

# Coping Strategies



Family involvement is very important in the recovery of a person with a brain injury. Because brain injury recovery is unpredictable and can vary from months to years, members of the family can get physically and emotionally worn down. Things that tend to wear down family members or other care givers include:

- Providing physical care (toileting, bathing, feeding, etc.)
- Having to repeat information frequently because of memory problems
- Managing behavioral or emotional outbursts
- Managing work and home responsibilities
- Financial strain

If family members knew exactly how long they would be inconvenienced and that things would then return to normal, this new reality would feel manageable. But brain injury is indefinite and every brain injury is different. Some individuals get their strength and mobility back but may have significant memory problems for the rest of their lives. Others may get a little better with each year. Still others may be left with permanent severe problems with movement and thinking.

## What can family members do to keep from burning out?

- Don't assume you can handle everything alone. Accept help. People want to help. Don't feel as if you are inconveniencing them.
- Get organized so that when people offer to help, you can tell them what you need. Make a list of things that need to be done and divide it into things only you can do and things that others can do.
- The list will help friends and family choose a task to do or choose to relieve you so that you can do things that must be done by you. You might even let a family member or close friend use the list to coordinate help. Granny may not be able to do much physically, but she can coordinate volunteers and keep track of the list. And she feels good about being able to help!
- Make time for the family to get back to doing some of the normal things, like going to church, allowing the teenagers to spend time with friends or go to a football game, and getting back to work and school.
- Find healthy ways that help you relieve stress--exercise, reading, meditation, gardening or whatever works for you. Carve out time for stress relief on a regular basis. You deserve it!
- Everyone needs a balance between rest and responsibility. Having this balance will help you have energy to meet life's challenges. Please take this time to review ways in which you can accept help from others in order to care for yourself or the injured person.

An example of a **Support Worksheet** can be printed as a tool.