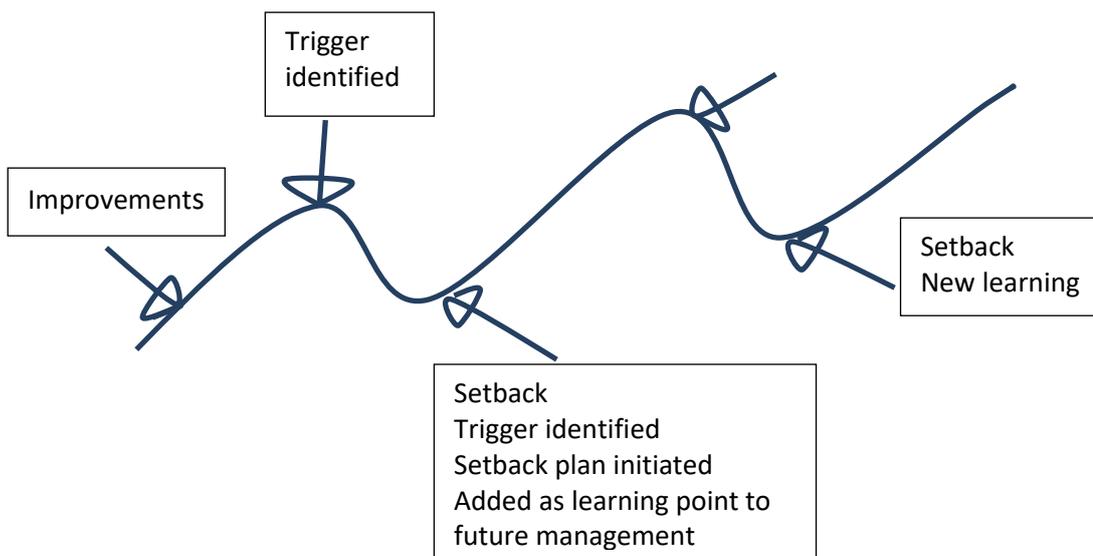


## Managing Setbacks

Setbacks are common but this does NOT mean that overall you are not improving. Although setbacks can be frustrating and upsetting having a plan ready will help you to cope while you are having an increase in symptoms.

There may be things that you can learn from each setback which will help you manage your condition in the future which may then help to reduce the number and severity of further setbacks. It is important to develop a plan for the bad days BEFORE the setback occurs so that you know how to cope at the time and what you can do to improve your situation again.



### A Setback Plan

A setback plan should come into place during times that you don't feel so well. This could be during times when you feel particularly physically tired, mentally drained or emotionally vulnerable. Setbacks can occur for many reasons, sometimes it is a result of an unrelated illness such as cold or flu, over-activity (mental or physical) or sometimes you may have had a particularly emotional or stressful time which has aggravated your symptoms.

When you notice an increase in your symptoms, use this as a sign to analyse how you are managing your condition and put your setback plan into place. Using your setback plan will help you cope during this period and may reduce the length and severity of this difficult time.

Your setback plan will need to be adjusted to each particular event, but these are general guidelines that can be applied in any situation:

### 1. Immediate symptom management

- Keep as mobile as your symptoms allow.
- Avoid prolonged periods of inactivity.
- Review your medication.
- Consider other self-help methods of pain control (heat/ cold).
- Try and avoid oversleeping/ daytime sleeping.

### 2. Accept that setbacks are a normal part of your condition.

- Setbacks can occur for many reasons - if you are able to identify the trigger for this one, it can be used as a learning tool to prevent similar setbacks.
- Setbacks do not mean that you will not continue to improve or recover.

### 3. Review your activity levels

- Consider using activity diaries again so that you can plan your activity and rest periods.
- It may be useful to keep a copy of a diary where you have planned and structured your week particularly well. How does that compare to your current structure?
- Modify/reduce your activity levels - you may need to lower your goals and reduce the duration or intensity of your planned activity or exercise.
- Aim for consistency - avoid boom/bust activity levels.
- Set clear boundaries - ask others for assistance and delegate tasks when appropriate.
- Remember to use a timer when carrying out an activity.
- Avoid long periods of inactivity or rest if possible.
- Try to do at least one activity a day that is for you and is enjoyable.
- Acknowledge your achievements - remember you are managing to accomplish tasks despite your symptoms.

#### 4. Stress Management

- Be optimistic and positive. If you have experienced previous setbacks/relapses in the past, what has helped in the past?
- Use stress management techniques (e.g. mindfulness, relaxation, exercise).

#### 5. Sleep Hygiene

- Have you lost an established routine or slipped into bad habits? - check your sleep hygiene handout and recommit to any techniques that have worked previously.

#### 6. Resume your previous activity and normal living as soon as possible

- As your symptoms improve, have the confidence to gradually begin to build up your activities in a paced manner - set yourself SMART goals
- Slowly begin to decrease the length or frequency of your rest periods and increase the duration intensity of your exercise/activity.
- Keep using stress management techniques - even when you begin to feel a little better.
- Contact any people or appointments that you cancelled and rebook when you are able

#### 7. Spend some time making your own 'setback kit'. What strategies did you find useful when you attended the group?

- Handouts - Re-read your handouts and recommit to any strategies that you have stopped doing.
- Keep a copy of a completed version of any of the paperwork that you found useful in your setback kit (activity diaries, goal sheets, circuit sheets) along with some blank copies for new completion.
- Contact people around you who can support you e.g. families/friends.

#### 8. Are you still exercising regularly?

- Remember, the recommended amount is 5 x 30 minutes/week (150 minutes per week) of light-to-moderate cardiovascular exercise (slightly out of breath).

- Recommit to including exercise into your regular routine. Start gently and progress in a graded manner.
  - Consider other avenues of support to maintain your interest/motivation: friends/family, gym membership, community exercise classes.
9. Try and learn from the experience - are there any measures you can put into place to prevent / minimise the setback for the future? (Identify and manage the 'trigger').

