

# ALS Mental Health

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects nearly every facet of our lives, including how we feel, think, act, and relate to others. When you're living with a disease like ALS, it is important to remain aware of how you're feeling and seek support when you need it. Tending to your mental health can have a positive impact on your day-to-day quality of life.



## Developing a Strong Support Network

It is important to develop a strong support system that can help guide and support you throughout your ALS journey. It is essential to find a team of ALS medical professionals, ideally at an ALS clinic, that can monitor your health, provide care, and make recommendations. It is also important to find a local ALS organization, like ALS United North Carolina, that can answer your questions, host support groups, connect you to resources, and more. And it can be very helpful to have a network of family and friends who can support you and your caregiver.

## Staying Connected with Others

When living with ALS, it is not uncommon to feel physically or emotionally isolated and disconnected from others. Yet socializing and maintaining relationships is often what brings us joy and lifts us up during hard times. As ALS progresses, it can become more difficult to socialize and communicate with others. With the right mobility equipment and communication devices, there are ways to socialize in person or connect with others via video, phone, email, text, or social media.

## Practicing Self-Care

When living with ALS, there are a number of things you can do to improve your overall well-being, such as getting good nutrition, finding ways to sleep better, and doing range of motion exercises. Following your ALS medical team's recommendations, such as getting and using prescribed mobility and respiratory devices, is another way to improve your quality of life.

## Being Open to Counseling

If you are struggling with overwhelming emotions, anxiety or depression, or if you are just finding it hard to make it through each day, a skilled counselor or therapist can work with you to develop insights, coping skills, and techniques that can help you better manage your current and future challenges.

If you think you could benefit from mental health support, reach out to your ALS medical team for suggestions. Some but not all ALS clinics offer mental health services. If your team does not, ask if they can recommend a skilled professional who has experience working with people living with ALS, a disability, or another chronic or terminal illness. If you are concerned about being able to pay for counseling, ask your ALS medical team if they have any suggestions or know of any free or reduced-cost mental health services in your area.

## Anxiety and Depression

It is not uncommon for people diagnosed with ALS to experience anxiety or depression. If you are concerned that symptoms of anxiety or depression may be affecting your quality of life and ability to handle daily activities, discuss these symptoms with your ALS care provider.

Your neurologist or mental health professional might suggest counseling and/or taking a medication that can help ease your symptoms. Many people diagnosed with ALS have found that taking medication under the guidance of a professional has helped them feel more like themselves again. Accepting this help could improve your quality of life during this difficult time.

## Finding Quality of Life

Receiving an ALS diagnosis is shocking, life-changing news. It is common to feel overwhelmed by powerful emotions like fear, anger, sadness, and grief. Yet at some point, many people begin to accept the diagnosis and adjust to their new reality of having this illness. Once this begins to happen, the question can become: How will I choose to live my life with ALS?

ALS does not have to define who you are or consume your every thought. You may have little control over how ALS affects your body, but you do have some control over how it affects your mind and outlook. Your approach to living with the disease will play an important role in your quality of life.

### Get Local Support



**ALS United North Carolina**  
**4 N. Blount Street - Suite 200**  
**Raleigh, NC 27601**  
[www.alsnc.org](http://www.alsnc.org)  
**(919) 755-9001**

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