



RESEARCH NEWS, HEALTH TIPS, AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES FROM THE VIRGINIA TBI MODEL SYSTEM



## Managing Energy after Brain Injury

by Kelli Williams Gary, PhD, OTR/L

It is common to have less energy or tire faster after a TBI. This is known as physical and mental fatigue and it is a normal part of the brain injury recovery process. There are several factors that can contribute to this fatigue, including side effects of various medications prescribed after injury, energy consumed by the mind working harder to process information, inability to adhere to nutritious eating habits, and dealing with other chronic health conditions and pain. Here are six tips to help manage your energy more effectively after brain injury.

1. Become familiar with the time of day you have the most energy. For example, some people feel the most energized after some sleep and can wake up early in the morning and get things done. Others may be “night owls” and have more energy at night. Try to plan to get things done when you are at your most alert.
2. Get plenty of sleep. A good way to manage energy is to make sure you get a good night’s rest. If that is hard to do, try to take mini power naps for 15-minute spurts throughout the day.
3. Drink plenty of water. If you are not drinking enough, you can become dehydrated and that can drain your energy. Drinking water is linked to increased alertness and concentration. Plus, water flushes toxins out of the body and that can boost your energy.
4. Use the times you feel most energetic to get most of your work done. Place the most important tasks during the times you have the most energy and leave the easier tasks for the times you have lower energy. For example, cook several meals during the afternoon, when you feel the most energetic, and store food for other days. Use slow-cookers to cook overnight and prepare the food when you wake up with more energy.
5. Increase your level of exercise. Exercise is linked to increase sleep, mood, and overall health. Regular exercise increases oxygen and neurotransmitters in the brain that boosts your energy.
6. Lastly, avoiding caffeine and alcohol can help increase energy. Caffeine can keep you alert initially but when consumed excessively coffee, tea or soda may hinder more than help. Alcohol is a depressant drug and large consumption will slow down the central nervous system and zap your energy.

There are a lot of different factors to consider when you are trying to manage your energy, but with effort and awareness you can find ways improve your stamina throughout the day.

## Virginia TBI Model System Team

### Project Director

Ronald Seel, PhD, FACRM

### Dissemination Director

Kelli Williams Gary, PhD, OTR/L

### Research Staff

Katherine Abbasi, M.A.

Laura Albert Suarez, B.A.

Laura Boylan, B.S.

Karen Brooke, M.T.

If you would like to continue to receive the physical version of the newsletter, please let us know! For all listserv and for physical newsletter requests, please contact [Laura.Albert@vcuhealth.org](mailto:Laura.Albert@vcuhealth.org).



*The contents of TBI Today were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90DPTB0021). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of TBI Today do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*

VISIT OUR WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[TBIMS.VCU.EDU](http://TBIMS.VCU.EDU) | [SAI.REHAB](http://SAI.REHAB) | [BIAV.NET](http://BIAV.NET) | [MSKTC.ORG](http://MSKTC.ORG)



## Sportable Wellness Initiatives

Sportable has partnered with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) to offer an 8-week evidence-based virtual wellness program, called **MENTOR**, to people across Virginia with SCI or TBI. This free program provides weekly classes on mindfulness, nutrition, exercise and other wellness topics to empower people with disabilities to improve their overall health.

### Sportable's next group starts July 10th, 2023

Learn more and complete an interest form at [sportable.org/mentor-program/](https://sportable.org/mentor-program/)



### Aphasia Support Group

**When:** 2nd Thursday of the month, 6-7 pm  
**Where:** Wells Coleman office building in Monument Corporate Centre office park, 5004 Monument Ave, Richmond, 23230  
**Contact:** Susan Hapala at (804) 906-3261 or email, [rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com](mailto:rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com)

### BIAV Online Caregiver Group

A meeting for caregivers no matter where they live in Virginia.  
**When:** 1st Wednesday of the month, 6-7 pm  
**Contact:** Email Debra Holloway at [debra@biav.net](mailto:debra@biav.net) to register

### BIAV Online Support Group for people living with BI and their families

**When:** 4th Tuesday of the month, 6 PM  
**Contact:** Christine Baggini at [christine@biav.net](mailto:christine@biav.net) or 804-355-5748 for an invitation to the virtual meetings

### Supportive Survivors

**When:** 2nd, 4th, and 5th Tuesdays, 6-8 pm,  
Outings planned for the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays  
**Where:** Regency Mall Food Court, 1420 Parham Road, Richmond, 23229  
**Contact:** Ted Taylor at (804) 781-2144 or [taylorsted58@yahoo.com](mailto:taylorsted58@yahoo.com)

### Women's Luncheon Group

**When:** 2nd Tuesday of the month for lunch, 11:30 am  
**Where:** The Mill House, 7812 Shrader Road, Henrico, 23294  
**Contact:** Jennifer Zemke at (804) 386-0925 or [jennifer@communitybraininjury.org](mailto:jennifer@communitybraininjury.org)

## Community Connections:

### What is a Sportable?

Sportable is Central Virginia's leading adaptive sports club. They provide recreational and competitive sports programs to 500+ athletes with physical disabilities and visual impairments each year. They currently offer 17 adaptive sports for both kids and adults. The athletes come from diverse backgrounds and have varying abilities. Active Sportable athletes have access to all 17 sports programs, wellness webinars, and a YMCA membership.

### How can I get involved or learn more?

To see Sportable's current program and volunteer opportunities or to donate, please visit [Sportable.org](https://Sportable.org).

### What drives the team at Sportable to do this work?

Sportable's CEO Hunter Leemon was introduced to the organization in 2009 after volunteering to coach one of Sportable's power soccer teams, the Hive. Despite his years playing college baseball at Randolph Macon, Hunter did not consider a professional career in sports. But after seeing the impact adaptive sports can make in the lives of their athletes, he knew he found his calling. When reflecting on his career Hunter noted, "adaptive sports create community, independence, and confidence. I have now been at Sportable long enough to see youth athletes graduate high school and go on to play adaptive sports at the collegiate level. I have celebrated athletes' marriages, new babies, new jobs, and promotions. I am incredibly lucky to be a part of this work and community."

### Research Highlight: Factors Associated with High and Low Life Satisfaction 10 Years after Traumatic Brain Injury

by Laura Boylan

A group of TBIMS researchers studied what factors may play a part in feeling satisfied with life after TBI. The researchers looked at qualities from people before their TBI, at the time of their TBI, and up to 10 years after their TBI. Researchers found that people who **spent more time in their community** reported having a **higher quality of life**. We will be able to use this information to improve life satisfaction after a TBI. This work would not be possible without the people involved in the study, so thank you to our TBIMS participants.

For the full article visit [here](#)

visit [tbims.vcu.edu](https://tbims.vcu.edu) to access back issues!

### Brain Games for Fun!

Check out the games highlight for some fun exercises to engage your brain



SCAN ME

**Website:** <https://freegames.org/>

How to use a QR Code:  
Open your smart phone camera and center the QR code. A link should pop up on the camera screen. Click this link to be directed to our puzzle page.