

# Key Points for Families After Brain Injury



## **Provide Positive Reinforcement**

Provide frequent praise throughout each day as a means of reinforcement for handling difficult situations. Since some amount of frustration is normal and expected for you and your family member, it is important to create a positive environment and provide support throughout the treatment progression. This also helps to boost the self-image of your family member as they work through this difficult process.

## **Encourage Independence**

The ultimate goal of the rehabilitation process is to achieve the maximum level of independence. Your family member may be fearful of trying new things as a result of the changes since their injury. Although you are required to supervise your family member for safety, it is important to redirect him/her to try new things and build independence.

## **Simplify**

Too much information regarding any topic may confuse or overwhelm your family member. When providing information or making requests, try to leave out unnecessary details and keep lists to a minimum of 2-3 items. Try to be specific and omit extra details to decrease chances of becoming overwhelmed and confused. Your loved one may also take things very literally, so this will help to prevent misunderstandings. Basically, say what you mean and mean what you say.

## **Don't Forget About Me**

When having conversations about your loved one, do not forget to include them. You have been in a position to make decisions about the care of your loved one throughout this experience, but as they are able to participate in conversations, make sure to ask for their input. If left out of conversations, your loved one may begin to feel frustrated, isolated, helpless and even resentful. Your loved one will appreciate the opportunity to begin regaining some control over the decisions related to the present situation.

## **Provide Structure**

Organizing thoughts and activities following a brain injury can be very difficult. As a family member, it may be helpful to help establish the framework for organization in the form of a calendar, a daily "to do" list, or even writing out the steps to a task. Spending a few minutes each day reviewing these items will assist your loved one in feeling more successful in activities and more in control of their time.

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## **Offer Cues**

Following a brain injury, your loved one may need a little extra assistance in answering questions, getting started with a task or completing a task. Sometimes offering “cues” to get going in the right direction (but not doing things for them) is all they need to be successful. While it may be easy for you to complete tasks for them, it is far more important for you to promote their success.

## **Be Consistent**

Brain injury reduces one’s ability to be flexible with changes, so it is important to prepare your loved one for any changes that will need to be made and to minimize the number of changes taking place at once. Situations such as a new daily routine, new people or a new sequence of steps can cause increased confusion and anxiety if not properly anticipated.

## **Be Patient**

Following a brain injury, thinking, moving, speaking and simple processing take longer than usual. You can help decrease your loved one’s frustration by being patient. Allowing extra time will help improve the effectiveness and success of basic tasks.