

# EMOTIONAL CHANGES AFTER A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

MANY PEOPLE WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY OR "TBI" OFTEN HAVE A HARD TIME CONTROLLING THEIR EMOTIONS.

### "EMOTIONAL LABILITY"



SOME PEOPLE WITH TBI HAVE INTENSE MOOD SWINGS. THEY MAY GO FROM FEELING HAPPY TO ANGRY TO SAD VERY QUICKLY. USUALLY THEY CAN'T CONTROL THIS.

"EMOTIONAL LABILITY" IS CAUSED BY DAMAGE TO THE PART OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROLS EMOTION.



DR. CUSHING TOLD ME THAT MY EMOTIONS WILL PROBABLY BECOME "MORE NORMAL" AFTER THE FIRST FEW MONTHS.

## SO WHAT CAN I DO?

THAT'S GREAT! COUNSELING CAN HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS BETTER. THERE ARE ALSO MEDICATIONS THAT CAN STABILIZE MOOD.



FOR NOW, MY FAMILY AND I ARE TALKING TO COUNSELORS TO HELP US COPE.



IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE ARE EXPERIENCING THIS, THE FIRST STEP IS TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR.

### HOW CAN YOUR FAMILY HELP?



GREAT QUESTION! HERE'S A LIST FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP.

1. REMAIN CALM. AVOID REACTING EMOTIONALLY.
2. GENTLY CHANGE THE SUBJECT OR SUGGEST DOING SOMETHING ELSE.
3. GET THEM TO A QUIET AREA. THIS WILL HELP THEM REGAIN CONTROL.
4. GIVE THE PERSON A CHANCE TO TALK CALMLY.
5. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS.
6. PROVIDE FEEDBACK GENTLY AND SUPPORTIVELY AFTER THEY REGAIN CONTROL.

# "ANXIETY"



I'M AFRAID OF MAKING MISTAKES AND THAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE EVERYONE IS WATCHING AND JUDGING ME, EVEN WHEN THEY PROBABLY AREN'T.

ANXIETY IS A FEELING OF FEAR OR NERVOUSNESS THAT'S TOO STRONG FOR THE SITUATION. PEOPLE WITH TBI MAY FEEL ANXIOUS WITHOUT KNOWING WHY...

PEOPLE WITH TBI MAY GET ANXIOUS ABOUT HOW WELL THEY'RE ABLE TO DO THINGS



This reminds me of the accident...

PANIC ATTACKS ARE SUDDEN ONSETS OF ANXIETY THAT ARE OVERWHELMING



BEING RUSHED, BEING IN CROWDS, OR SUDDEN CHANGES IN PLANS CAN ALL CAUSE ANXIETY



SOMETIMES THE MEMORY OF HOW A PERSON GOT INJURED GETS PLAYED OVER IN THEIR HEAD AND INTERFERES WITH SLEEP.

## WHY DOES ANXIETY HAPPEN?



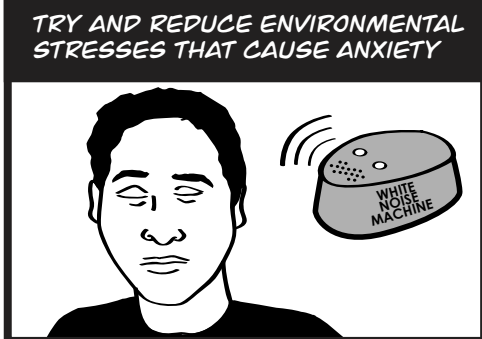
I GET ANXIOUS WHEN I'M DRIVING ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M TRYING TO FIND SOMEPLACE NEW.

I'M GETTING ANXIOUS JUST THINKING ABOUT THAT STUFF...

AFTER A TBI ANXIETY IS VERY COMMON, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE ARE A LOT OF MENTAL DEMANDS, LIKE TAKING A TEST OR BEING IN A NOISY ENVIRONMENT.

ANXIETY OFTEN HAPPENS WHEN THERE ARE TOO MANY DEMANDS ON A PERSON...

## SO WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT ANXIETY?



TRY AND REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES THAT CAUSE ANXIETY

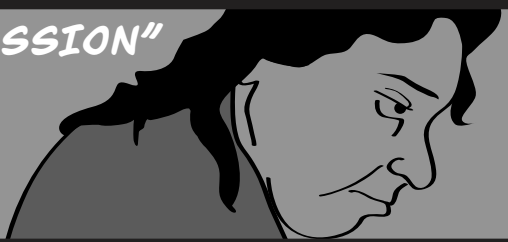


ADD STRUCTURE OR ROUTINE TO DAILY ACTIVITIES

COUNSELING IS GOOD FOR MANAGING ANXIETY, THERE ARE ALSO MEDICATIONS THAT CAN HELP. DISCUSS THESE OPTIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR.



## "DEPRESSION"



IT'S NORMAL TO HAVE FEELINGS OF SADNESS, FRUSTRATION, OR LOSS AFTER A TBI.

I STARTED FEELING REALLY SAD A FEW MONTHS AFTER MY INJURY, WHEN I REALIZED IT WOULD HAVE A LONG TERM IMPACT ON MY LIFE...



## COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

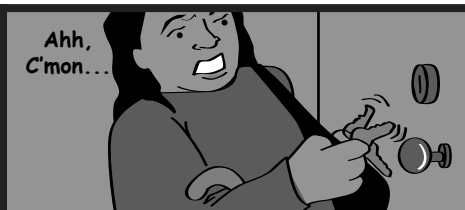
- FEELING THAT YOU ARE SAD OR WORTHLESS
- CHANGES IN SLEEP OR APPETITE
- TROUBLE FOCUSING
- FEELING DISTANT OR WITHDRAWN FROM OTHERS
- LOSS OF INTEREST IN OR PLEASURE FROM LIFE
- FEELING TIRED, OR HAVING LITTLE ENERGY
- THOUGHTS OF DEATH OR SUICIDE

BECAUSE THESE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION ARE ALSO COMMON EFFECTS OF A BRAIN INJURY, THEY DON'T ALWAYS MEAN DEPRESSION, THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO BE CAUSED BY DEPRESSION IF THEY BEGIN A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE INJURY.

## WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION AFTER A TBI?



DEPRESSION CAN ARISE AS SOMEONE STRUGGLES TO ADJUST TO A TEMPORARY OR LASTING DISABILITY



PEOPLE OFTEN BECOME DEPRESSED WHEN ADJUSTING TO THEIR NEW ROLE IN THEIR FAMILY OR COMMUNITY



DEPRESSION CAN ALSO BE CAUSED BY CHEMICAL CHANGES OR DAMAGE TO PARTS OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROL EMOTIONS

## WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT DEPRESSION?

DEPRESSION IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. YOU CAN'T JUST "GET OVER IT". DEPRESSION IS AN ILLNESS.



AEROBIC EXERCISE AND DAILY ROUTINES HELPED ME REDUCE MY DEPRESSION.



EITHER COUNSELING, MEDICATION, OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH CAN HELP MOST PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION.



IT'S BEST TO TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE HAS THESE SYMPTOMS, TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR. DON'T WAIT!

## "TEMPER OUTBURSTS AND IRRITABILITY"

Ahh! I just get so irritated so easily!!

FAMILY MEMBERS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH TBI OFTEN DESCRIBE HAVING A "SHORT FUSE" OR A QUICK TEMPER.

STUDIES SHOW THAT 71% OF PEOPLE WITH TBI ARE FREQUENTLY IRRITABLE



## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

PEOPLE WITH TBI GET ANGRY FOR MANY REASONS...

...I'M FRUSTRATED AND UNHAPPY WITH HOW MY LIFE HAS CHANGED

...I FORGET THINGS AND CAN'T CONCENTRATE WELL

...I'M IN A LOT OF PAIN

...I FEEL ALONE, DEPRESSED, AND MISUNDERSTOOD

...I LOST MY JOB AND A LOT OF MY INDEPENDENCE

...I GET TIRED EASILY

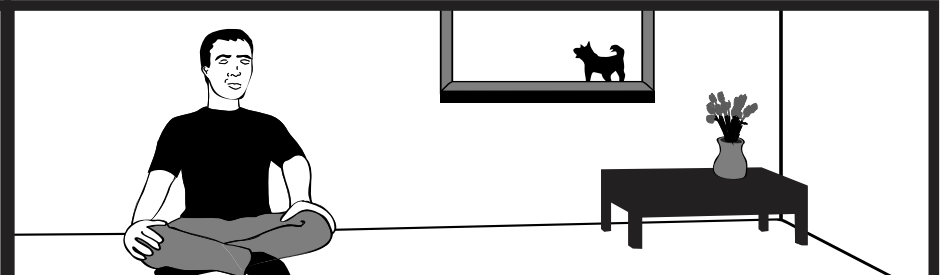
...I HAVE DAMAGE TO THE PART OF MY BRAIN THAT CONTROLS EMOTIONS



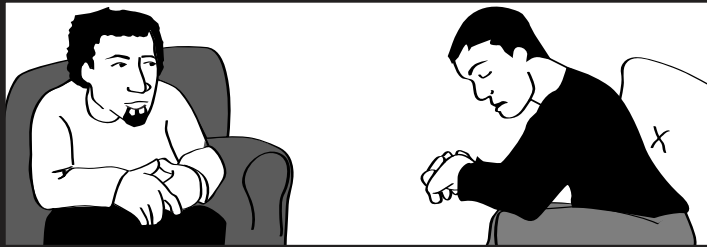
## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MY TEMPER AND IRRITABILITY?



REDUCE STRESS AND DECREASE IRRITATING SITUATIONS



PEOPLE WITH TBI CAN LEARN SOME BASIC ANGER MANAGEMENT SKILLS LIKE SELF-CALMING SKILLS, RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AND BETTER COMMUNICATION.



COUNSELING, MEDICATION OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH CAN BE HELPFUL WHEN WORKING WITH A DOCTOR.

**"FAMILY MEMBERS CAN HELP TOO!"**



DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY, REMEMBER THEIR ANGER IS DUE TO THEIR INJURY.

MAKE SURE THAT THEY KNOW THAT IT IS NOT OK TO THREATEN TO HURT PEOPLE OR YELL AT THEM.

WHEN THE PERSON IS CALM SET RULES FOR COMMUNICATION.

DON'T ARGUE WITH THEM WHILE THEY ARE HAVING AN OUTBURST, LET THEM CALM DOWN FIRST.

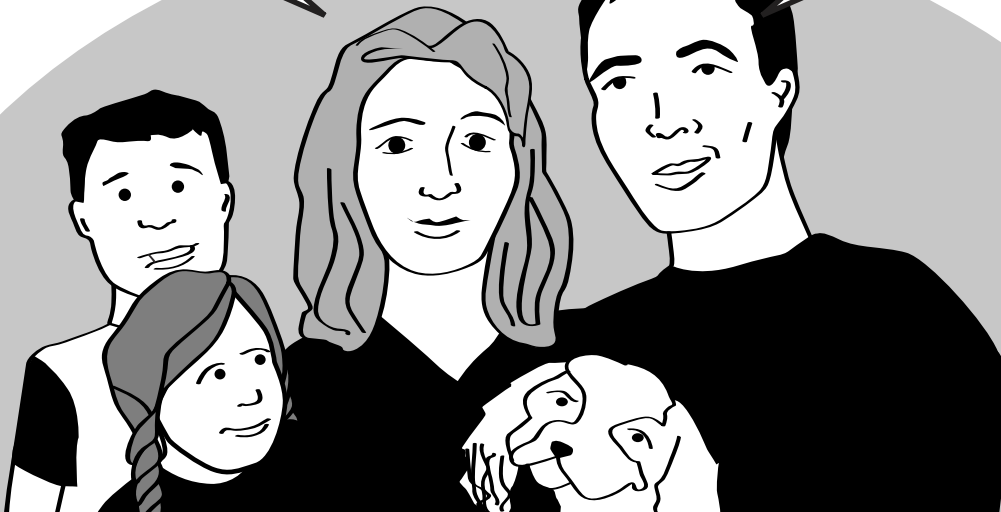
DON'T GIVE IN JUST TO CALM THEM DOWN. AFTER THE OUTBURST IS OVER, HAVE A CONVERSATION.

SOME OTHER WAYS TO CALM DOWN ARE MEDITATION, LEAVING THE ROOM, OR GOING FOR A SHORT WALK (BUT MAKE SURE TO TELL PEOPLE WHEN YOU WILL BE BACK).

## "WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?"

IF YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY IS DEALING WITH DEPRESSION, ANXIETY OR EMOTIONAL LABILITY...

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR AND ASK THEM IF MEDICATION, A PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION, OR COUNSELING COULD HELP.



## MORE ABOUT MEDICATIONS

IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER ARE TAKING MEDICATIONS FOR ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS IT'S IMPORTANT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR DOCTOR, AND BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS.



THERE CAN BE A DELAY BEFORE THE MEDICATION STARTS WORKING.

YOUR DOSE MAY NEED TO BE ADJUSTED BY YOUR DOCTOR OR YOU MAY NEED TO TRY DIFFERENT MEDICATIONS BEFORE YOU FIND THE ONE THAT WORKS BEST. EXCEPT IN AN EMERGENCY DO NOT STOP TAKING THE MEDICATION YOUR DOCTOR HAS PRESCRIBED WITHOUT TALKING TO THEM FIRST.

## PEER SUPPORT AND OTHER RESOURCES



REMEMBER THAT NOT ALL HELP COMES FROM HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS!



PEER MENTORING IS WHEN SOMEBODY WHO IS IN THE SAME SITUATION HELPS YOU COPE WITH PROBLEMS THEY MAY HAVE DEALT WITH THEMSELVES.



A BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP CAN BE A FANTASTIC SOURCE OF PEER SUPPORT; SOME GROUPS ARE OPEN TO PEOPLE WITH TBI OR THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS; OTHER GROUPS ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE.

## SOURCE

The health information presented in this Graphic Fact Sheet is based on evidence from research and/or professional consensus and has been reviewed and approved by an editorial team of experts from the TBI Model Systems.

## AUTHORSHIP AND ILLUSTRATION

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