Make small goals

It can sometimes feel overwhelming to plan and do things when you have been unwell or when you are feeling worried. Setting small achievable goals can reassure you when you feel the world is an uncertain place. It can help you focus and give you a sense of control. Making a list of very small goals you want to tackle can be a good starting point. When goals are small, they become more manageable and achievable. This gives you a small boost and some reassurance that not everything is outside your control.

Develop your social connections

Research shows that those of us who feel part of a community have a better sense of wellbeing than those who live in isolation. Social engagement and feeling part of a group has positive benefits for your health. This can include family support but if that is not available to you, then other social groups can be very beneficial. If you don't feel like being sociable initially, being around those that support you can be helpful and it will get easier over time.

Use the ACE approach

A helpful strategy to help manage your mood and activity levels is to monitor it on a daily basis. Using the acronym ACE, review your activities and score them (on a scale of 0 -10).

- Does this give me a sense of achievement?
- Does this give me a sense of connection?
- Does this give me a sense of enjoyment?

Some of your activities will score highly on all 3 aspects, but other activities or experiences may only score highly for you on 1 or 2 of these. Try to engage in a range of activities that offer you a variety of meaningful experiences across all three of these domains. Asking yourself "How did I do on my ACE score today?", can help you keep track of your behaviours and feelings . This means you are actively managing your own wellbeing.

ACE your day

A sense of **A**chievement

C sense of **C**onnectedness to others and the world

E sense of **E**njoyment

Never be afraid to reach out and ask for help!

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

Patient Information

Look After Your Mind

Psychological aspects of recovery after a blood 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.

Look After Your Mind

Psychological aspects of recovery after a blood clot

For many people, being diagnosed with a blood clot or a coagulation disorder is a sudden illness event. In addition to the physical impact, some people can experience an increase in worry or anxiety in the aftermath of such an illness experience. Feeling like this is a normal reaction. In addition, if you are on anticoagulation treatment, you may have to change aspects of your lifestyle and manage a new medication regime. All of this can lead to increased feelings of worry or anxiety.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal human response to stress. We all feel anxious at times but it can be particularly noticeable when you have been ill or diagnosed with a long term health condition. When you are anxious you may worry more. You could also experience physical symptoms such as muscle tension, nausea, light-headedness or a racing heart rate. It can be difficult to decipher physical symptoms that are attributable to anxiety from other causes. It is important to check in with your medical specialist about these symptoms. If they are diagnosed as being anxiety based, then the good news is that you can help yourself to self-manage them. We all need to develop our own individual "Tool Kit" of coping strategies to help us manage worry and stress in our lives.

The Mind / Body connection

Recovery from any illness event involves both our bodies and our minds. People often believe that the mind and body are separate things. Research has shown that the mind and body are closely connected and have a direct effect on each other. Your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical sensations are all related. For example, we blush when we feel embarrassed and we can feel calmer when we think about a nice experience we have had. Your emotions can be directly felt in your body; e.g. if you are low or sad, it can make you feel more sensitive to pain or tension in your body.

Top tips to manage our Psychological recovery

Notice when you are anxious or worried

The first step to managing anxiety is to notice when you are feeling anxious, worried or afraid. You can do this by noticing your thoughts and how you are feeling physically.

It is important to know that just because you have had a thought it does not mean that it is true or that it is a fact. Example " I am never going to recover". We can often get very upset by our thoughts and it is helpful to label your thoughts and remind yourself that they are not always facts, they are just thoughts. Some people find it helpful to acknowledge that they are having the thought and say to themselves 'I am having the thought that….' especially if it is a stressful or upsetting thought.

Our minds tend to make lots of judgments so rather than trying to stop this; tune into the part of your mind that tends to notice; for example, "I am noticing that…. ". This helps us challenge our more unhelpful thoughts. Practice the skill of challenging thoughts that are unhelpful, and try and generate more helpful thoughts "Can I think of an alternative thought that is more helpful to me right now".

Also bring your attention to the words you are using in your thoughts, are they provoking more fear? Can you replace language that promotes fear with more helpful language? For example "I am terrified, this is a crazy time" to "Yes, I can feel the fear because the world is so uncertain, but let me focus on what I can do right now to help me feel more steady".

Share your worries with someone you trust

Talking to someone you trust about your thoughts and worries can really help to alleviate your stress or anxiety. Sometimes when people keep their thoughts and worries inside and don't share them, those thoughts and worries can seem much bigger than they are. Talking to someone who can give support and reassurance can really help you to feel better, especially if there is little they can do in that particular moment about their worries or fears.

Keep a journal

Some people find it helpful to write down their concerns when they notice they are worrying. This can be particularly helpful before going to sleep if that's a time you worry a lot. Writing down worries helps you to understand what you are worrying about. This can also help you to get some perspective on your worries.

Research shows that practicing gratitude on a daily basis, no matter how small, has a positive benefit on your wellbeing. Writing down daily small things you are grateful for is also helpful in managing your mood.

Be active

It can be difficult to be active after feeling physically unwell. Being active and doing the exercises recommended by your physiotherapist or medical team can be an excellent way to help you physically recover. Research also shows that exercise / physical activity is helpful in managing anxiety and worry. However, It is okay to have days where you can exercise and other days when it is harder. The more you try and are consistent, the more benefit you will get.