TIPS For Living Life To Its Fullest

ADULTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) occurs when someone's head is severely hit or shaken, or when an object goes into the brain. Brain injuries range from mild to severe. People with TBI may have changes to their personality, trouble with memory, confusion, or poor judgment. They may be tired, depressed, or anxious. The changes to the brain after TBI can affect people's ability to do daily activities (*occupations*). It may also affect their roles, such as employee, spouse, parent, and friend. Although TBI can affect how a person functions, many people with TBI learn to live valued and productive lives.

The following tips are from occupational therapy practitioners who help people with TBI do the things that are important to them and be as independent as possible.

If you want to:

Address problems

and organization.

with memory,

attention span,

Consider these activity tips:

consider these detivity tips.

Create daily schedules. Check things off after you do them. Use alarms to remind yourself of things

- you need to do throughout the day, such as taking your medications.
- Keep calendars where they are easy to see. Review them and update them every day.
- Have specific places for things you use a lot, like your house keys.
- If reading is challenging, listen to recorded books from your local library.
- Play games that use memory and problem solving. These include cards, dominoes, checkers, chess, word search puzzles, and board games.
- Reduce distractions such as noise and clutter to help you concentrate and make fewer mistakes.

An occupational therapy practitioner offers expertise to:

- Evaluate your skills and what you want to do, then create a daily plan to help you succeed.
- Help select the best tools for you that fit your lifestyle and skills. Examples include a smartphone, tablet, computer, paper notebook, small voice recorder, etc. The occupational therapist will also train you in how to use these tools.
- Review how you use your tools throughout the day to make sure they are helping, and make changes if they aren't.
- Help you practice all your skills to do different things, such as buying groceries, making dinner, going to work or school, attending social events, etc.

 Feel more in control of your emotions and behavior.

- Try to avoid things that make you angry or frustrated.
- Make time to do the things you enjoy, such as hobbies or being with friends.
- Allow yourself to grieve your losses.
- Accept help from people you trust.
- Get enough sleep and rest. Being tired and in pain can make it harder to cope.
- Join a support group to share your experiences and learn from others.
- Work with you throughout the day to determine what triggers your anger or frustration. Create ways for you to address it before you feel out of control.
- Teach you ways to relax, manage your anger, and think more positively. The occupational therapist will work with you during challenging moments.
- Role-play difficult situations, share ways to respond, and practice with you.
- Teach you new ways of doing the things that are important to you, like cooking or buying groceries, and help you meet your goals.

If you want to:

Be as safe as

possible.

Consider these activity tips:

- Keep emergency contact numbers on the refrigerator, where they are easy to find.
- Remember that you may need more help than you realize. Ask for support from a family member or friend.
- Use household appliances that have fewer risks until you have been evaluated for safety. For example, use the microwave instead of the stove.
- If you want to drive, have an evaluation before getting behind the wheel. If you can't drive, look into alternative transportation in your community.
- Install safety grab bars near the toilet and in the tub if you have poor strength or balance.

 Participate in work, school, or volunteer opportunities.

- Think about the things you enjoy and are good it. How can you apply these to work, school, or volunteer positions?
- Meet with your employer or school administrator to talk about your skills, and what you need help with.
- Consider taking a different job in the same company if you're having trouble at work.
- Ask for feedback or assistance from a trusted friend or colleague.

An occupational therapy practitioner offers expertise to:

- Assess your judgment and skills (e.g., reliability, impulsivity, self-awareness), so you and your family members will know what types of support you need to be as independent as possible.
- Evaluate your home, and recommend safety modifications or equipment (e.g., use hand tools rather than power tools).
- Evaluate how well you do daily activities such as dressing, bathing, and cooking, and make recommendations if you need assistance.
- Evaluate how well you can drive, and work with you if adaptations will make you safer. If driving is no longer possible, help you find other ways to get where you need to go and provide training in how to use them.
- Share community housing options that will allow you to live as independently as possible, such as having a roommate or living in a group home. Make sure the options are a good fit for you.
- Recommend the types of support you will need to return to school, work, or volunteering.
- Work with your school, workplace, or community as you transition, to ensure that you have the supports you need to be successful.
- Help you practice work and social behaviors and skills that will help you succeed.

Need More Information?

Occupational therapy practitioners with expertise in treating adults with traumatic brain injury can be found in hospitals and rehabilitation centers, specialized outpatient brain injury programs, home health agencies, and private practice. Ask your physician for a recommendation. You can find additional information through the American Occupational Therapy Association at www.aota.org.

AOTA thanks Marsha Neville, PhD, OT/L, and Kathleen Golisz, OTR, OTD, for their assistance with this Tip Sheet.

Occupational therapy is a skilled health, rehabilitation, and educational service that helps people across the lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations).

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