

The of Brain Injury

...by Headway service users, survivors of Acquired Brain Injury

Awareness : You may find that there is a lack of awareness of Brain Injury, particularly among your family and friends. There are agencies you can access for information and support such as Headway, ABII, and BRÍ.

Behaviour: You may notice a change in your behaviour. In our experience, immediately after a brain injury it's quite normal to behave in an angry manner. It's all part of the adjustment process. You may have angry outbursts or cry at the drop of a hat. Sometimes this subsides after time. Other times depending on the part of the brain that is injured it can be a more permanent effect.

Communication: You may lose the ability to talk or understand what others are saying to you. There are strategies and aids you can use to help you such as picture books, gesturing, using a notebook etc. Your speech and language therapist can help you with this.

Disability (physical): A physical disability such as impaired balance, reduced mobility or sensory deficits may occur as a result of an acquired brain injury. This can have a profound impact on your life, both at home and on your ability to access the community. It is possible to make improvements and develop strategies to help manage this with patience, persistence and professional help.

Epilepsy: It is very common to develop epilepsy or experience some seizure activity following a brain injury. This can be managed effectively with medication. If you have been on epilepsy medication for some time without any seizure activity it might be worth having your GP review your medication.

Fatigue: It is very common to experience fatigue or extreme tiredness following your brain injury. Your brain is working very hard to learn new ways to do things and needs plenty of rest. Fatigue may also be a lasting effect of a brain injury. You will become aware of when you usually experience highest levels of fatigue and can plan your day accordingly. For example, if you are very tired in the evenings, try and get all of your important tasks done in the morning.

Goals: Your goals may change significantly following your brain injury and you may find yourself re-evaluating what is really important to you. However it is still important to set them for yourself to aid your rehabilitation.

Happiness: At the beginning this may feel like a long way off. But believe us it is possible to regain it. Support is available should you need it from family, friends, and professionals.

Independence: It can feel like some of your independence has been lost and you may need to make some adjustments to account for this. But with the right support and persistence you can certainly regain some if not all of your independence.

Journeys: The journey of recovery or rehabilitation can be a long one depending on the type of injury you have. It can take a while for the brain to learn all the new strategies it needs to. It's a long process but you'll get there. There is light at the end of the tunnel!

Knowledge: Is a powerful weapon. It is important that you and your family to be aware of all the services and support networks available to you.

Loss: After a brain injury you may experience one or all of the stages of bereavement such as anger or sadness.



Memory: It is very common to have problems with your memory. You can use many different strategies to help you with this. For example, if you have trouble remembering dates or appointments, use a diary or a wall planner to help manage these.

Noise: Crowded places, too many voices at once and background noise may overload your brain with information and it can be difficult to process it. If you find you are affected by this it may help to do things like choosing a quiet morning to do your grocery shopping, or completing important tasks in a quiet room with no interruptions.

Overload of sensory information: Too much going on at once such as noise, light, colour etc. can be very distracting thus making it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand (whatever it might be). If you find yourself having trouble making conversation in a busy environment then try and make sure there are minimum distractions. If you are at home, turn off the TV or the radio, dim the lights etc. It is possible to apply this strategy to lots of different situations.

Patience: After a brain injury things may take longer than they did before. Be patient with yourself and let your friends and family know that this is the case. Things may take longer but you'll get there with patience and support.

Questions: Naturally you will have lots of questions following your brain injury. Medical professionals, friends, family, and agencies such as Headway, ABII and BRÍ are all good sources of information.

Relationships: Changes can occur in personal relationships following a brain injury. You may feel isolated from friends and family. It's important for your mental health to try and maintain your relationships while accepting there have been certain inevitable changes.

Services: There are services that you can access within the community. Brain injury specific are Headway, ABII, BRÍ, Brain-wave, Irish Heart Foundation (Stroke). Others you may find useful are, Citizens Information, FAS, Community Health Centre, Public Health Nurse, Community Occupational Therapist, your local disability officer and of course your GP.

Trainig: You may want to develop new skills or relearn some old ones. There are training courses out there to help you. These are provided by Headway, the National Learning Network, FAS, and evening courses which are run in many community colleges.

Understanding: Understanding your new strengths and limitations is really important after a brain injury as everybody experiences it differently.

Voice: You still have one! You have the right to have your feelings and opinions heard.

Weakness: Physical weakness can occur as a result of an ABI. While you may never be the same as you were you can make progress in this area with plenty of support from your occupational therapist and physiotherapist. Be patient, Rome wasn't built in a day.

Xrays: You will have lots of these in hospital. MRI scans, CT scans, etc.

You: Believe in yourself. It's a long and difficult journey but you will make progress.

Zzzzzz: Sleep when you need to!

