



NAVIGATING THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF ENDOMETRIOSIS

CanSage, 2025

Endometriosis affects much more than just your physical health. The chronic pain, unpredictable flares, irregular periods, fatigue, pain during sex, infertility and other challenges associated with it can wear away at your quality of life and even affect your ability to perform at work.

Learning how to find support, develop positive coping skills, and ask for accommodations can help you better cope with your condition. Strong support networks are the key to staying well.

HOW AND WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT

In Canada, you can turn to:

- Friends or family you trust
- Reliable social media sources (led by doctors or experts)
- Your primary care provider (referrals, medication, mental health support)
- Online support groups (e.g., Endometriosis Network Canada, eMentalHealth.ca)
- In-person support groups (through local health departments or Psychology Today)
- Sexual-health clinics (Planned Parenthood, hospital clinics)
- School or workplace programs (Employee Assistance Programs, Accessibility Services)
- 811 nurse's line (general advice in most provinces)
- 211 community navigation line (local mental health and support resources)

FINDING HEALTHY SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Look for people and places who:

- Believe your endometriosis story and symptoms
- Know and accept that your capacity changes day-to-day
- Don't guilt-trip you about cancelling plans or tell you to "just try harder."
- Have the time, energy, and resources to help (not everyone will).
- Trust science, listen to experts, and support safe, evidence-based treatments.

SPOON THEORY AND ENDOMETRIOSIS

Endometriosis can drain your energy from day to day. **Spoon Theory** wasn't specifically created with it in mind, but it can be a useful framework for communicating your needs to the people around you.

- "Spoons" are basically a stand-in for energy.
- You get a specific number of them per day
- Tasks like showering, working, and exercising cost at least 1.
- Once they're gone, you need to rest and recuperate for a while.

You have **fewer spoons during a flare**.

Budgeting them helps you set limits and give yourself permission to rest. Sometimes, you won't have the "spoons" for an activity or experience, and being aware of that can help you avoid creating a deficit.



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MANAGING YOUR STRESS

Stress can trigger flares and make symptoms worse. Up to two-thirds of patients report high stress every day, so learning to manage it is essential.

Try:

- Breathing exercises
- Journaling
- Gentle exercise
- Meditation or mindfulness
- Arts, music, or crafts

Therapies like CBT and DBT can also help. You can find free resources at **DBTSelfHelp.com**.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

If any of the following apply, seek an assessment right away:

- You feel sad or depressed for more than two weeks.
- You're losing interest in your favorite activities or hobbies.
- You are thinking about hurting yourself or others.
- You can't sleep because of anxiety or stress.

Delaying treatment can make issues with mood worse and make them harder to fix. Being in pain for a long time can also raise your risk for depression.

In Canada, you can also call the **988 Suicide Crisis Helpline** or your local **211 line** for support.

COPING WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS: A.C.C.E.P.T.S

When emotions feel overwhelming, the DBT skill **A.C.C.E.P.T.S** can help you ride them out:

- A – Activities: Do something you enjoy within your current limits.
- C – Contributing: Shift your focus outward by doing a good deed.
- C – Comparisons: Remember all the times you survived your symptoms.
- E – Emotions: Change how you feel with music, TV, or uplifting videos.
- P – Pushing Away: Give yourself permission to take a short break from the problem.
- T – Thoughts: Distract your mind with high-focus tasks, like puzzles.
- S – Sensations: Name what you can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

COPING WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS AT WORK

You have a legal right to ask for accommodations that help you manage your symptoms, stay productive, and protect your health. Employers have a duty to act in good faith to support these requests unless they're unreasonable, impossible, or would cause extreme hardship.



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COMMON ACCOMMODATIONS

- Flexible hours
- Remote work
- Frequent breaks
- Ergonomic supports
- Time off
- Extra time
- Mental health days



WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN ASK FOR

- Confirmation that you have a medical condition
- How it affects your ability to work
- Any restrictions or timelines for recovery

Your employer cannot demand your full medical history, test results, or other unrelated details about your endometriosis. Your doctor can also describe your needs without disclosing your condition.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- **Canada's Human Rights Act** protects you from discrimination based on endometriosis.
- **Canada's Labour Code** gives you up to 27 weeks of medical leave per year.
- **Each province** has its own additional rules for sick leave and accommodations.

If your request is denied, you can contact your **provincial Human Rights Commission, employment standards office, or union representative** for support.

SEEKING SUPPORT FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE

Endometriosis is difficult to cope with, and it can affect your life in many different ways. Learning how to cope and ask for help when you need it isn't always easy, but it's always worthwhile—and you don't have to do it alone. Building strong support networks at home, at work, and in the healthcare system can help you persevere and stay positive even when times get tough.