



## Natalia's Journey

**Scenario:** 1 year ago, Natalia had ACL surgery and is currently having a hard time finding the confidence she needs to return to sport. She wants to start playing soccer with her team again but is experiencing a high level of fear and distress.



Recovery



Experience

- Sudden injury and pain; unexpected life disruption
- Visit to doctor/physio
- Wait time for MRI/diagnosis
- Consultation with surgeon
- Pre-operative rehab
- Schedule surgery date
- Researching about ACL

- Waking up from anesthesia
- Extreme pain + discomfort
- Post-surgery difficulties i.e. constipation, depression, bed-ridden, crutches
- First check-up with surgeon/physio
- Begin rehab plan

- Intensified physical therapy; transition to strength exercises
- Back to daily activities such as work, driving, walking, etc.
- Light hiking/running/cardio?
- Surgeon follow-ups
- Reflecting on progress made
- Occasional setbacks; plateaus

- Plateau; physically & psychologically
- Passively dealing with fear and mental blocks; stuck and hesitant to try going back to soccer—PTSD?
- Fully back to work and participating in social life

Feelings

- Shock, difficulty processing
- Denial about an ACL tear
- Uncertainty about surgery decision or what to expect
- Feeling uninformed, uncertain, and confused about whole process
- Alone and disregarded; lack of empathy from surgeon
- Regret/mad at self about getting injured

- Pre-surgery anxiety/nervous
- Uncertainty about success outcome
- Disorientation/grogginess
- Frustration about lack of independence for daily activities
- Stress about missing work but having to pay for physio
- Isolated from friends/team
- Feels better after physio visits and is reassured from professional

- Hopefulness about progress
- Cautious optimism
- Fear of reinjury
- Lack of confidence / low knee self-efficacy
- Reflection on journey
- Feeling guilty/stress about not prioritizing or making time for physio; maybe due to low energy
- Lack of motivation/support
- Left out from pre-injury activities with friends

- Dissociated from idea of ever returning to sport
- Hyper-conscious when using knee during activity
- Lack of confidence / low knee self-efficacy
- Lack of motivation to seek out support/ask for help
- Paranoia and doubt

Recovery



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- Lack of motivation/support
- Left out from pre-injury activities with friends
- Found the motivation to push through plateau
- Completed all return-to-sport assessments successfully – helped build confidence and self efficacy in knee
- Sought out professional help to address fear of reinjury and prepare psychologically for RTS