

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. Try to make the time. It will give you more energy in the long run. 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.

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:

- Private Insurance
- Worker's Comp Insurance
- Division of Rehabilitation Services (Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- Private Pay

SUPPORT GROUPS

Aberdeen Brain Injury Support

Contact person/Facilitator: Ron Hoops (605) 395-6655. When: Meets 3rd Tuesday of the month from 7PM to 8:30PM. Where: St. Luke's Hospital, 4th floor.

Brain Injury Support Group of the Black Hills

This group meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:00PM to 7:30PM at The Brain Injury Rehab Center in the Conference Room. For more information about this group, call Justine Ashokar, Director of The Brain Injury Rehabilitation Center, at (605) 343-7297.

Brookings Area Brain Injury Support Group

The Brookings Area Brain Injury Support Group meets the first Thursday of the month from 3PM to 4PM at the Brookings Hospital. Contact Person: Doris Schumacher, dahschumacher@hotmail.com or call (605) 697-6678.

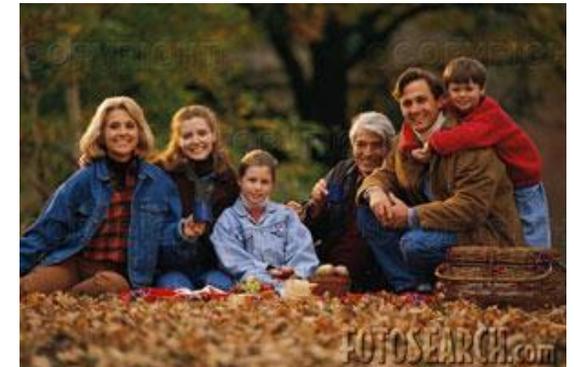
Sioux Falls Area Brain Injury Support Group

Contact Person/Facilitator: Karen Brokenleg (605) 339-0137, Deb Lichty (605) 322-5066, Mary Tommeraasen 605-367-5260 or Julie Brown 605-328-5194. When: Meets 2nd Saturday of every month, from 1PM to 2:30PM. Where: The Center for Active Generations at 2300 W. 46th Street, Sioux Falls, SD.

South Dakota Brain Injury Alliance

Helps people with brain injury in South Dakota find resources and to promote awareness. You can find us on the web at www.braininjurysd.org. Our website includes links to other brain injury information that you may find helpful.

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



www.braininjurysd.org