



Perseveration (Repetition)

Perseveration is repetitive and continuous behavior, speech or thought that occurs due to changes in cognitive skills such as memory, attention, and mental flexibility.

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About perseveration

Stress and anxiety can trigger perseveration, or at the very least make it worse. Brain injury is just one of a variety of conditions in which perseverative disorders can occur. Others include Alzheimer's disease, aphasia, schizophrenia and Parkinson's disease.

An example of perseveration is someone sandpapering a table until they go through the wood, or a person who continues talking about a topic even when the conversation has moved on to other things. Another person might be asked to draw a cat, then several other objects, but continue to draw a cat each time.

Treatment

Perseveration can be treated through behavioural and cognitive training in a structured environment, and possibly by group therapy or medication.

How others can help

It is important to understand that when a person is perseverating they feel unable to stop. Others need to respond in a calm and supportive way. Getting frustrated will only cause anxiety and make the situation worse. A useful strategy is redirecting the person by changing the topic of conversation, or asking them to try another activity. It is also helpful to direct a person from conversation to an activity and visa versa. This will help them to move on from the behaviour, speech or thoughts they are stuck on.

Managing symptoms

As with most aspects of a brain injury, the making good lifestyle choices will make the symptoms of perseveration easier to manage:

- sleep well
- exercise regularly
- avoid alcohol or limit your intake
- follow a healthy diet
- learn stress management techniques
- maintain contact with friends and family.