



State or level of adjustment

When people are living with a LTC they are typically required to follow particular medical and health behaviour advice. For instance, they may have to take medication regularly or optimise their life-style to minimise the impact of the condition and avoid exacerbation of symptoms, or perhaps long-term complications. This is often called 'self-management', however, this is not always a popular term with people with LTCs (PwLTCs). On this website we prefer calling it 'looking after oneself and one's condition'.

Someone with a LTC may be very good at looking after themselves or they may be struggling to do so – or most likely somewhere in between! If this is assessed at a given time point we are talking about their level of adjustment at that point. The state of adjustment is mainly useful in terms of deciding whether or not something needs to change and possibly also whether people need professional help to make such changes.

We also need to consider who determines the state of adjustment;

- The health professional (HP): if the person with a LTC (PwLTC) is not following the advice given by the HP they are said to not 'adhere to treatment' and that is often considered 'poor adjustment'
- However, the PwLTC may have a range of reasons for not 'adhering' to the advice given, e.g. side-effects of the medication or being in a social situation, where life-style change is challenging
- On the other hand, the PwLTC may 'adhere' to treatment and follow the HP's advice, but they may still have significant emotional and social challenges related to their condition, which means they experience a poor quality of life

So, ideally, the decision about a PwLTCs level of adjustment needs to be made in collaboration. When considering the level of adjustment, it is not sufficient to look at whether the PwLTC follows medical advice, it is also important to take a holistic view. If the PwLTC reports that their condition has 'taken over their life', i.e. is having a disproportionate impact on function and wellbeing, then there may be an issue of adjustment that might need addressing with professional help.

