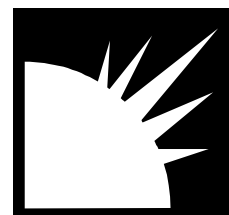


TBI TODAY

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



EDITOR

Margie Martinez, B.A.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jeffrey Kreutzer, Ph.D.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

David Cifu, M.D.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Jenny Marwitz, M.A.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

William Walker, M.D.

BIostatistician

Adam Sima, Ph.D.

DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR

Kelli Gary, Ph.D.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Grace Denio, B.S.

Kristin Graham, Ph.D.

Nancy Hsu, Psy.D.

Daniel Klyce, Ph.D.

Margie Martinez, B.A.

Ana Mills, Psy.D.

DIRECT CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Margie Martinez

P.O. Box 980542

Richmond, VA 23298-0542

(804) 828-3703

Email:

mariegrace.martinez@vcuhealth.org

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C.O.P.E. Problem Solving Can Keep You Optimistic After a TBI

by Michael Cerreto

In life, you face simple problems that can be solved routinely without much effort, while other problems are more complex and require more thoughtfulness. A traumatic brain injury, however, does not discriminate between the two. It can inhibit your mind's ability to solve both types of problems.



This can result in a TBI survivor losing faith in his or her problem solving abilities and becoming pessimistic, especially if family members also lack good problem solving skills.

A University of Redlands' study found that, when spouses of patients used dysfunctional problem-solving methods, the patient's distress level increased. However, this did not happen when spouses used constructive problem-solving methods.

While problem solving may have been routine for you before a brain injury, you may need to use concrete methods to solve problems and stay optimistic after a TBI. One helpful problem solving method is called **C.O.P.E.**

Here's how it works: After you put a problem into words that you can understand, you start the **C.O.P.E.** method with "**E**" for getting **Expert** information about the problem. You then move to "**C**" for **Creatively** brainstorming solutions by visualizing potential outcomes. The next step is "**O**" for maintaining an **Optimistic** attitude that the problem will be solved. After you select a solution from your brainstormed list, you use "**P**" to **Plan** the sequence of steps needed to implement your solution, and determine the help you need.

If you focus on each step of the C.O.P.E. process and trust that you will find the best solution, the method gives you a way to make good decisions and stay optimistic.

Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia. Learn more about Michael at www.atalentedmind.com.



Mark Your Calendar

Aphasia Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Thursday of the month, 6-7pm
- ♦ **Location:** Wells Coleman office building in Monument Corporate Centre office park, 5004 Monument Avenue, Richmond, 23230
- ♦ **Contact:** Susan Hapala at (804) 908-3261 or Jan Thomas at rva.aphasia@gmail.com

Stroke/Brain Injury Survivor & Caregiver Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm
- ♦ **Location:** Sheltering Arms Rehab Hospital, 8254 Atlee Rd, Mechanicsville, 23116 Conference Rm C OR 13700 St. Francis Blvd, Midlothian, 23114 4th Floor Conference Rm
- ♦ **Contact:** Kate Lim at (804) 764-5290 or klim@shelteringarms.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

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 jennifercc@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.

HAVE YOU MET GRACE?



Grace Denio B.S. works as a Research Specialist for the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She is responsible for conducting follow-up interviews and helps coordinate a multi-disciplinary team to collect data relating to brain injury and recovery outcomes for the TBI Model Systems Project.

Grace is originally from Norfolk and came to Richmond to attend VCU. She graduated magna cum laude and received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Minor in Religious Studies.

Grace has served in a number of research positions including working as a research assistant for VCU's Department of Psychiatry, where she worked on a number of studies focusing on substance use and other risky behaviors and their relation to peer network development, and as research assistant and lab supervisor for the VCU Health and Discrimination Lab, where she studied different aspects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, and their relation to health outcomes.

Grace plans to pursue a career in occupational therapy (OT), and she is particularly interested in how OT can be used to address anxiety and social-emotional issues, such as using purposeful activity and tasks to build skills, self-worth, and self-esteem.

Outside of work, Grace enjoys spoiling her dog, Oliver, and adding new varieties to her ever-growing plant collection.

Enhancing Parenting Skills after Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a complex condition that impacts most aspects of a person's life and the lives of their families. Research has focused on relationships, including marriage, family and caregivers, however, TBI survivors may also experience issues related to parenting. These challenges may result in strained relationships with children and parenting partners. Yet, little attention has been given to programs designed to address and improve survivors' parenting skills.

VCU's departments of Rehabilitation Counseling and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are excited to announce the development of the Enhancing Parenting Skills (EPS) program. This unique and important project will design and deliver parenting education and skills development for individuals with TBI and their parenting partners. EPS is funded by Virginia's Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative. The program will deliver in-person workshops across Virginia for TBI survivors and their parenting partners. Additionally, fact sheets and newsletter articles that address parenting challenges, experiences and helpful problem solving strategies will be developed and distributed to parents and professionals.

While our team of TBI and family experts are busy developing content, we also want to reach out to you about your ideas and suggestions. What would you like to see addressed in workshops, fact sheets and newsletters? What has been the most challenging aspect of parenting after TBI? The most rewarding aspect? You can provide feedback in two ways:

1. Email us at TBIparenting@gmail.com

or

2. Complete the survey at the link or QR code:
<https://redcap.vcu.edu/surveys/> then enter: 7L7KYETCA

A large, pink, multi-pointed starburst graphic with a white outline, containing the text 'THANK YOU!' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

**THANK
YOU!**

We at the Virginia TBI Model System would like to thank our participants who have completed their follow-up interviews for our longitudinal study! We sincerely appreciate your contributions and value the time you take to help us learn more about life after brain injury. We strongly encourage all participants to keep in touch with us and would love to hear from you when we reach out to complete your follow-up. If you would like to update your contact information in our records, please contact either Grace Denio at (804) 828-5781 or grace.denio@vcuhealth.org, or Margie Martinez at (804) 828-3703 or mariegrace.martinez@vcuhealth.org.

DEAR PAT,

What can I do to make friends and not feel so lonely? It has not even been a year since my brain injury, and I have already lost all my friends. They no longer call or come to visit, and it makes me sad to think about it. I used to be very social, going out and meeting new people all the time. I was a social butterfly, always ready to be out and about. Now, I stay home on the weekends and watch TV with my parents. I do want friends, but there are also a lot of days when I just want to be left alone and spend time in my room.

I have worked really hard to get my life back to where it was before my injury. It's not easy. I've been told that it may never be the same, but I'm not ready to accept that. I know I'm better than I was after I got out of the hospital. I have reached a lot of the goals I set for myself, like driving again. I'm very grateful for my parents because they have been there for me every step of the way, but I don't want them to be my only friends. How sad is that! I'm only 20 years old! I should be out, doing what "normal" 20-year-olds do. Please help me. I'm torn between wanting to have friends and being left alone.

PAT'S RESPONSE:

Many changes occur after a brain injury, including relationships. Many survivors often feel like no one understands them or that they cannot relate to others. Social situations could be overwhelming for people with a brain injury. They may have a hard time following conversations, listening to multiple people talking at the same time, being sensitive to loud noise, and being easily fatigued. Many survivors also feel self-conscious after their injuries because they are concerned about being 'different'. They worry about what others think of them. Sometimes, it seems easier to be alone than to deal with all the challenges.

Many survivors describe feeling alone and misunderstood after their injury. By understanding the reasons behind your isolation, you will be in a better position to help yourself. Try the following suggestions to overcome loneliness, and build and maintain relationships:

- * Write, call, or e-mail family and friends even to just say "hi."
- * Be polite kind, and considerate. Show care and concern for others.
- * Stop and think before speaking.
- * Be a good listener.
- * Consider how your actions will affect others.
- * Offer to help and do things for other people without expecting something in return.
- * Think of others at least as much as you think about yourself.
- * Do volunteer work.
- * Join a support group, club, fitness center, or sports team.
- * Be active in church.
- * Be positive and work hard to show your best side.
- * Adopt and care for a pet.

Lastly, getting involved with a local support group would help you to feel less alone. You will have the opportunity to meet others who may be struggling with the same challenges. If you wish to get involved with your local support group to share your experience, Brain Injury Association of America has a list of support groups you and your family may attend. To contact BIAA, you may call them at 1-800-444-6443 or send them an e-mail at info@biausa.org. The website for BIAA (www.biausa.org) provides links to state chapters and additional brain injury resources. You may also write BIAA for more information at 1608 Spring Hill Road, Suite 110, Vienna, VA 22182. In Virginia, you can contact the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) by calling 1-804-355-5748 or writing them at 1506 Willow Lawn Drive, Suite 212, Richmond, VA 23230.



Fall Word Scramble

Unscramble the fall-themed words below, then use the boxed letters to figure out the secret message. You can find the answers on page 7!

1. H R T E A V S
2. M U A U T N
3. I P M N U P K
4. A E L P P
5. H Y L C I L
6. Q S S H U A
7. A E S N O S
8. I Q R E U S R L
9. S L E E A V
10. B F I N R O E
11. N I Y W D
12. D R E C I
13. A R K E
14. C O N R A

A 10x10 grid of dashed lines. Twelve squares are placed at the following intersections (row, column) starting from the top-left corner (0,0):

- (0,0)
- (0,1)
- (2,3)
- (3,1)
- (4,7)
- (4,8)
- (5,3)
- (6,9)
- (7,0)
- (7,2)
- (8,0)
- (8,4)
- (8,4)
- (9,5)

JUST FOR FUN



MESSAGE:

Frequently Asked Questions

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE FAQ IS INTENDED TO FAMILIARIZE THE PUBLIC WITH ISSUES RELATED TO TBI. NO INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AS THERAPEUTIC ADVICE OR AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONSULTATION WITH A COMPETENT MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.

QUESTION:

My doctor keeps telling me to stop drinking after my brain injury. What is the big deal with having a few drinks on the weekend?

ANSWER:

Alcohol use can:

- ◇ Slow the recovery process
- ◇ Increase the risk of another brain injury
- ◇ Make balance, walking, and talking problems worse
- ◇ Worsen disorientation, reasoning, memory, temper, and concentration problems
- ◇ Impair judgment and decision-making abilities
- ◇ Increase the risk of family and relationship problems
- ◇ Lead to more problems, including saying and doing things without thinking, worsening your situation
- ◇ Make depression worse and cause negative personality changes
- ◇ Cause health problems
- ◇ Lead to problems at work or school
- ◇ Result in legal problems



If you are having difficulty reducing your consumption of alcohol, here are some suggestions to try to help yourself.

- ◇ Write down your reasons for cutting down or quitting. Review the list often.
- ◇ Keep a diary of how much you are drinking. Set limits and long-term goals.
- ◇ Make a record of your progress and successes, and give yourself credit when you make positive changes.
- ◇ Learn to forgive yourself and others. Getting angry at yourself or blaming other people will probably make things worse.
- ◇ Avoid temptation. Spend time with people who don't use and participate in alcohol-free activities.



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



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



RESILIENCE AND ADJUSTMENT STUDY FOR ADULTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!

**Have you had a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?
You May Qualify for an Ongoing Research
Study!**

Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with traumatic brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help people adjust to having a brain injury. Qualified volunteers will participate in seven rehabilitation and education sessions and possibly three additional 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.

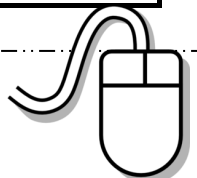
**If you are interested in participating,
please call Jenny Marwitz at
804-828-3704
or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email
jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org**

MESSAGE:
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

12. CIDER
13. RAKE
14. ACORN

KEY
1. HARVEST
2. AUTUMN
3. PUMPKIN
4. APPLE
5. CHILLY
6. SQUASH
7. SEASON
8. SQUIRREL
9. LEAVES
10. BONFIRE
11. WINDY

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<http://model.tbinrc.com> to subscribe by email and to access back issues!



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

BIAV is a chartered state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America and exists to be the voice of brain injury and healing for Virginians with brain injury and



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