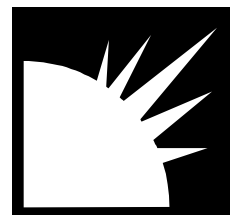


TBI TODAY

NEWS, IDEAS, AND RESOURCES FROM THE VIRGINIA TBI MODEL SYSTEM



Improve Your Life After a TBI: *One small step at a time*

by Michael Cerreto

As we journey through life, we can encounter three major adversities that derail the life we planned. We may come face-to-face with a chronic illness, brain injury, or pain that takes control of our life. We may tragically lose a loved one through death, divorce, or a breakup that causes deep loneliness. Finally, we may have wasted our talents and not lived up to our potential, causing frustration.

After an acquired brain injury, you may experience all three of these adversities and feel overwhelmed. You may ruminate over the desire to get your life back, drive a car again, reunite with your spouse and kids, or pick up your career where you left off. These larger desires are rooted in two basic needs we have in life: The need to be loved and to love others (feel connected) and the need to be constructive in life (contribute to others).

After a brain injury, you may feel overwhelmed to get these basic needs met because your goals for change seem too big and complicated. By creating smaller goals to improve your life, you can feel less overwhelmed and develop the skills to tackle bigger goals down the road. To start, answer the following questions:

Question 1: To what extent are my two basic needs in life being met: To be loved and to love (connect with others) and to be constructive in life (contribute to others)?

Question 2: If one or both of my basic needs are not being met, am I behaving in ways that are unhealthy to me and others to have them be met?

(Cont'd on page 2)

Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with **A Talented Mind Clinic** in Richmond, Virginia. He helps children, adolescents, and adults with a TBI improve the quality of their daily lives. He also facilitates **The Comeback Project** that is a free, private online community for brain injury survivors and their families. You can join the community to get the support you need at: a-talented-mind.mightybell.com. If you have any ideas for a future article about cognitive rehabilitation, please contact Michael at cerreto@atalentedmind.com.



Mark Your Calendar

Aphasia Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Thursday of the month 6-7pm
- ♦ **Location:** First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1000 Blanton Ave, Richmond, 23221 in the President's Room
- ♦ **Contact:** Susan Hapala at (804) 908-3261 or Jan Thomas at rva.aphasia@gmail.com

Support Group for Adults with TBI, Family, and Friends

- ♦ **When:** 3rd Monday of the month 6:15pm-7:45pm
- ♦ **Location:** Disability Law Center of Virginia, 1512 Willow Lawn Drive, Suite 100, Richmond, 23230
- ♦ **Contact:** Christine Baggini at (804) 355-5748 or christine@biav.net

Supportive Survivors

- ♦ **When:** 2nd, 4th, and 5th Tuesdays 6-8pm, Outings planned for the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays
- ♦ **Location:** Regency Mall Food Court, 1420 Parham Road, Richmond, 23229
- ♦ **Contact:** Ted Taylor at (804) 781-2144 or taylorted58@yahoo.com

TGIF: Social Group for Adults with TBI and Family

- ♦ **When:** 1st Friday of the month
- ♦ **Contact:** Email Aleana McClellan at mcclellana@chesterfield.gov or call (804) 751-4134 to get on the mailing list.

Women's Luncheon Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Tuesday of the month for lunch 11:30am
- ♦ **Location:** The Mill House, 7812 Shrader Road, Henrico 23294
- ♦ **Contact:** Jen Candela at (804) 386-0926 x 104 or jenniferc@communitybraininjury.org

Looking for a support group in your area? Check out www.biav.net/virginia-support-groups.htm for more support groups organized by region!

If you have an upcoming event of interest to the Brain Injury community in Virginia, we would be glad to consider including it here. Please call (804) 828-3704 or email jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org.

(Improve Your Life, cont'd)

Question 3: What one small part of my daily life do I want to perform better in a healthy, constructive way (such as learning to use the microwave or remembering one person's name). How will making that change improve my daily life?

One of the best ways to make sure you achieve your goal is to ask someone to help you. Who in your life can help you make the change you want? Now, take the initial step to ask that person for help and start improving your life one step at a time.



BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF VIRGINIA'S

35th Anniversary Benefit

Guests are invited to attend the Brain Injury Association of Virginia's 35th Anniversary Benefit at the Hilton Hotel in Short Pump on Friday, March 2 at 5PM to celebrate the leadership of their honorees and to recognize 35 years of services by the BIAV. The event will feature cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, a raffle, guest speakers, an award ceremony, and entertainment. The benefit will raise funds to continue to provide resources and services to the brain injury community. Tickets are \$60/PP and can be purchased online at www.biav.net.



DEAR PAT,

It has been 4 years since my brain injury from a bicycle accident, and I still have problems with sleep. I am exhausted all the time because I sleep only 2-3 hours at a time and spend the rest of the time tossing and turning. I will doze off here and there, but again, I'll wake up after 2-3 hours. It is very rare that I get 7 hours of continuous sleep. I wake up in the morning feeling like I was in a battle all night.

In addition, even though I'm tired during the day, I can't nap. I have tried, and I can't fall asleep. My poor wife and kids. They can tell when I have a poor night's sleep. It is all over my face. I'm irritable and short with them. I snap at my kids more often now, and I don't mean to. I

just lose my cool and get really impatient because I can't think clearly. I walk around in a fog, going through the motions. I have trouble focusing and paying attention. I lose stuff all the time because I can't remember what I did with it.

I'm not sure what I can do. I have tried counting sheep, drinking hot milk, watching TV, taking a hot bath; you name it, I tried it. I'm desperate now. Please help me, Pat. I need to sleep!



PAT'S RESPONSE:

How frustrating it must be for you! Having a good night's sleep is so important to one's sense of well-being because it impacts many aspects of our lives. You are not alone, though. Sleep disturbance is a common problem following a traumatic brain injury. Injury to the brain often leads to changes in sleep pattern. As such, people with a brain injury frequently complain of difficulty falling or staying asleep, drowsiness during the daytime, and an erratic sleep pattern. Several factors contribute to sleep problems: physical and chemical changes; breathing control changes; medications; physical inactivity and daytime napping; pain; depression; alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine use.

There are many things you can try to improve your sleep before talking to your doctor. Changing your behaviors and surrounding environment is often an effective treatment for sleep difficulties. Here are some suggestions of things you can do during the day: Set an alarm to try to wake up at the same time every day; Get off the couch and limit TV watching; Exercise every day; Do not nap for more than 20 minutes during the day. At nighttime: Try to go to bed at the same time every night; Follow a bedtime routine (e.g., put out your clothes for morning, brush your teeth, and then read or listen to relaxing music for 10 minutes); Avoid eating prior to sleep to allow time to digest; Do not eat, read, or watch TV while in bed; Create a restful atmosphere in the bedroom protected from distractions, noise, extreme temperatures, and light; if you don't fall asleep within 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing or boring until you feel sleepy.

Good luck restoring a restful night of sleep! If your sleep problems persist, please talk to your doctor to explore safe and effective solutions. You might consider counseling, relaxation therapy, or phototherapy as some other treatment alternatives.



Winter Word Find

See if you can find the following words in the word find below. Words can be forward, backward, diagonal, horizontal, and vertical. If you get stuck, answers are on page 7!

JUST FOR FUN

T	E	K	N	A	L	B	I	G	S	P	L	B	V	C
L	E	R	K	J	I	S	C	A	W	A	H	N	G	F
R	P	M	B	J	N	V	Q	R	E	T	A	E	W	S
H	Z	C	Z	E	J	B	C	C	F	R	O	S	T	Y
D	J	J	T	K	R	X	K	O	B	U	F	H	L	I
I	W	T	W	V	H	Y	R	A	P	X	E	S	T	U
E	I	D	U	D	W	I	H	T	M	E	C	O	K	Q
M	T	S	L	E	D	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	N	H
D	I	A	G	H	H	E	V	P	Y	N	L	E	I	W
S	Z	C	N	Z	J	O	A	B	Q	A	P	K	U	G
I	C	H	I	R	W	D	C	L	J	O	E	A	G	H
F	L	A	B	C	E	S	T	K	X	E	R	L	N	Q
K	P	F	R	V	L	B	Q	A	E	J	I	F	E	D
U	N	E	F	F	N	E	I	S	A	Y	F	S	P	N
V	F	R	O	Z	E	N	S	H	S	T	O	O	B	D



BLANKET
BOOTS
COAT
FIREPLACE
FLAKE

FROSTY
FROZEN
HIBERNATE
HOCKEY
ICICLES

MITTENS
PENGUIN
SCARF
SLED
SNOWMAN
SWEATER

Frequently Asked Questions



QUESTION:

I feel exhausted, tired all the time. I don't feel like doing anything at all. Is there anything I can do so that I can be more productive?

ANSWER:

After TBI, it is common for people to experience physical, psychological, and mental fatigue. Here are some things you can try to decrease fatigue:

- Pay attention to what triggers your fatigue and learn to identify the early signs of fatigue (e.g., becoming irritable or being distracted). Stop an activity before getting tired.
- Get more sleep and rest.
- Include some regular rest breaks or naps into your daily schedule. Be careful to limit naps to 30 minutes and avoid evening naps.
- Avoid alcohol and marijuana as they will generally make fatigue worse.



- Resume activities gradually, over weeks or even months.
- Start with familiar tasks at home or work that you can complete without fatigue. Gradually increase the complexity of each task, taking breaks as needed.
- Exercise daily. Research has shown that people with TBI who exercise have better mental function and alertness. Over time, exercise and being more active helps lessen physical and mental fatigue, and builds stamina.

- Improve your time management:
 - ⌚ Plan and follow a daily schedule. Using a calendar or planner can help manage mental fatigue.
 - ⌚ Prioritize activities. Finish what is most important first.
 - ⌚ Do things that require the most physical or mental effort earlier in the day, when you feel refreshed.
 - ⌚ Avoid over-scheduling.



Questions for Pat or the FAQ column are welcomed.

Send them to:

"ASK PAT" OR "FAQ"

P.O. BOX 980542. RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542

or e-mail: jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Brain Injury Association of Virginia's 17th Annual *Making Headway* Conference

Registration is now open for BIAV's 17th annual conference at **Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa, Short Pump** on **Friday, March 2nd and Saturday, March 3rd**. BIAV's Annual *Making Headway* Conference aims to:

- ◆ Provide a venue for the exchange of information about brain injury programs, resources, treatment, and therapies
- ◆ Create a positive learning environment through discussions, case studies, lectures, and exhibition
- ◆ Design a program that is specific to individuals with brain injury, caregivers, family members, and professionals

The first day of the conference is designed for professionals working in schools, clinics, and community settings seeking advanced knowledge about brain injury, focusing on the topic of *Concussion and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: It's Not Just a Bump on the Head*.

The second day features keynote speakers as well as BIAV's new Marketplace, a perfect setting for small businesses and organizations to have the opportunity to showcase and sell their special services and products.

Learn more about the conference and register at www.biav.net/conferences. Registration closes on February 15.



The 42nd Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference: Practical Solutions to Real World Problems

In May, the Williamsburg Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference will celebrate its 42nd consecutive year. The conference provides a thought-provoking opportunity to learn and interact alongside leading national and internationally-recognized TBI experts.

The conference provides a unique focus on practical solutions and interventions to improve brain injury rehabilitation practice; it is designed primarily for multidisciplinary rehabilitation professionals and others who serve individuals with brain injuries and their families, including: case managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, neuro/psychologists, counselors, physicians, social workers, special education teachers, and more. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be available for a variety of disciplines.

The conference will take place at the **Williamsburg Double Tree by Hilton Hotel** on **Thursday, May 3rd and Friday, May 4th**. For more information on guest speakers, schedules, cost, and registration, please visit www.williamsburgtbiconference.com.

Join a Supportive Online Community for TBI Survivors and Families

The Comeback Project is a free, private online community for survivors of brain injury and their families to help you get your life back after a brain injury. You can join the community to share and get the support you need at: a-talented-mind.mightybell.com.

The community is provided by A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia, that provides cognitive rehabilitation therapy to brain injury survivors and families. For more information, you may also email Mike Cerreto at cerreto@atalentedmind.com.

Survivor Stories Wanted!

Recovering from a brain injury can be very difficult. Sometimes, one of the most helpful and inspiring things is simply hearing from other survivors who have gone through recovery and faced the same challenges. Are you a survivor with a story you'd like to share? If so, then we'd like to hear it, and it might get into a future issue of TBI Today!

Submit to: jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org

or

TBI Today, VCU P.O. Box 980542
Richmond, VA 23298-0542



Here are the answers to the word find on page 4.
How did you do?

T	E	K	N	A	L	B	I	G	S	P	L	B	V	C
L	E	R	K	J	I	S	C	A	W	A	H	N	G	F
R	P	M	B	J	N	V	Q	R	E	T	A	E	W	S
H	Z	C	Z	E	J	B	C	C	F	R	O	S	T	Y
D	J	J	T	K	R	X	K	O	B	U	F	H	L	I
I	W	T	W	V	H	Y	R	A	P	X	E	S	T	U
F	I	D	U	D	W	I	H	T	M	E	C	O	K	Q
M	T	S	L	E	D	S	N	O	W	M	J	N	N	H
D	L	A	G	H	H	E	V	P	Y	N	L	E	I	W
S	Z	C	N	Z	J	Q	A	B	Q	A	P	K	U	G
I	C	H	I	P	W	D	C	L	J	O	E	A	G	H
F	L	A	B	C	E	S	T	K	X	E	R	L	N	Q
K	P	F	P	V	L	E	Q	A	E	J	I	F	E	D
U	N	E	F	E	N	E	I	S	A	Y	F	S	P	N
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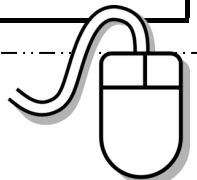
SKILL-BUILDING, SUPPORTIVE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR COUPLES AFTER BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!

**Are you in a relationship? Have you or your partner had an acquired brain injury ?
You May Qualify for an Ongoing Research Study!**

Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help couples adjust to brain injury. Qualified volunteers will participate in five to six support and education sessions. Study volunteers will be given information on brain injury, local resources, skills development, and positive coping strategies. Volunteers will also be asked to complete several questionnaires. Participants must be at least 18 years old. There is no charge for services and volunteers are compensated for their time.

If you are interested in participating, please call Jenny Marwitz at 804-828-3704 or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org

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Founded in 1983 by families and concerned professionals, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia is the only statewide non-profit organization in Virginia exclusively devoted to serving individuals with brain injury, their families, and those that care for and about them. Over 10,000 people find help from BIAV each year.



The Voice of Brain Injury: *Help, Hope & Healing*