



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Social Communication

*Do you
have
trouble
expressing
your
thoughts
and
feelings
to
others
since
your
brain
injury?*

What does this mean?

Social communication involves sending and receiving messages to and from others: Being able to understand others and what others meant to communicate and being able to express your thoughts and feelings to others in a way they can understand.

Social communication includes many skills, both verbal and nonverbal.

Social communication must be adjusted for the situation: A person needs to adjust how they communicate depending on the situation and the persons involved. This includes the physical setting, the social demands of the situation, and one's relationship to person(s).

How might a brain injury impact affect social communication?

- ◆ Impairment is common following moderate to severe traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- ◆ Problems result from both cognitive and personality changes that can be caused by injury to the brain.
- ◆ Other factors such as pre-injury ability, emotional reactions to disability, and environmental factors may also contribute to social communication difficulties after injury.

Common examples of social communication problems:

- ◆ Inability to read other people's feelings or thoughts.
- ◆ Not understanding how you come across to others.
- ◆ Trouble understanding sarcasm or jokes.
- ◆ Talking too much; not listening or taking turns.
- ◆ Interrupting others.
- ◆ Saying things that others find rude or inappropriate.
- ◆ Showing insensitivity to the feelings of others.
- ◆ Going off on tangents; losing track of the topic.

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Practice with your caregiver (role-play and rehearse) appropriate examples of social communication.
- ◆ If you are in the middle of a conversation and sense inappropriate social communication, let the person know you hear what they're saying, but you notice yourself becoming agitated and take a "time out." Or use a STOP and THINK approach to your triggers.
- ◆ Use empathy. Try to see things from the other person's point of view.
- ◆ Seek positive feedback from your caregiver when you communicate appropriately, and remember to reward yourself often too.

Source: TIRR Memorial Hermann Rehabilitation & Research. Further, the information in this FACT SHEET is also based on a consensus of expert opinion of the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Departments of Neuropsychology and Resource Facilitation.

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatments.

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