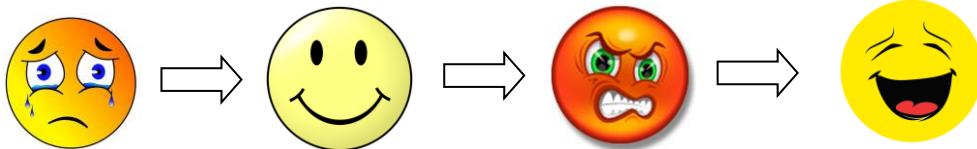


Managing after brain injury

Difficulties to manage:

- Reduced emotional control – can get tearful or irritable quickly and easily.



- Slower information processing.



- Difficulties filtering out noises and distractions – it is hard to concentrate or listen when there are other noises or conversations nearby.



- Fatigue – mental and physical tiredness can occur quickly and once fatigued all functioning deteriorates.



Strategies to manage:

Plan your days and weeks so that you do not take on too much on each day but also do not have too many empty days. It is easy to get carried away when you feel good and do too much. This causes increased fatigue which can impact on functioning and mood for many days afterwards. On the other hand, not having anything planned can also lead to low mood and anxiety.

Work in an environment with as few distractions as possible. It is important that if you need to concentrate on something you can create the best environment possible for this. When having to remember something try to reduce the number of distractions. Background noise (e.g. vacuum cleaners, other people talking, music) may make it difficult for you to concentrate and therefore difficult to remember information. Turn the TV/radio off when answering the phone or even speaking with someone.

Provide yourself with regular breaks when attempting tasks. By taking regular breaks it will help to give you time (to problem solve, remember the information you were learning) and avoids unnecessary fatigue.

Give yourself extra time to complete tasks and process information. If you feel rushed it will be harder to process the information. If you give yourself more time you are more likely to be able to effectively process information and complete tasks.

Keep a regular daily routine with consistent times for waking eating meals, napping and going to bed. Keeping a consistent daily routine helps to improve sleep quality and reduce the cognitive demand of general daily tasks, therefore reducing levels of fatigue.

General rules for remembering information:

- Make sure you understand the information. Think about what you need to remember and how you will remember it.
- Simplify and reduce the information.
- Be realistic about what it is you want to remember.
- Be systematic and use routines.
- Change your environment; place items in the same place each time; keep everything where it 'should' be.
- Put important things where they will be seen.
- 'Over-learn' new information, focus on learning one piece of information at a time. Then use 'expanded retrieval', test yourself 5 seconds later, then 10 seconds, then 20, then 40 and so on.
- Attention is important for memory - make sure there is the minimum of distraction and plan work or tasks with frequent breaks, to minimise demands.