

Neuro Restorative™

Rebuilding Lives After Brain Injury



The New Normal: Understanding Family and Individual Dynamics Following Brain Injury

Deborah Gutteridge, MS, CBIST
Clinical Evaluator

...The Most Challenging Issue...

- ...for survivors
- ...for families
- ...for professionals

Essential Basics That Must Be Considered:

*"Every brain is different.....
every brain injury is different..."*

Physical Givens:

- 3 pounds “jello”
- 18 yrs old/25 yrs old
- Bones, walnuts, and mushrooms
- “I feel no pain”

Physical Givens Continued....

- 100,000 miles of vessels
- Fattest organ in body
- 75% water
- Have most all cells you will have at birth

Key Factors Impacting “Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance”

- Pre-injury lifestyle of family
- Location of injury to brain
- Pre-injury lifestyle of IwABI
(Individual with Acquired Brain Injury)

Occipital Lobes

- “Am I seeing what I think I see?”
- Ok, I am ‘seeing stars’

Temporal Lobes

- “I’m hearing what you’re saying!”
(hearing)
- “I remember what you’re saying!”
(memory)
- As Popeye says, “I am what I am!” (sense of self)
- “déjà vu”

Parietal Lobes

- “I feel no pain!”
- “I feel ‘that’ pain!”

Cerebellum

- 1/8 of total brain weight
- Skilled repetitive movements: running, swimming, writing, holding a drink

Frontal Lobes

- $A + B = C$ (I'm thinking)
- "Let's go to the store" (I'm planning)
- *Per-so-na-lity (teens!)*

“Getting Thicker as You Use It!”

- Upper most “cerebral cortex” is 80%
- “Brain Work”-thinking, perceiving, speaking and understanding
- Other structures underneath-moving, sleeping, eating, smelling, seeing, breathing, etc.

“My Half is Better than Your Half!”

- Left Cerebral-analytical, reasoning, logic, language
- Right Cerebral-artistic, creative, art, music, voice recognition, orientation in space, mapping
- Corpus Callosum-bridging the halves!

“1 Cup ‘o Fluid’ Helps The Medicine Go Down”

- Cerebrospinal fluid-brain and spinal column
- “Your Brain’s connected to the Spinal Column” by the “Stem”
- Medulla-1 inch! for temp, breathing, swallowing, vomiting, HR, and BP

Injury Site Plays Role

- Damage to the frontal lobe is significant for behavior problems
- Frontal lobes are “regulators” of integrative behavior
- Poor attention to task, initiation or participation in goal-directed behaviors

Other Injury Sites

- Damage to temporal lobes may cause verbal or physical outbursts
- Damage to hypothalamus may cause appetite disturbances, mood swings, and irritability
- Diffuse damage has shown to result in depression, poor frustration tolerance, and sexual dysfunction

Pre-Injury Lifestyle of IwABI

- Personality
- Body image
- Previous satisfaction with life activities
- Religion and philosophy of life
- Life stage
- Ability to live with uncertainty

Pre-Injury Lifestyle of Family

- Proactive vs. Reactive
 - Eat well, exercise in hopes of long healthy life
 - Family members *will* become ill, disabled or suffer, age, die....or may sustain an ABI

Family Lifestyle cont.-

- Family Beliefs: untested myths vs. belief validations
 - “my family loves me so much they will always take care of me”
 - “we will never leave each other no matter what”
 - “I have sacrificed for my children, so I know they will take care of me when the time comes”

Additional Factors to Consider

- Premorbid level of functioning
- Severity of injury
- Depth and length of coma
- Age at time of injury
- Premorbid educational level
- Socioeconomic status

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 1 (1-3 months)
 - Shock of the injury
 - Hopes for full recovery
 - Denial of severity

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 2 (3-9 months)
 - Recognition of severity
 - Helplessness
 - Frustration

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 3 (6-24 months)
 - Possible annoyance with survivor
 - Family expects full independence
 - Start to recognize the reality of impairment
 - Start information seeking about ABI

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 4 (10-24 months)
 - Realism of situation sets in
 - Family begins to get exhausted
 - Reduction of time with loved one
 - Bereavement like emotions may occur

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 5 (12-24 months)
 - Profound sadness
 - Families begin to grieve again
 - Mourn the loss of loved one's personality

Adjustment, Coping, and Acceptance in Families

- Stage 6 (2-3 years)
 - Greater understanding of the situation
 - Understanding person may never be the same
 - Begins to accept loved one's condition
 - Can now address needs of entire family unit

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 1-Denial of Trauma's Impact
 - Denial that recovery won't occur
 - Denial of past abilities or current limitations
 - Avoidance of tx/refusal of rehabilitation
 - Denial can be adaptive* (in control, reduce stress)
 - Long term denial can be detrimental

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 2-Grieving Over Perceived Losses
 - Helplessness, sadness, sorrow
 - Anger directed toward others
 - Little dying/deaths along the way

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 3-Depression
 - Limited control over life
 - Loneliness
 - Impact of varied losses upon life
 - Can come out as anger

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 4-Guilt
 - Accident is their fault (seatbelt; motor cycle helmet; alcohol)
 - Families blame person for injury as they can't believe what has happened

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 5-Coping Styles
 - Displacement: anger over what one has lost may be displaced to family friends
 - Regression: reverts to past methods of gaining gratification
 - Intellectualization: “could have been worse” “now I’ll be better person”

Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance for IwABI

- Stage 6-Acceptance
 - Gain new perspective on living
 - Mental decision to live with realities
 - Renegotiate old relationships
 - Redefining self based on new interactions with others

Taking Adjustment, Coping and Acceptance to the Next Level!

“AWARENESS”

Impaired Awareness:

“Person lacks or has reduced insight into deficits, present changes, and their implications on daily life.”

- Due to damage to certain areas of brain
- Denials of illness secondary to psychological distress

Awareness in Our Lives

- We all struggle daily with awareness
- Impacts all aspects of recovery
- Impacts getting back to life activities
- Requires self-monitoring
- Guides our actions and approach

Pyramid of Model of Awareness

- Intellectual Awareness: what has happened
- Emergent Awareness: “I get it” but don’t do anything about it
- Predictive Awareness: What happens if I don’t do anything different? Breakdowns?

The Struggle....

- Understanding-
 - they have a problem and need to change
 - how awareness impacts their life
 - what they need to do about it

#1 Strategy for Increasing Awareness

- Videotaping-
 - Allows person to analyze their behavior
 - Watch & ask how they think they did
 - Break down task steps
 - Teach compensatory strategy

Recalibration of Self

- Re-evaluate yourself
- Strengths and weaknesses evolve
- What you do in your 40's versus 20's
- What are my strengths, weaknesses, and challenges?
- Don't let the "weakness dialogue" overshadow the strengths!

Empower People

- Give someone a greater sense of confidence of self-esteem
 - Families
 - Friends
 - professionals

Conclusions-

- Life changes for everyone after an ABI, but does not have to be for the bad.
- Grief theory provides a framework for adjustment.
- Take time to re-learn who you are now and how you have changed.
- Exploring how you have changed can be empowering!

Thank you for listening!

Deborah Gutteridge, MS, CBIST

Deborah.gutteridge@neurorestorative.com