

Helping you recover your life...

Look After Yourself

If you don't look after yourself, you will have less to give to the person who has a brain injury. It's very important to get a break and recharge your battery. Try to do something fun on that brief break.

Get into a Regular Routine

Develop and stick to a routine as much as is possible for everyday activities. This helps decrease confusion. People with memory deficits prefer having structure and would rather know what they are going to be doing.

Provide an Organized Living Environment

To ease the difficulties, ensure that the living environment is consistent and well organized. Have a place for everything and everything in its place. For important items, such as keys and wallet, have a convenient place that is visible and consistent. Use external aids such as a calendar, memos and labels.

Provide an Emotionally Calm Environment

Try to ensure the living environment is calm, try to speak calmly, and try not to show your anxiety. Don't take it personally if the person forgets what you said. If you show your anger and frustration, the person with a brain injury will likely show theirs. This is called a *catastrophic reaction*. A catastrophic reaction happens because the person with a brain injury has more fatigue, more anxiety, and diminished problem-solving abilities. When faced with a stressor, the person will often either blow up or shut down. During that time no new information will get in until they are calm again. If you see him or her getting frustrated, give them a break.



Break Down Information and Tasks into Smaller Pieces

Present one piece of information at a time, rather than a lot of things at the same time. Give the person one task at a time.

Memory is Not an Isolated Problem

Keep in mind that memory problems aren't alone...they are often accompanied by problems of slowed thinking, difficulties planning and organizing, poor judgment, fatigue, lowered frustration tolerance, and reduced emotional control.

Remove Distractions

Minimize distractions in the living environment, especially when giving important information. Any sights or sounds can be distractions. Switch off the television or radio when giving important instructions.

Be Patient

Give the person plenty of time to learn new tasks or to relearn old ones. Provide practice and repetition in a consistent way. It is a long road to recovery and there are no short cuts. When frustrated take a deep breath and slowly exhale. Do this a few times---it will help you relax.

Attention

Be sure that you get the person's attention when you are giving instructions or information. Sit close to the person and maintain eye contact.

Keep it Short and Simple

Keep instructions short, and follow up with concise written notes if needed. Know what you want to say before you speak. If the person has difficulty understanding spoken language, speak slowly and clearly.

Review and Restate

Ask the person to repeat the information back to you (don't just ask him or her if they got it--he or she will likely say "yes" even if they don't). If the person does not have it correct, review the information several times until he or she can restate the information back to you.

Join a Brain Injury Support Group

You are not alone! Brain injury support groups can benefit both the caregiver and the individual who has a brain injury. If you're nervous or have questions, contact the facilitator of the group.

Exercise

Exercise is a great way to burn off stress. It will give you more energy and facilitates new brain cell growth. Always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

Outpatient Therapies are Important

Make sure you get the person to his or her therapies. Just because someone is discharged does not mean he or she is fine. Therapy speeds recovery and progress.

Community Re-Entry Programs

These programs are designed to provide needed counseling, cognitive therapy, independent living training, employment training and job placement, as well as case management after a person has been discharged from inpatient care. Community Transitions is a community re-entry program in Rapid City, South Dakota. They are on the web at www.brainrehab.org.

Neuropsychological Evaluations

This exam is a series of mental tests to determine how the individual's brain is functioning in different areas. These exams are particularly important for understanding the person's brain injury as well as identifying potential problem areas. Repeated neuropsychological evaluations can also be used for assessing progress.

Assisted Living or Nursing Home

Sometimes for safety these living options may be considered. Keep in mind that people can continue improving and these may be only temporary housing solutions.

Finding Funding

Depending on where you are in the rehabilitation process, funding options can vary. Funding for outpatient therapies and community re-entry programs can be found through the following sources:

- Workers Compensation Insurance
- Private Insurance
- Division of Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- Private Pay

Community Transitions

This community re-entry program is located in Rapid City, South Dakota and provides counseling, cognitive therapy, speech therapy, independent living training, employment training, job placement and case management. They also can provide 24-hour care. The phone number is (605) 718-8446.

Community Transitions' Admission Criteria:

- Medically stable
- Must be able to benefit from rehabilitation
- Age 16 and above

Contact Information:

Ron Sasso, Director
Tel. # (605) 718-8446
Fax # (605) 721-9858
Website: www.brainrehab.org
E-mail: rsasso@bhws.com

Brain Injury Support Group of the Black Hills

Individuals, family members, and professionals are encouraged to attend the Brain Injury Support Group of the Black Hills. This group meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM in the Conference Room at Community Transitions. For more information about this group, call Ron Sasso, Director of Community Transitions, at (605) 718-8446.

South Dakota Brain Injury Alliance

Helps people with brain injury in South Dakota find resources and to promote awareness. Contact Justine Ashokar, President at (605) 389-0334.

A Survival Guide for the Family and Friends of People with Brain Injury



Brought to You By:

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