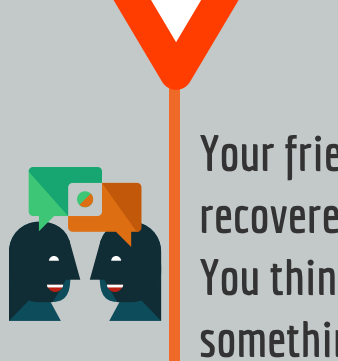




Concussion Pitfalls

Below are examples of common concussion recovery pitfalls and actions you can take now to avoid them.



COMPARING YOUR CONCUSSION AND RECOVERY TO SOMEONE ELSE

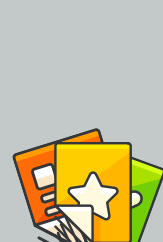


Your friend tells you the story of their concussion and how they recovered in a few days. They also had different symptoms than you. You think that your symptoms should be resolved by now. Is there something wrong?



Why is this a pitfall?

Every concussion and recovery path is *different*. Comparing yourself to someone else might get you off track and set up unhelpful recovery expectations.



What can you DO?

Remind yourself that the type and length of common concussion symptoms vary. What works best to treat those symptoms may be different for each person. Listen to recommendations from your medical providers and concentrate on *YOUR* recovery. Set achievable goals for yourself. This will help you remember your “wins” and keep your recovery on track.



Helpful Handouts

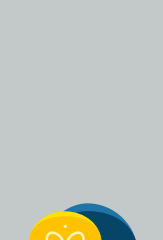
- [Concussion Basics](#)
- [Staying Organized](#)
- [Self Advocacy](#)
- [What I Want you to Know About my Concussion](#)
- [Healthy Coping](#)



IGNORING OR COVERING UP SYMPTOMS AND OVERDOING THINGS



You are at the gym working out with your workout buddy. Your symptoms go from a 2/10 to a 6/10 after 30 minutes. You want to push through, and you don't want your workout buddy to know you are struggling, so you finish your workout without easing up on the intensity. Your symptoms don't go away after you get home and last until the next day. You miss class because of your symptoms.



Why is this a pitfall?

Overdoing it can prolong your symptoms, and overdoing it too often may increase your recovery time. Active recovery means staying engaged in daily activities and letting how you feel drive how much you do, and how much you don't do. Your goal is to find a nice moderate or medium level of activity.

Also, most people do not understand concussions or the recovery process unless they have previous personal experience. Others around you want you to get better, they just might not know how to help. Not being open about what is really going on and how you are feeling does not allow your family, friends, and others to have the best information to know how to support you on your path to recovery.



What can you DO?

During an activity, it's okay if your symptoms increase a little. If your symptoms *continue* to increase, that may be a sign that it is *time to take a break*. Do something relaxing and then return to the activity once your symptoms calm down. Using strategies like the **4 P's** (located in the Returning to Activity handout) can help you find a good balance. Be sure to stick with activities you've been “cleared” for by your healthcare provider or athletic trainer.

Also, *be willing to speak up* about what you are experiencing and self-advocate. Understand your needs and act on that information to help you be successful. Let the people in your support system know your symptoms, what is working for you, and how they can help.



Helpful Handouts

- [Concussion Basics](#)
- [Self Advocacy](#)
- [Returning to Activity](#)
- [Social Life](#)
- [Return to Play and Exercise](#)
- [Returning to Work](#)
- [Success in School](#)
- [What I Want you to Know About my Concussion](#)



OVER-FOCUSING ON SYMPTOMS

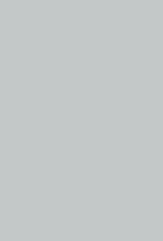


It's been a few weeks since you got your concussion, and even though you've been getting better, you're feeling stressed because you are still experiencing several symptoms. Every day you think for long periods about what symptoms you are having and how they compare to the day before. You've even started making notes about your daily symptoms.



Why is this a pitfall?

While it's important to *listen to your body* and avoid ignoring symptoms altogether, it's equally important to *avoid over-focusing* on your symptoms. Often the more people focus on their symptoms, the worse they feel. In some cases, people begin to monitor symptoms so closely, it's as if they've pulled out a magnifying glass and are inspecting every thought, feeling, or action. When this happens, people tend to begin noticing symptoms that were there even before their injury but that they hadn't paid attention to before. This can cause stress and put you at risk of not fully recognizing the progress you've made in your recovery.



What can you DO?

Remind yourself that *symptoms are a normal part of recovery* and that some symptoms are normal to experience even for people who've never had a concussion. Limit monitoring or tracking of symptoms, and work to find a balance of listening to your body without over-examining things. Keep in mind that recovery may be stressful at times and that over-focusing on symptoms may further increase stress. Rather than focusing on symptoms, it may be more helpful to focus on using healthy coping strategies, taking care of your emotional well-being, and using strategies to help manage your symptoms.

That said, be sure to tell your healthcare providers if you notice new symptoms that are worrying you, or if your symptoms seem to be worsening. The best bet is to *find a balance* between noticing your symptoms, but not dwelling on them while you are recovering.

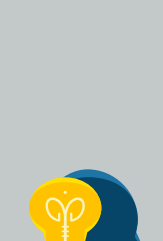


Helpful Handouts

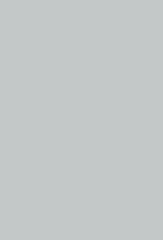
- [Concussion Basics](#)
- [Sleep](#)
- [Healthy Coping](#)
- [Success in School Part 2](#)
- [Emotional Well Being](#)



RESPONDING TO SYMPTOMS BY COMPLETELY AVOIDING THINGS



You started getting a headache while you were at a friend's house. They had a few people over and were watching TV in the background. You felt overwhelmed and like your symptoms were flaring, so you left without letting anyone know. From now on, you plan to only stay at home and not go anywhere that might have more than 1 or 2 people.



Why is this a pitfall?

After concussion, it is common to be more sensitive to different sights, sounds, movements, and environments. Your brain may need *practice* processing some sights, sounds, and movement to reduce its sensitivity, which can lead to overall symptom reduction. While it may be helpful to temporarily avoid or reduce activities or environments that increase symptoms, avoiding things altogether or refraining from activities that are only very minimally bothersome may increase sensitivities, worsen your symptoms, and *prolong* your recovery.



What can you DO?

During active recovery, your aim should be to *gradually increase* the duration and intensity of activities, as tolerated. Again, it's okay if your symptoms increase a little during activity. And if your symptoms continue to increase, that may be a sign that it is time to take a break, relax until your symptoms calm down, and then return to the activity. If you know an activity may bother you, it may help to plan out breaks ahead of time or generally limit the amount of time you spend doing that activity. If you have concerns or experience more severe symptoms, talk to your doctor, athletic trainer, or other healthcare providers for guidance on safely managing activity after a concussion.

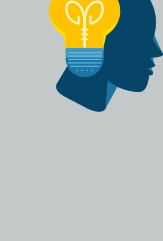


Helpful Handouts

- [Concussion Basics](#)
- [Success in School](#)
- [Returning to Activity](#)
- [Social Life](#)
- [Return to Play and Exercise](#)
- [Return to Work](#)



BEING HARD ON YOURSELF



You feel badly because you pushed yourself too hard over the weekend and now your symptoms are elevated. You start having “I should” type thoughts.

“I should be able to handle this better.”

“I should be able to do this without needing to take breaks!”



Why is this a pitfall?

It is *normal* to have ups and downs in the recovery process. How you talk to yourself can have a big impact on your mood and emotional wellbeing.



What can you DO?

Use *positive* self-talk if you fall into any of the common concussion pitfalls. Instead of using an “I should” statement, say something like, *“It's ok that I feel this way. It's a normal part of recovery,”* and *“What can I do that will help me now?”*. And remind yourself that you are trying your best. Positive self-talk makes you feel good about yourself and what is going on in your life.

Helpful Handouts

- [Emotional Well Being](#)
- [Concussion Basics](#)
- [Healthy Coping](#)
- [Returning to Activity](#)