It is quite normal for heart failure patients to be concerned about their condition. The term “heart failure” sounds frightening, even though most patients can lead productive lives if they have proper treatment. Yet many heart failure patients have periods when they feel anxious, frustrated, depressed, helpless, or angry. These emotions are usually not harmful but they make you feel bad and may affect your family and friends also.
The most common problems for patients with heart failure are depression, anxiety, and anger. You should become aware of your emotions so you can take steps to deal with them before they become problems.

**Depression**

People with any chronic disease feel depressed at one time or another. It may be hard to separate the symptoms of the illness from the symptoms of depression. Take a moment to think about the statements below, and check off the ones that apply to you.

- I feel down in the dumps, blue, and/or hopeless most of the time.
- My sleep is often disturbed. (Other than when I am short of breath.)
- I sometimes feel that life is not worth living.
- I want to cry for no reason.
- I have lost interest in my usual activities.
- I have nothing to look forward to.
- I have lots of trouble concentrating.

A check mark by any of these statements suggests that you might be depressed. Discuss how you are feeling with your doctor, nurse, or other health care professional. Many people get better simply by discussing their fears and concerns. Other people may need help from a mental health professional.
Anxiety

Feelings of anxiety are common. Anxiety may cause irregular heartbeats. It may also cause you to feel restless, or like something very bad is about to happen. Here are some tips to help you deal with anxiety:

• Try sharing your worries with a family member, friend, or health care professional. You may not even know what is causing your anxiety, but it can still help to talk about it.

• Take time each day to relax. You may think, “I take it easy all the time—that’s my problem.” Even if you are resting a lot, you can still be worried and tense. Relaxation is a skill that helps you feel less anxious and worried. If you have trouble relaxing, ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

• Be sure you’re not doing anything harmful to reduce your anxiety. Some people drink too much, or take too many sleeping pills or tranquilizers. These habits can produce problems in people with heart disease.

Anger

There are plenty of reasons to be frustrated or angry if you have heart failure. It is not bad or wrong to feel angry. However, it can be upsetting to you and those around you if you let your anger get out of control.

Do any of these statements sound like you?

☐ I sometimes blow up at people.

☐ I often feel angry or irritable.

☐ Other people say I seem angry or irritable.
☐ I get mad easily.

☐ I have caused myself some problems by getting angry easily.

If any of these sound familiar, you may have a problem with anger. There are ways of dealing with anger so it does not upset you or those around you. For example:

- Find someone to talk to about your feelings. If you don’t want to talk with your family, friends, or health care professionals, try joining a support group or seeing a counselor.

- Learn to ask for help. If you are overwhelmed, you are more likely to feel angry. Asking family and friends for help may make life easier for you and for them.

Remember:

Try to relax and enjoy life; it will help you feel better. There is no reason to deprive yourself of the things you enjoy. Go to a movie or out to dinner. Listen to music or watch a video that makes you happy. Visit with friends or take leisurely walks. Even when you feel bad, you need to pull yourself up and do it!