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## Practical and Actionable Tips to Help You Rebuild Your Life After an Accident

Our Friends · Tuesday, August 27th, 2024

An accident shakes up both your body and mind. But how exactly can you bounce back? Is it even possible to pick up the pieces and be happy and fulfilled?

Here's what to do.

### Focus on Healing Physically

- Get checked out by a doctor ASAP. Even if you feel ok initially, more **injuries may show up days or even weeks after the collision**. Better safe than sorry, so go get examined.
- Do any suggested physical therapy exercises. Return for follow-up appointments. Trust your doctor's judgment on appropriate treatments for the type of injury sustained.
- Apply ice/heat packs as directed. Using ice and heat as instructed by your physician can alleviate muscle soreness, pain, and swelling. Be careful not to overdo it to avoid further tissue damage.
- Get plenty of rest
- Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water too!

As difficult as it can be to stay patient, let your body guide the timeline instead of pushing healing faster than is realistic. Slow and steady wins the race when it comes to recuperating physically after an accident.

### Deal With Logistics and Paperwork of the Accident

While not the most exciting task, you need to handle various administrative duties to tie up loose ends. Ignoring these responsibilities usually backfires by creating bigger hassles down the road.

You should wrap up accident-related business to close that challenging chapter.

- Report the incident to insurance companies. Notify your insurer about the accident right away as most have a timeframe deadline listed in the policy. Provide all relevant details about property damage and injuries sustained. Get a claim number.
- Track expenses for reimbursement. Document accident-related costs like car repairs, medical bills, medication costs, damaged property, lost wages from missed work, etc. Submit this paperwork to the insurance company.
- Communicate with healthcare staff. Update doctors and physical therapists about pain levels, treatment effectiveness, and questions about medications or at-home recommendations. Ask for

progress reports and discharge plans to submit for insurance reimbursement.

- Stay on top of paperwork. Don't let documents pile up unopened. Read letters from healthcare facilities and insurance companies then respond promptly as needed with additional information requested.

Closing out obligations stemming from the accident relieves added stress so you can shift focus to simply getting back on your feet again.

## Attend to Your Mental Health

An **accident can cause serious mental trauma**. And so you should make caring for your mental health just as much of an immediate priority as physical healing – the two are interconnected. Don't ignore emotional trauma or think you can “tough it out” alone.

- Talk about the experience with supportive people. Describing details helps process the incident at your own pace. Friends/family often normalize emotions, relieving shame. Consider joining a support group of fellow accident survivors.
- See a counselor or therapist if struggling with PTSD symptoms. Flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and depression after an accident signal PTSD. Counseling teaches coping strategies as you regain emotional equilibrium. No shame in needing some extra support.
- Practice relaxation techniques daily. **Stress management via deep breathing** exercises, meditation, yoga, or mindfulness keeps worrying from becoming overwhelming. Relaxation releases tension allowing peacefulness to return.
- Maintain usual routines. Sticking to former schedules, hobbies, and social events creates a semblance of normalcy. Familiar activities reinforce life carries on despite this disruption. Slowly return to customary rhythms.

Don't downplay how this incident might torment you mentally in addition to physical consequences. Make emotional healing a priority too by being honest about your struggle while utilizing healthy outlets for stress relief.

## Return to Work/School Gradually after the Accident

Bouncing back into professional and academic responsibilities before being reasonably ready often backfires. And so pace yourself to avoid setbacks in recovery. Ease in gradually according to what your mind and body can handle.

- Use downtime wisely to catch up on rest. Don't feel guilty about missing work or classes as energy restores. The extra sleep, stretching, and destressing actually quickens recuperation.
- Ask about temporary disability accommodations if needed. Employers and academic advisors often happily oblige restrictions like reduced hours/workload, more breaks, leniency on deadlines, etc. Most want you fully mended too!
- Build endurance bit by bit. Try short trial runs before assuming you can handle full duty. Maybe start with a couple of hours back at the office or one class. Slowly add more as strength returns. Pace yourself.
- Don't overexert past your limits too quickly. The last thing you want is re-aggravating injury trying to prove you can handle regular output before reasonably ready. Be honest with yourself and your workplace/school about your current abilities. They usually appreciate that responsibility rather than having to send you right back on medical leave! Reacclimate progressively.

Patience is essential when determining the right timeline to resume everything on your plate pre-accident. Listen to feedback from healthcare providers, as well as your mind/body signals, regarding when you're truly prepared energy and health-wise. Gradual immersion back into routine prevents setbacks.

## Examine Driving Anxiety Carefully

If you were injured as a driver or passenger in an automobile accident, even riding in vehicles may trigger fear initially. Distinguish between rational caution and unnecessary phobias by taking baby steps to rebuild confidence behind the wheel.

- Assess anxiety triggers thoughtfully. Does a passenger seat exacerbate panic more than driving? Do highway speeds scare you more than side streets? Pinpoint specifics like weather conditions, times of day, route locations, etc intensifying fear.
- Begin exposure therapy slowly to desensitize. Have someone you trust drive you short distances around low-traffic neighborhoods on dry, sunny days. Gradually increase duration and hazard level as comfort grows.
- Get anxiety reduction tips from your healthcare provider. Counselors often suggest coping mechanisms like controlled breathing, positive self-talk, relaxing music, or visualizing safe outcomes. Use strategies disproving exaggerated worries.
- Retake a defensive driving course. Reviewing safe habits bolsters competence to share roads with others again. Brushing up on skills helps get into the correct mindset.

Driving apprehension after an incident is completely normal initially. Let anxiety diminish by facing feared scenarios slowly, utilizing professional guidance, to prove recurring accidents are unlikely. Confidence behind the wheel returns taking small steps forward.

## Lean on Your Support Network

Nobody bounces back efficiently from adversity alone. Relying on trusted friends and family for physical assistance plus emotional encouragement eases the pressure tremendously. Don't isolate yourself when loved ones happily help carry the load.

- Accept help from support networks. Let friends and family members cook meals, drive you places, clean up around the house, run errands, etc while recuperating. Most people genuinely want to lighten difficulties through acts of service.
- Vent, process, and validate emotions together. Sessions with a counselor provide one sounding board to air worries. Casual conversations with friends/family serve a similar purpose of processing feelings in a judgment-free zone.
- Spend time together doing light activities initially. Gentle pursuits like playing board games, watching movies or simply enjoying a coffee break together redirect focus positively. Laughter and companionship boost healing.
- Say yes to invites nudging you back into life. The instinct to hermit at home grows strong post-accident. Push past avoidance by accepting offers to social gatherings even if you only stay briefly. Connection speeds progress.

Let your village care for you while injured and traumatized. The immense relief possible from practical help plus emotional support accelerate getting back on track. Never feel ashamed accepting assistance. That's what loved ones are for!

## Establish a “New Normal” Moving Forward after the Accident

Trying to force recreating your pre-accident existence is unrealistic and unhealthy. Accepting life has changed to some degree liberates you from beating yourself up. And so consider determining what components constitute a satisfying “new normal” aligning with current abilities/circumstances.

- Redefine priorities and boundaries. What used to be non-negotiable obligations before injury may require relegation lower on lists now. Be honest about energy/time limits in order to establish maintainable systems.
- Set small attainable goals. Maybe you work longer hours or take fewer classes while recovering. Breaking bigger objectives down into mini-milestones creates achievable pathways forward.
- Research adaptations maximizing independence. Assistive devices, apps for remembering medications, better home organization etc streamline daily functioning altered post-accident. Modify surroundings to support needs.
- Expect and accept setbacks during adjustment. Ups and downs are inevitable regaining footing after disruption. Self-compassion quiets inner critics when progress isn’t linear. Patience prevails long-term.

Rather than rigidly clinging to “this is how life should be”, approach evolving circumstances after an incident with an open willingness for flux. Define “normal” as what functionally works best today. Flexible adaptation minimizes frustration.

## Seek Further Help If Struggling to Cope with the Accident

Despite the best solo efforts, some accident after-effects linger – interfering with daily life at work, school, home or socially. Don’t keep drowning with no relief – ask for reinforcements through formal help routes if informal support networks aren’t enough.

- Consult a doctor about medications helping cope with sustained pain, insomnia, anxiety, etc if home remedies and natural supports fail. Sometimes properly prescribed medications assist in rebooting stalled progress.
- Look into signing up for state and federal assistance programs as applicable for help covering healthcare costs, disability accommodations, in-home care, food stamps, etc. Let these services alleviate financial stress.
- Call emergency responders if self-harm ideation intensifies. Thinking about suicide requires immediate intervention.

Ask for extra assistance from professionals qualified to bolster your continued efforts toward recovery.

Everyone needs a lifeline sometimes when emotional and physical health feel completely overwhelmed. Asking for support and guidance requires courage and self-awareness – two strengths that will serve you well in rebuilding post-accident life.

## Be Gentle with Yourself

Finally, yet importantly, practice self-compassion. Forgive setbacks while celebrating baby steps forward sideways or backwards. Growth looks different from person to person.

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You've endured something extremely difficult so reject any unfair self-criticism about not "bouncing back" fast or thoroughly enough.

The key is to remain patient with yourself and the healing process while utilizing every resource available to accelerate recovery.

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