



Recovery Tips

Although the degree of recovery is largely determined by the nature and extent of the injury, the level of engagement in rehabilitation also significantly affects recovery outcomes. There are many things people can do to maximise recovery throughout the rehabilitation process and beyond.

Determination

People with a brain injury often say rehabilitation is the biggest challenge of their lives. While life may never return to 'normal', people can influence their recovery through hard work and persistence. A steady and consistent approach to rehabilitation makes a big difference as it is important to avoid fatigue.

Acceptance

There will be times when it will seem impossible to see past the challenges you are facing. That's OK - that's a normal part of adjusting. Trying to deny the pain, fear, suffering, loss, grief, or pain you are experiencing will not make it go away, it will just make you feel bad for feeling bad. Accept that you are going to have bad moments, but also remember that these bad moments (like all emotions) will pass, and over time, they will happen less often and be less intense. Remember to give yourself, and your family, credit for all the things you have managed to do since the brain injury

happened. It is easy to underestimate how much we have adapted and how far we have come, so be sure to take note of it, and pat yourself on the back for it. It might help to tell others in your family that you can see how much they have changed, adapted, or learned new things.

Talk to someone

If you find that you cannot see any positives, it might be a good idea to see a psychologist. Talking to a psychologist can help a great deal. Make sure that the psychologist you see is registered with the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) and listed with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Go to your GP and ask for a referral and a Mental Health Care plan to let you claim a Medicare rebate. Alternative, the Australian Psychological Society have a web page to help you find registered psychologists in your area. go to www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist



Resilience

Resilience can be helpful for individuals and families managing brain injury. A good rehabilitation program will enhance resilience by identifying individual and family strengths.

Some of the qualities associated with resilience are:

- having hope for the future
- having close relationships
- the ability to be independent, proactive and get things done
- the ability to solve problems
- the ability to enjoy laughter and respond to humour despite tragic situations (Rees, 2012)

Making meaning out of what happened

For many, it is important to work through the grief and shock about how brain injury has changed their lives. It is common to feel bitter, resentful, or as if it is punishment. In some cases, finding a positive outcome from the brain injury can help during rehabilitation. For example, a person may never

work again but discovers happiness in volunteer work that is helping others. Others become involved in brain injury support groups and make sense of their injury by seeing how they can help others in a similar situation.

Structure and routine

There is a large amount of difference in how much structure we like in our lives, such as when to eat, rest, sleep and work. After a brain injury, however, structure and routine provides predictability that allows the brain to rest and save its energy for rehabilitation. Having meals at regular times and maintaining a healthy diet is vital. Having a weekly timetable for meal times, rest periods, rehabilitation tasks and exercise on a big poster or whiteboard will provide gentle memory prompts and encouragement if memory or motivation problems exist.

Family involvement

Research has shown improved outcomes for people with a brain injury when their families engage in the rehabilitation process (Braga et al., 2005). Although the focus of rehabilitation is usually on the injured person, a good rehabilitation team understands the importance of family (McIntyre and Kendall, 2013). It is during this formal rehabilitation stage that knowledge can be passed on to family members about how to provide support beyond the formal period of therapy. If behavioural problems emerge, family members can ask for a plan to use at home in order to respond appropriately. It is important to have a realistic discharge plan before leaving rehabilitation. Once home, it is necessary to establish a routine and consistently apply the discharge plan. It is important that the family member being cared for has control over aspects of their life they can safely manage.