

What is traumatic brain injury

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a disruption to the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or penetrating head injury. Brain injuries can also be caused by depriving the brain of oxygen such as by near-lethal overdose, strangulation, or drowning.

We all have unique brains, which means that injuries to this vital organ will affect each of us differently.



If you have a TBI and are struggling with memory:

Create associations: Associate something unfamiliar with something familiar. If you already know a Bill Smith think of the Bill you know and associate him with the new Bill Smith.

Move while you learn: Walk around, move your hands to gesture as you recite the information, or simply try standing instead of sitting while learning. Movement is a powerful way to enhance memory.

Write it down: Writing by hand requires your brain to process that information in a more detailed way, which means you will be more likely to remember it later.



If you have trouble focusing your attention:

Break tasks into small steps: Large tasks can feel overwhelming, so break them down into smaller/shorter tasks. Take a 5 minute break in between these smaller tasks.

Make a list: Write down things that need to be done and when they should be completed. List them in order of what should be done first.

Allow more time to complete activities: Take away time pressures and don't rush. Try not to expect tasks to be done perfectly.

Strive for consistency: Try to make your schedule as consistent as possible. Having a set routine can improve focus, organization, productivity, and can help to reduce stress. Write down changes to your schedule.



If you have difficulty understanding others:

Paraphrase instructions: When getting long or complex instructions, paraphrase them back to the speaker to make sure you are understanding them correctly.

Ask the speaker to rephrase: If you feel confused or have trouble understanding something, ask the speaker to rephrase what they are saying. You can also ask the speaker to repeat themselves or slow down.

Give yourself time: You can let others know when you need more time to think - just say, "Let me take a few moments to think about that."



If you have trouble with your mood:

Pay attention to your body: When you are feeling angry, sad, or annoyed, try to notice how your body reacts (tapping your foot, sweating, clenching your fists) and how your body feels (sick to your stomach, headache, feeling faint). Noticing how your body reacts to strong emotions can be a good sign that you should ask for a break.

Plan ahead: Write down important information before you go into emotional situations. This will help you remember everything you want to say in case you get upset and anxious.

Create a support system: Write down a list of people that make you feel safe and will listen to you. When your emotions feel hard to control, reach out to one of these people for support.

Focus on your 5 senses: When you have intense feelings, focus on your 5 senses - something you can touch, feel, see, taste, and hear. Or pick a color and spend 1 minute finding objects near you in that color.

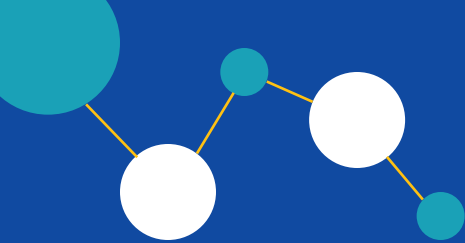


If you have trouble getting organized:

Reach out: Talk to someone you trust, like a family member, friend, caregiver, counselor, or teacher and ask them for support.

Keep a written schedule: To keep track of different dates (classes, court dates, therapy, etc.), you can use a notebook planner, or the digital calendar or reminder app on your phone. You can review the tasks on your to do list with family, friends, or other providers to keep you on track.

Write a checklist: If you have a hard time finishing a task, try breaking it down into smaller and simple steps on a list. Cross off each step as it is completed.



Ways to reduce stress:

Mindful meditation: Pause and become aware of your surroundings. Take deep breaths and feel your lungs fill up with air. Give yourself time to think about how you are feeling.

Mantra: Choose a calming word or phrase, and repeat it to yourself silently to prevent distracting thoughts from entering your mind.

Prayer: Pray using your own words or the writing of others. Reflect on what those words mean to you or write about it in a journal.



Tips for practicing self-care:

Keep track of progress: Remember to acknowledge hard work you have accomplished. Celebrate when you have reached a goal.

Find hobbies: Continue to do activities you enjoy and take the time to have fun.

Re-charge: Take time to relax and re-charge. This could be spending time alone, connecting with friends and family, or doing something that brings you energy and joy.



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A.H.E.A.D. Achieving Healing through Education, Accountability, and Determination. A psycho-educational curriculum for traumatic brain injury. This curriculum was designed in such a way that mental health staff and criminal justice staff can facilitate group sessions. Utilize the QR code to access the curriculum.

