

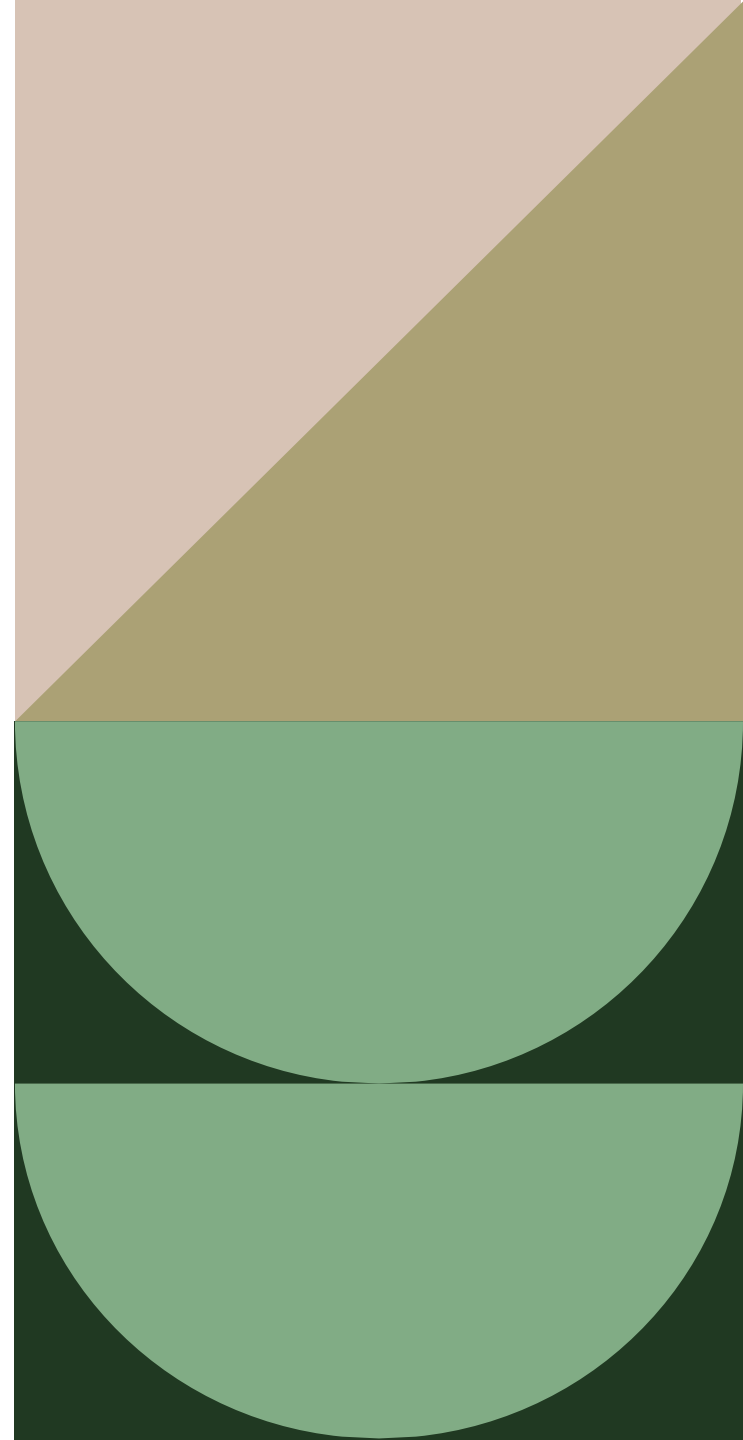


# **LVAD as a Bridge to Transplant**

Behavioral Medicine Techniques for Coping with Uncertainty

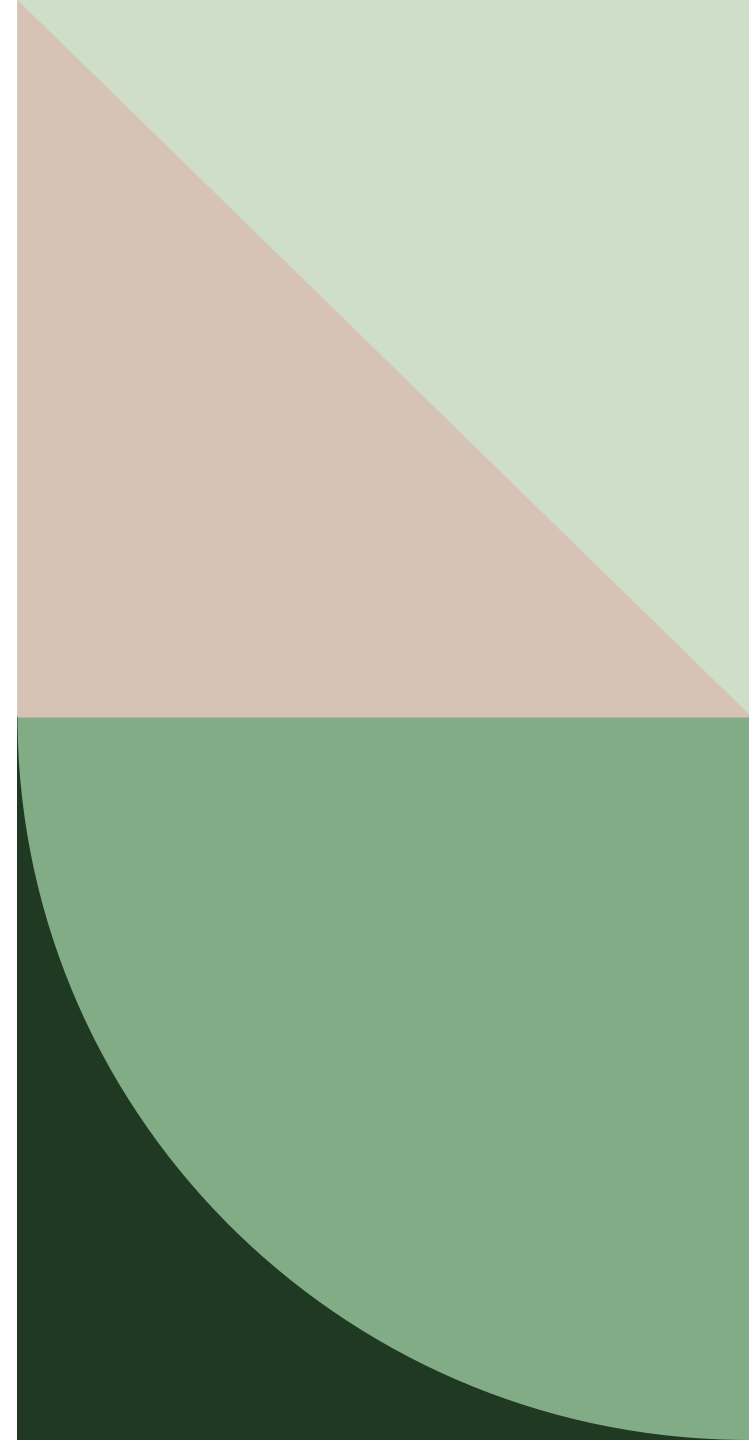
# Goals

- Review the mental health implications of living with LVAD
- Explore coping skills for help adjusting to LVAD
- Discuss steps to connecting with a mental health professional



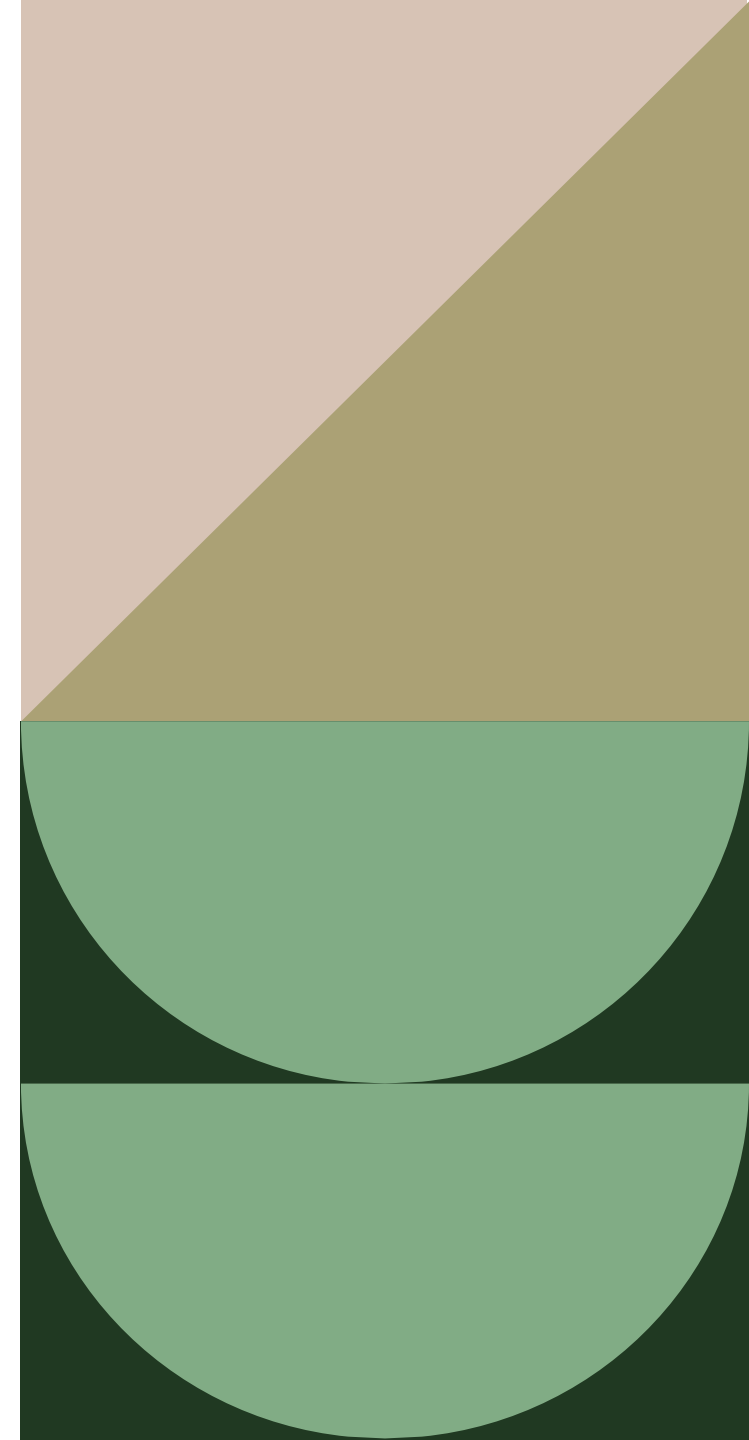
# Common Mental Health Experiences with LVAD

- Quality of life often improves with LVAD, though mental health difficulties are common before and after implant
- Moderate to high levels of anxiety, depression, and relationship difficulties are associated with LVAD
- Distress can vary across LVAD treatment - spikes just before and months after implant
- You are not alone!



# Common Mental Health Experiences with LVAD

- Device-related distress is common with transition to long-term outpatient care
- Changes to sense of connection – loneliness and isolation
- Internal Concerns - Worry about bodily signals, device malfunctions, memory and focus troubles, lack of energy, and identity changes (who am I now?)
- External Concerns – Worry about relationships, social interactions, finances, intimacy, and changes to family roles



# Managing Worry and Anxious Thoughts



Anxiety is not your enemy – worry can be our mind signaling danger



Like a fever, worry is there for a reason, but can be uncomfortable



Goal is to *manage* anxious thoughts

# Signs Worry Might be Problematic

- Worrying occurs most days of the week, most of the time during the day
- Worrying gets in the way of doing things you enjoy
- Often feeling "keyed up" or restless
- Fatiguing easily due to worry
- Trouble falling asleep because of racing thoughts or worrying
- Quick to irritability
- Trouble controlling your worries

# Managing Worry and Anxious Thoughts



DESIGNATE "WORRY  
TIME" EACH DAY - 15  
MINUTES EACH DAY



"FORGETTING IT'S  
THERE" ACTIVITIES  
AND BEHAVIORS



INCORPORATE  
RELAXATION AND  
MINDFULNESS

# Worry Log Example

- **Worrisome Thought:** "I'm worried about going to the cabin this weekend. If I go, I won't be near any hospitals and something bad would happen."
- **Initial Intensity of Anxiety:** 7/10
- **Category of Worrisome Thought:** health concern
- **Any Thinking Errors Present:** jumping-to-conclusions and catastrophic thinking
- **Alternative Thought:** "I've been stable with my LVAD for several months now. It's good to be cautious, but a catastrophe is not likely."
- **Intensity of Anxiety Now:** 4/10

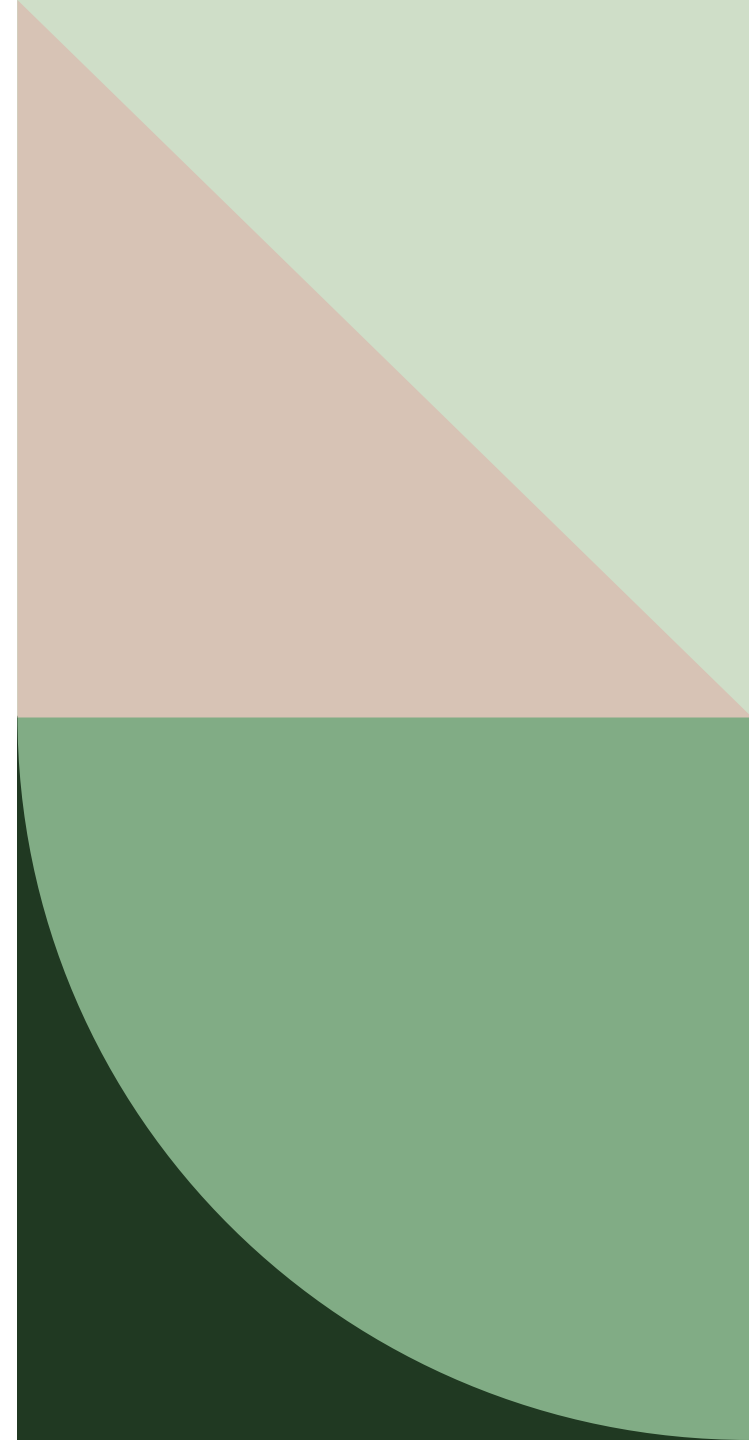




## Managing Bodily Signals

# Managing Depressed Mood

- Depressed mood needs certain factors to persist; changing factors can improve mood
- Activity, Social Contact, Diet, Sleep, and Thought Patterns are factors to manage
- Develop goals around these factors for mood management
- Easiest to start with changing our actions



## **Recognizing Depression**

Physical - tired,  
aches, appetite  
change

Behavioral - doing  
less, sleeping  
more, withdraw  
socially

Thoughts -  
negative thoughts,  
difficulty focusing

Emotional -  
sadness, anger,  
guilt

Specific

**S**  
**G**

What  
do you want  
to do?

Measurable

**M**  
**O**

How will you  
know when  
you've  
reached it?

Achievable

**A**  
**A**

Is it in your  
power to  
accomplish it?

Realistic

**R**  
**L**

Can you  
realistically  
achieve it?

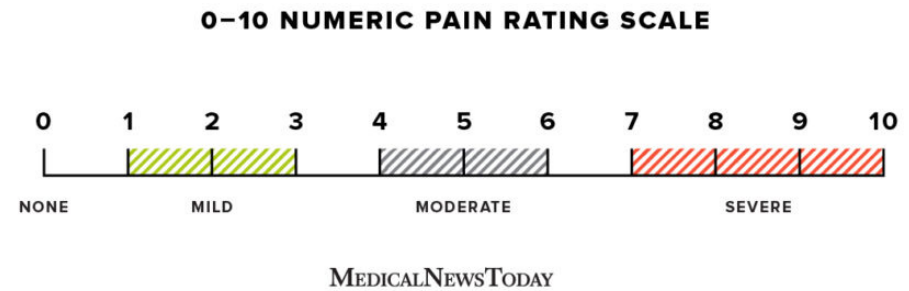
Timely

**T**  
**S**

When exactly  
do you want to  
accomplish it?

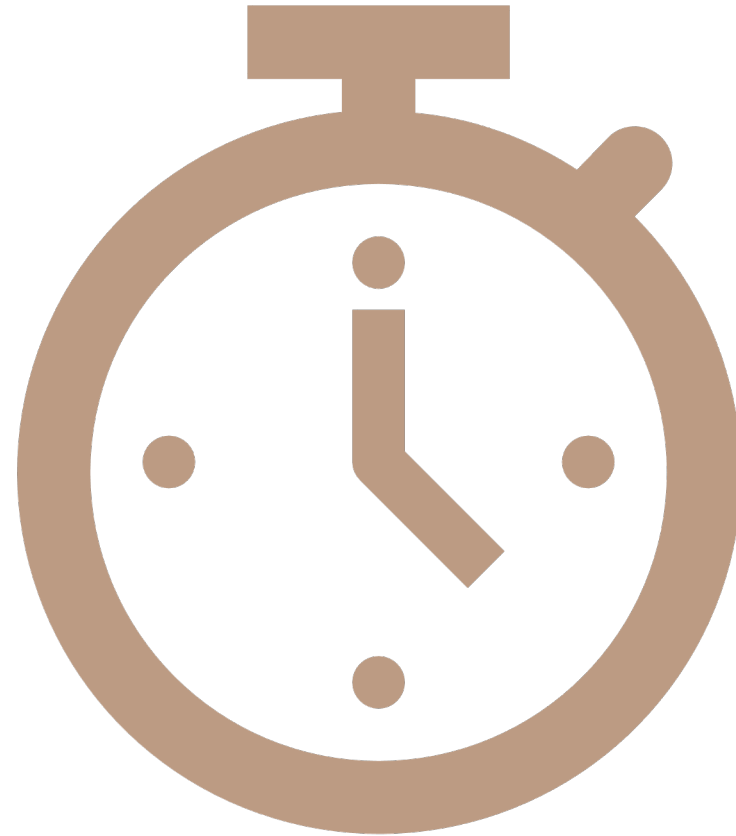
	Physical Activity	Social	Diet	Sleep	Thoughts
Monday	Walk 10 mins	Call Bill	No soda today	Read before bed	Use worry log
Tuesday	Walk 12 mins	Visit Tom	Try new recipe	Try sleep podcast	What did I accomplish today?
Wednesday	Walk 12 mins	Support Group	Schedule w/ dietitian	Deep breathing	Describe 3 strengths
Thursday	Stretch/Yoga 10 mins	FaceTime with Susie	Go to grocery store	No screens	Gratitude exercise
Friday	Fishing	Dinner with family	Eat 3 servings of vegetables	Lower temperature	Use worry log
Saturday	Walk 12 mins	Lunch with Bill	Eat 3 servings of fruits	Go to bed same time	Focus on helpful thoughts
Sunday	Walk 10 mins	Church	Eat 3 servings of vegetables	Try Relaxation	Pray

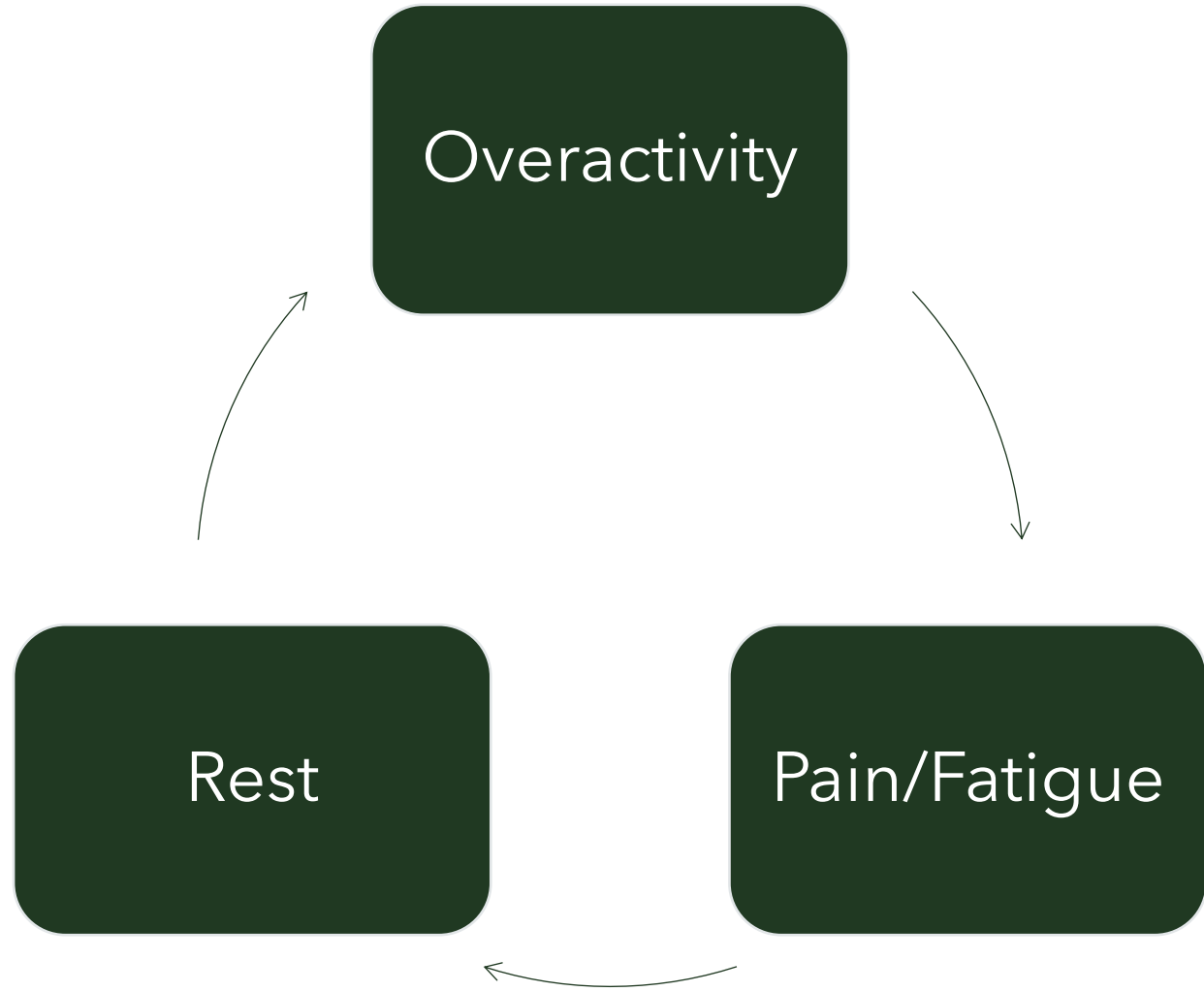
# Keep a Daily Pain/Mood Record



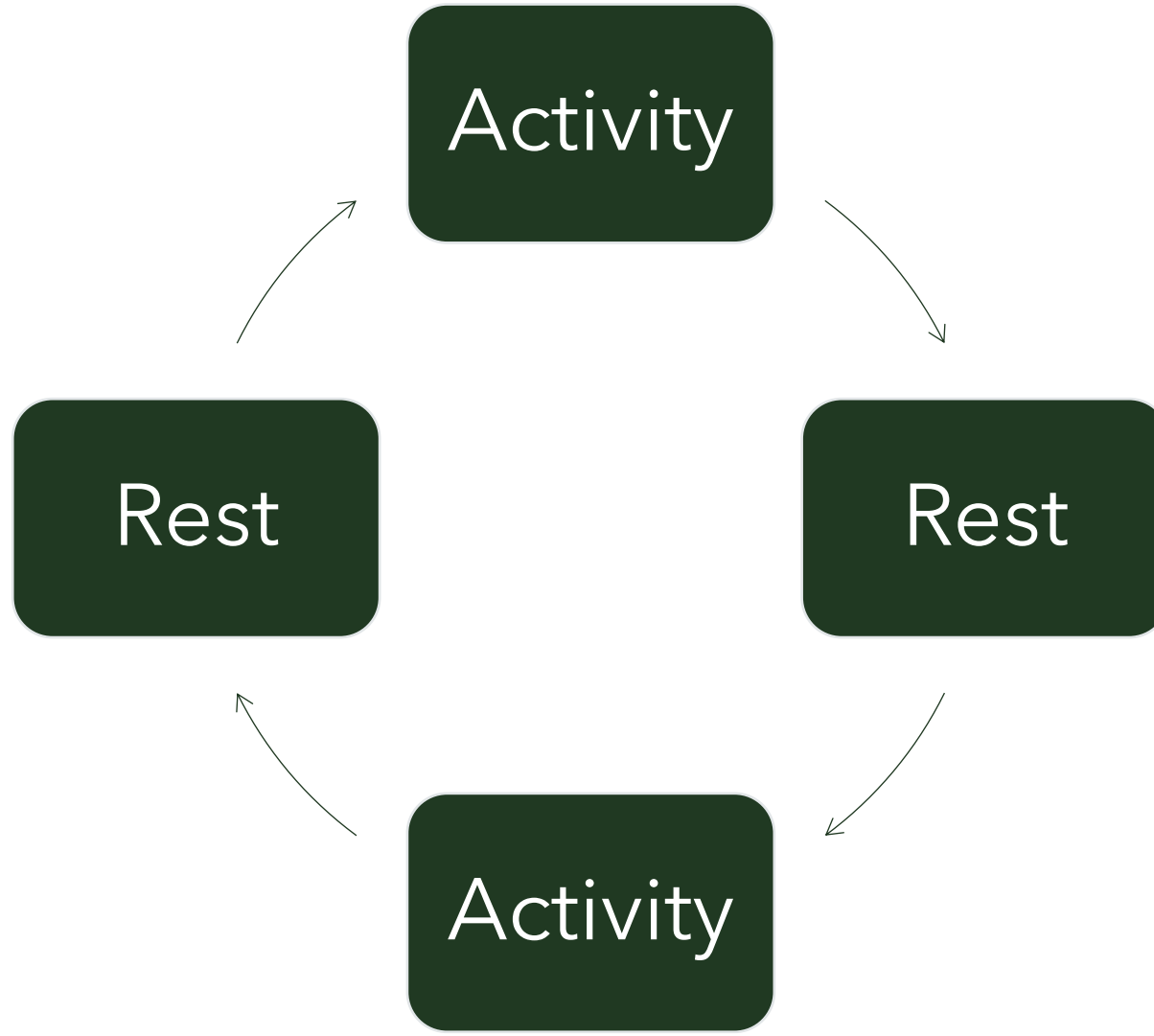
# Time-Based Pacing

- Purpose is to help you achieve goals and maximize efficiency
- Adjustment to LVAD and Transplant is a marathon, not a sprint
- Intention is to focus on time spent on a task rather than task completion to avoid exhaustion









# Steps to Successful Pacing



Make a list of things you tend to overdo (e.g. folding laundry, dishes, playing with children)



Determine the time about which you begin to feel fatigued doing an activity (e.g. 10 minutes)



Set a timer for that amount of time and work until the timer expires (e.g. set timer for 10 minutes)



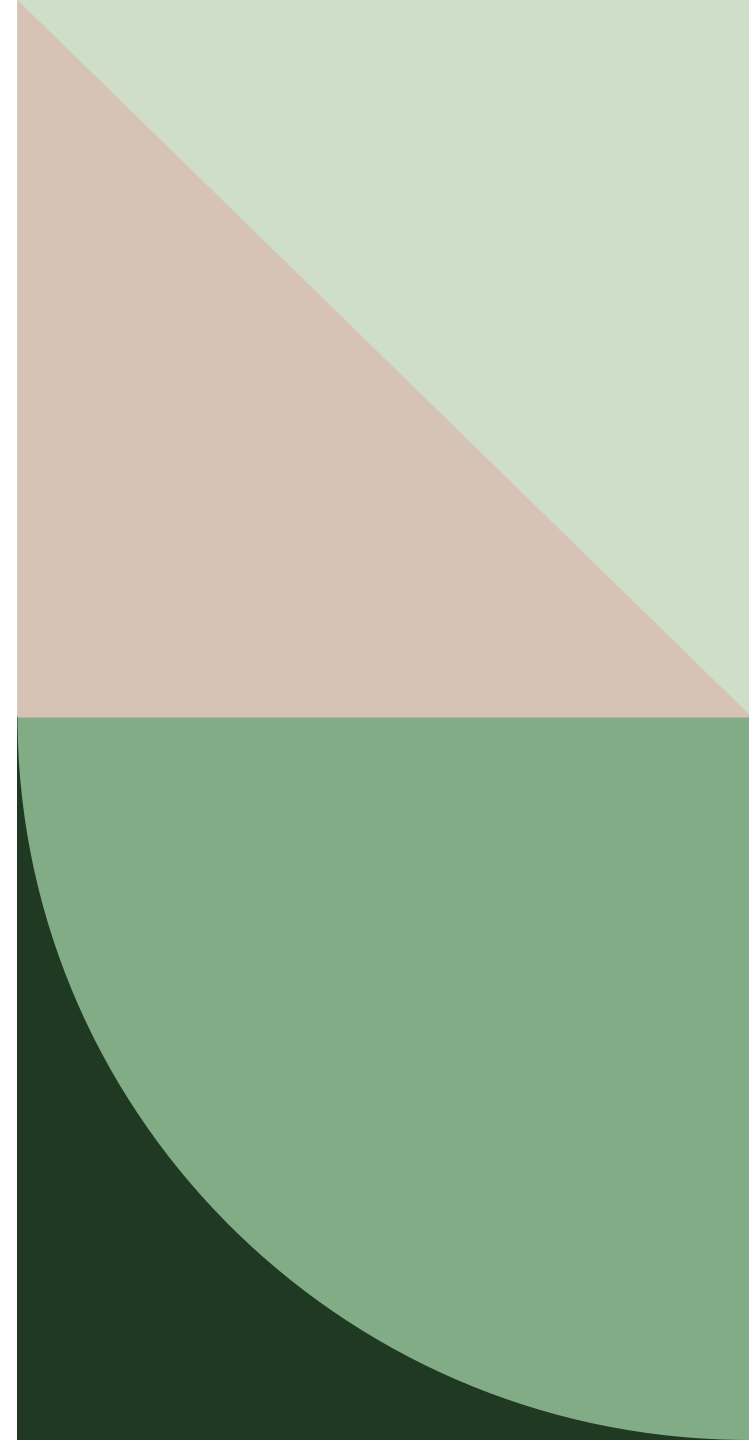
Take a break and rest for about half the timer-length (e.g. 5 minutes)



Focus on being efficient with the task, not getting it done

# Connecting with Mental Health Care

- This is tough right now – systems are taxed due to COVID-19
- Talk to your primary care provider about a referral
- Behavioral health is often part of your care team and ready to help
- Call agencies around you to determine wait times
- Fit with a therapist is important – okay to shop around
- [PsychologyToday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)





**Questions!**