can still guide behaviour

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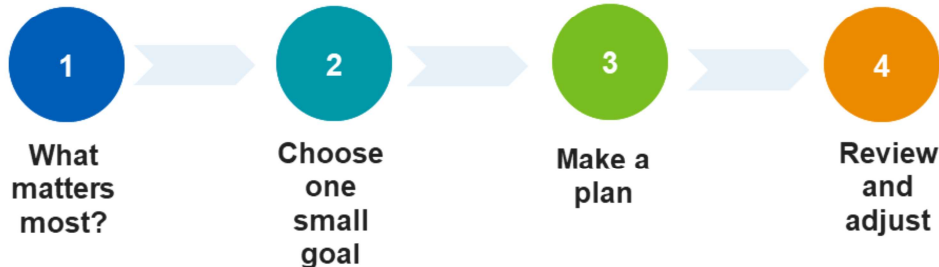
Many long-term conditions fluctuate. Good days and more difficult days are both part of the experience.

Living well does not mean living without symptoms. It means finding ways to keep moving towards what matters despite them.

Rather than waiting for symptoms to disappear, self-management focuses on finding ways to continue engaging with what matters while working within your current limits.

This does not mean ignoring symptoms or pushing through. It means making realistic, flexible decisions and finding ways to use your energy wisely.

Start with what matters to you



Questions to ask yourself

- What matters underneath the goal?
- What is the easiest step on a difficult day?

Examples of meaningful valued goals

Prepare one simple meal.

Keep in touch with one friend.

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Start with what matters to you.

Values are the things that matter to you, such as family, independence, connection or learning.

While goals may need to change from day to day, your values often remain the same. Values can help guide you when goals are blocked by symptoms.

When symptoms make a goal difficult, it can help to ask:

"What matters underneath this goal?"

Once you understand the value that matters, you can often find another small action that still moves you in that direction.

The aim is not to do everything at once. It is to identify what matters to you most, choose one realistic step, and adjust as needed.

For example, if your goal was to meet a friend for coffee but you're having a difficult day, a phone call or text message may still help you stay connected

Examples of meaningful valued goals

Walk to the corner shop and back.

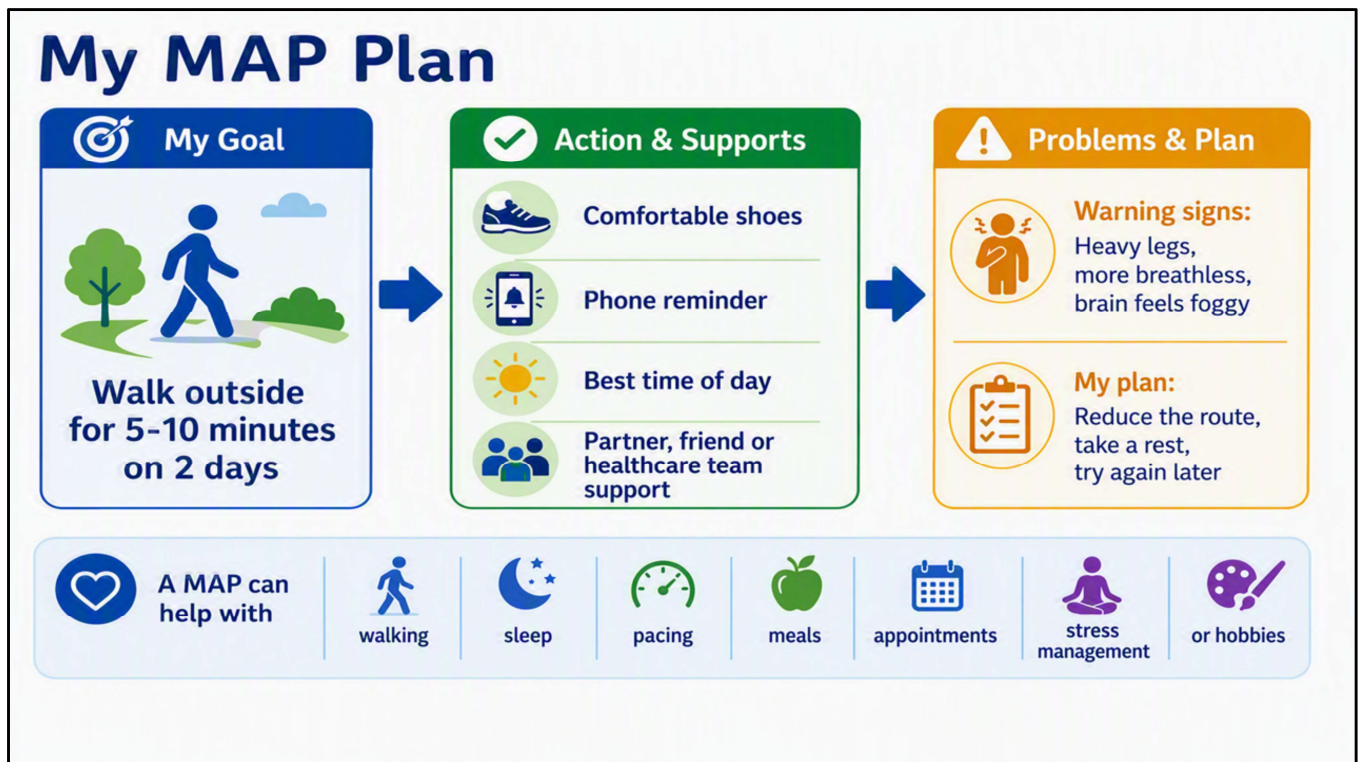
Prepare one simple meal.

Attend one appointment with less stress.

Keep in touch with one friend.

•What's most important to you at the moment?

- Family?
- Independence?
- Health?
- Work?
- Enjoyment?
- Something else?



Planning can help turn values into practical action, it is a practical strategy. In this example I've used the MAP model which stands for Motivation, Action and Planning:

This example starts with

M = Motivation what is → *My Goal* (What matters to me? What do I want to achieve?)

then considers

A = Action what → *Action & Supports* (What small step will I take? What or Who will help me succeed?)

P = Planning what → *Problems & Plan* (What might get in the way? Warning signs to look out for? What will I do if that happens? How to adapt the activity or task if things become more difficult?)

You can use this MAP plan for any activity that matters to you.

We find that Flexible plans often work better than perfect plans because they can adapt

to changing symptoms and circumstances.

Planning in this way can help you stay focused on what matters to you, while also preparing for more difficult days. It encourages realistic goals, early recognition of setbacks, and practical problem-solving.

Over the coming sessions, we'll explore ways to use tools like this to support pacing, activity planning, symptom management, rest, sleep, and other areas that are important for living well with a long-term health condition. At the end of the group programme you will have the opportunity to meet with one of the team to start creating a plan.

Flare-ups and setbacks

1. Notice it early

Work to notice and identify early 'STOP' signs.

2. Go gentler

Simplify tasks, reduce demands, use calming strategies.

3. Use your plan

Keep a simple plan for what helps.

“What does my body usually need when I start to tip into a flare?”

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Flare-ups and setbacks are a normal part of many long-term conditions and do not necessarily mean something is wrong.

The key is to:

- Notice early warning signs
- Often, there are early signs that your body may need a different pace. These might include increased fatigue, pain, breathlessness, poor sleep, changes in mood, or difficulties with concentration. The first step is to notice these signs as early as possible.

Think about your own early warning signs.

What usually tells you that your body needs a different pace?

It could be;

Fatigue

- Pain
- Poor sleep
- Breathlessness
- Brain fog
- Mood changes

Early awareness can help you make adjustments before symptoms become more difficult to manage.

Reduce demands where possible - Responding early and adjusting your pace can often help you manage setbacks more effectively.

And finally - Use a plan that you know helps

Rather than asking, "How do I push through this?", try asking:
"What does my body need right now?"

Familiar fluctuations may be part of your condition. However new, severe or worrying symptoms should not automatically be treated as a flare-up, seek clinical advice when needed.



Living with a long-term condition is hard → adjustment is normal → adaptation is possible → values matter → small steps help → setbacks are expected → self-management skills can be learned.

Over the next 5 weeks we will cover practical areas that can influence day-to-day wellbeing and self management, including:

- Activity planning and pacing
- Energy management
- Rest and sleep
- Movement
- Healthy habits
- Emotional wellbeing

We will explore these areas one at a time.

These areas can influence how manageable day-to-day life feels, although everyone's experience is different.

When these foundations are well supported, many people find day-to-day life becomes easier to navigate.

Key messages to take away

- ✓ **Ask for support when you need it.**
- ✓ **Adjust your plans to match your energy and symptoms.**
- ✓ **Expect progress to have ups and downs.**
- ✓ **Choose one small step towards what matters.**
- ✓ **Notice warning signs and respond early.**

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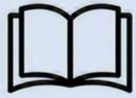
As we come to the end of today's session, there are a few key messages to take away.

Today's key messages are:

- **Ask for support when you need it.** - Self-management is a skill that develops over time - Support matters.
- **Adjust your plans to match your energy and symptoms. Plan an easier option for difficult days.**
- **Expect progress to have ups and downs.** Progress is rarely a straight line. **Aim for progress, not perfection.**
- **Choose one small step towards what matters.** Meaningful goals tend to work best
- **Notice warning signs and respond early.** Setbacks are a normal part of the process

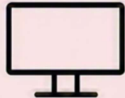
Living with a long-term condition is challenging, but many people find that learning new skills, making small changes and focusing on what matters helps them build a fulfilling life alongside their condition. We look forward to continuing these sessions with you over the coming weeks.

Before Next Week



Read

Website: My Health –
Living Well With Long Term
Conditions



Watch

My Health – Living Well
With Long Term Conditions

Video resources:

- Long Term Conditions video
- Instagram Reel



Do

Try reflecting on:

- What matters to you most?
- What would you like to do more of again?
- What is one small thing you could do this week?

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As we finish today, I'd encourage you to take away one thing to read, one thing to watch and one thing to do before our next session. The slides with these links will be available on our website.

You don't need to make big changes.

The most helpful changes are often small, realistic and sustainable.

Think about one thing you've heard today that you might like to try this week. Notice what happens, be curious, and remember that everyone is starting from a different place.

The aim is to keep learning what works best for you.