



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Stress

***Do you
have
trouble
managing
stress
since
your
brain
injury?***

What does this mean?

Following a brain injury, it is quite common for people to experience a great deal of stress. A little stress is part of life, but stress that goes on for a long time can have a negative effect on the mind and body. Chronic stress can also be caused by other problems including medical problems, such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

- ◆ Stress can affect the ability to concentrate, to be organized, and to think clearly.
- ◆ Stress also has a negative effect on relationships with other people because it can make you irritable, less patient, and more likely to lash out.
- ◆ Stress can lead to depression and/or anxiety.

How might stress affect my recovery after a brain injury?

If you are under constant stress, you are not going to be as helpful to yourself and your loved ones. *If you do not take the time to rest and care for yourself, you will get fewer things done, which will lead to more stress.*

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Learn to relax.
 - Breathe deeply and focus on breathing.
 - State a word or phrase that has positive meaning (e.g. “peace”).
 - Use visual imagery.
- ◆ Learn which coping strategies work best.
 - Be open to trying new ways of coping and find out what works.
 - Practice often.
 - Coping strategies others have found helpful:
 - Take time for yourself.
 - Keep a regular schedule for yourself.
 - Get regular exercise such as a 20-30 minute walk each day.
 - Participate in support groups.
 - Maintain a sense of humor.
 - Be more assertive about getting the support you need.
 - Change roles and responsibilities within the family.
 - Consider going to a counselor or therapist to talk about the stress and learn strategies to deal with it.