



PILOT™ Patient Counseling Tools Emotional Well-Being

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRONIC ILLNESS

While IPF is a lung disease, the consequences extend far beyond the disease itself and the medical treatments. If you or a loved one have been diagnosed recently with IPF, you are probably feeling overwhelmed, sad, and uncertain about the future. This is a totally natural response experienced by many people suffering from IPF. You are not alone: each year, 20,000–30,000 people in the United States learn they have IPF.

Some people are able to maintain a positive attitude; however, many people are hit hard by the news. Some feel the impact so strongly that other parts of their lives and relations with loved ones are changed. There are steps you can take that may help you cope with your recent diagnosis.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Develop a support system: Communication with friends and family is often an important place to find support during your illness. Ask someone to attend appointments with you, help you understand your disease, or help you manage chores and activities that may be causing you stress. You can get on the path to feeling better by asking your loved ones for help.

Join a support group: Many people gain emotional strength from support groups that provide the opportunity for patients to share their experiences and help each other. Seek out IPF support groups at these Web sites:

Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis: <http://www.coalitionforpf.org/Patients/support/default.asp>

Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation: <http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org/groups.htm>

Talk to your doctor: Your doctor is your partner in managing your disease. Your physician or health care provider can guide you to resources that can help with the emotional challenges you face. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any of the following feelings, particularly if they are becoming so consuming that you don't feel like yourself anymore:

- Uncontrolled crying spells
- Not wanting to get out of bed
- Depressed mood
- Thoughts of death
- Unable to enjoy favorite activities
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Loss of energy
- Hopelessness
- Change in appetite
- Hostility or anger
- Inability to sleep

Other resources: There are many possibilities, as well as different levels of support that can help you stay focused on fighting the illness and staying positive. These include counseling, stress management, and medication. The first step may be going online, making a phone call, or having a discussion with someone you trust. Part of feeling bad is thinking that no one cares, or that there is no way to change your life. Ignoring these feelings can have a negative impact on your health and well-being. There are professionals who have helped others, and they can help you. The first step is up to you.

OTHER WEB RESOURCES

More information:

American Lung Association <http://www.lungusa.org>

Mental health resources:

National Mental Health Association <http://www.nmha.org>

Find a counselor:

Psychology Today http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/ppc/prof_search.php?iorb=4764

PHONE RESOURCES

American Lung Association Lung Help Line	1-800-LUNGUSA
Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis	1-888-222-8541
Crisis hotline and mental health referral	1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)