



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Managing Emotions

Do you have trouble with controlling your emotions since your brain injury?

What does this mean?

After a brain injury, people often have problems controlling and managing their emotions. In life, everyone is exposed to events and situations that can trigger strong emotions, such as, conflict in a relationship, a personal criticism, or a perceived loss. A person with problems managing emotions may react in an exaggerated manner to these challenges. This may take the form of angry outbursts, crying, or blaming and can lead to real turmoil in a household.

How might a brain injury affect emotion regulation?

Brain injury, especially if it occurs in the front part of the brain, can cause problems with managing emotions. This can take any number of forms including impulsivity, poor insight, lack of inhibition, impaired judgment, emotional explosions and depressive symptoms. Explosive anger, often directed at family members, is not at all uncommon after a brain injury, particularly in individuals in whom impulsivity, disinhibition, and emotional dysregulation are present.

Common examples of emotional dysregulation:

- ◆ Uncontrolled anger or rage, irritability, sadness or other manifestation of emotional instability.
- ◆ Negative impact on daily school or work life, and personal and family relationships.
- ◆ Poor cooperation with therapies, conflicts with others, especially family members, and resistance to current therapy.

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Medication when indicated, coupled with effective individual counseling, sleep and stress management, and helpful education can significantly improve the quality of life of someone with emotional dysregulation.
- ◆ Certain kinds of group therapy can also be helpful with this problem and can teach clients how to take control of their lives, their emotions, and themselves through better understanding of their problems with emotional management and helping them to change their reactions to stressful situations.