Developing a strong sense of present awareness, is a skill that needs attention and time, but it's a skill that helps you maintain equilibrium and can regulate you when you feel overwhelmed.

Your breathing matters. In calming your body through breath, you calm your mind, it's a fact!

3 Breathing Exercises for Stress Management

Deep breathing is beneficial to stay calm during a stressful situation.

Pursed Lips Breathing

- **Inhale through the nose for 2 seconds.**
- **Pucker your lips, then exhale for 4-6 seconds.**
- **Repeat several times until you feel a slowed rate of breathing.**

Square Breathing

- **Sit upright with your back straight.**
- **Inhale for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds.**
- **Exhale for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds.**
- **Repeat.**

4-7-8 Breathing

- **Sit upright.**
- **Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth near your teeth.**
- **Close your mouth, then inhale through the nose for 4 seconds.**
- **Hold your breath for 7 seconds.**
- **Exhale completely through pursed lips for 8 seconds.**
- **Repeat.**

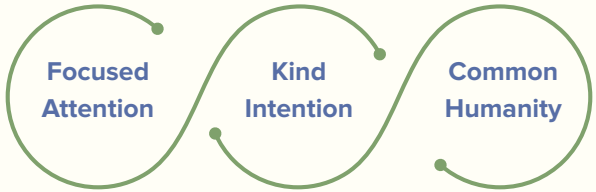
The Practice of Present Awareness

Present Awareness can take many forms; it can comprise the following:

Focused Attention is taking your thoughts and sensations and focusing on whatever is in your attention right now. You can then use this focused attention to soothe yourself and therefore your nervous system.

Kind Intention is choosing to take a compassionate stance towards yourself and others in the present, accepting what is and knowing that it will change.

Common Humanity is knowing that suffering is part of the human condition, that it is shared, and that none of us are immune or exempt.



What else can help?

Remember that your thoughts are NOT FACTS! When you are worried you tend to focus on all the worst case scenarios, rather than on a more balanced approach to thinking about your concerns.

For further information:
www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/vte/resources/

Patient Information

Living with uncertainty and fear of recurrence after a clot.

This Patient Information Leaflet provides general guidance based advice. It is not intended for the management of significant mental health challenges. If you have significant concerns about your mood or general wellbeing, please seek advice from your professional healthcare advisor or GP.

Living with Uncertainty

The experience of having a blood clot may introduce a level of uncertainty into your life. As humans we do not like uncertainty as it makes us feel uncomfortable. It can evoke feelings of anxiety, stress or fear.

Imagine uncertainty as being similar to a weather forecast. Just as you can't predict every detail of the weather with absolute certainty, healthcare professionals may not always be able to predict every aspect of how a clotting condition will affect your body. Just as you can prepare for the weather, so too can you manage your emotions and worry. By developing well-being plans and seeking help, you can better manage these emotions, and maintain a positive outlook on your future.

Fear of Recurrence

The risk of recurrence can vary widely depending on the reason why you developed your clot. For some of us this can mean that you have to live with the prospect of another clot occurring over time. This can be a significant challenge psychologically and may make you feel unsafe or anxious.

When you feel anxious, your nervous systems is prone to staying in that part of the system we call "Fight or Flight". This means you may have a sense of unease in your body, and are looking for a threat. It's a survival instinct that is useful when you experience it in short bursts. However, when you stay in this window of hyper arousal too long, it can be both exhausting and distressing.

Managing Worry

We all worry; it keeps us safe. When worry becomes overwhelming & unhelpful, you need to tackle it. Worry can be triggered by what's happening around you or by internal experiences, such as pain or fatigue. To worry is to have troublesome "what if?", type of thoughts. *"what if the clot comes back? What if I can't focus on my job in the future? What if I never recover from this?"*

What can we do to manage this?

When you feel under threat, your thinking can be full of fear based images and beliefs. You may think the worst, make assumptions, and jump to conclusions.

A more helpful approach in times of uncertainty is to engage in hope based thinking. This does not mean being unrealistic or in denial about your problems. It is making the choice, over and over again, to choose the most helpful thought or action that will help you live the best life you can in the circumstances you find ourselves in.

It is important to challenge our unhelpful thoughts

Unhelpful
I don't trust myself because I missed the symptoms.
I'm never going to be able to get this done.
I'm freaking out right here.
I can't do this.
It's too hard.
What is the point?

Helpful
I did eventually get help and I am taking care of myself now.
I'm going to do as much as I possibly can.
I feel anxious, but I know what to do to help with that.
I can try my best.
Nothing worth having comes easy, it's hard but I have a plan to break it down and get through it.
I am going to come out the other end of this with no regrets.