



FACT SHEET

Initiation and Planning

***Do you
have
trouble
with
getting
started
on
and
completing
tasks
since
your
brain
injury?***

What does this mean?

“Initiation” is the ability to start doing something. It requires seeing what needs to be done, making a plan about how to start doing it, and putting the plan into action. For example, if a person wants to get dressed, they must first recognize the need to get dressed, plan what they will wear, and begin gathering clothing.

“Planning” is the ability to choose how to do a task, and to list all the steps of the task. Planning also requires the person to decide what they will need to do the task and estimate how long it will take them to complete it. For example, if a person wants to cook a meal, they must decide what they will cook, what ingredients they need, where they can get the ingredients, what time to start cooking, and how much to cook.

How might a brain injury affect initiation and planning?

Initiation, planning, and organization are thought of as “higher level thinking processes” because they require a lot of brain power. To initiate, plan, and organize, a person needs to be able to think ahead, concentrate, remember things, gather and sort information, and set priorities. If you have damage to the front of your brain, you may have problems with initiation, planning, or organization. This is because the front of the brain is the part most involved in planning, organizing, and problem solving.

Common examples of issues with initiation and planning:

- ◆ Difficulty starting tasks. Sitting in one place for long periods without thinking anything in particular.
- ◆ Difficulty with tasks that used to be easy, such as getting dressed or finishing a work assignment.
- ◆ Getting stuck and doing the same thing over and over. Having difficulty trying new ways of doing things, even if the old ones fail.
- ◆ Difficulty doing more than one thing at a time.

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Make a list of things that need to be done and when. List them in order of what should be done first.
- ◆ When figuring out what steps you need to do first to complete an activity, think of the end goal and work backwards.
- ◆ Make a plan for how to do them; break down tasks into small steps.
- ◆ Execute the plan and monitor how well you are doing.
- ◆ Change your approach if it is not working out.