



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



### Self-Management After Brain Injury

by Kelli Talley, PhD, OTR/L

Self-management after a brain injury means that a person learns to handle some of their own thinking, movement, and feelings. When someone with a brain injury can manage their challenges, it helps their caregivers, makes them feel more responsible, and helps them organize their daily life better. Here are three important things to remember:

- Understand your brain injury
- Know what makes your symptoms worse
- Set realistic goals that you can achieve

Here are some tips for managing symptoms after a brain injury:

- Use a digital calendar on your phone or make a daily to-do list to help with memory problems.
- Play fun games like memory games or puzzles to exercise your brain.
- Take breaks sometimes to make it easier to do physical activities.
- Stay motivated to do light exercises to stay healthy.
- Practice deep breathing and relaxation exercises to help with bad feelings.

### Research Highlight: Life Balance for Care Partners

by Katherine Abbasi, MA

In our busy lives today, it can feel like everything is moving faster and faster. People who take care of loved ones, especially after a brain injury, may be offered new tools and ideas to help them and the person they are caring for. But keeping up with all these options can be hard. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you are trying to care for someone and also take care of yourself. To help with this, the MSKTC, working with researchers from TBIMS, made a helpful factsheet with important tips for caregivers:

- Remember to do things you liked before your loved one got hurt. Try to find small moments in your day to enjoy a favorite activity.
- After you finish a tough task, treat yourself with something nice, like going for a walk, chatting with a friend, or spending some time outside.
- Ask others for help! Think about specific ways they can support you, like going with you to a doctor's appointment.
- [Click here to read the full factsheet.](#)

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EXPLORE THESE WEBSITES FOR MORE UPDATES FROM  
OUR CONTINUUM OF CARE:

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



# Highlighting Virginia's Support Groups

No matter where you live in Virginia, there are groups you can join to get support. These groups help you meet people who understand what you're going through. You can share your stories and figure out how to handle life's challenges together. Joining in can help you make new friends and find ways to grow and feel better.

- [Click here to find a support group in your area.](#)
- BIAV is offering a Support Network Event called the BIAV Winter Wellness Series. [Click here for information and registration.](#)

## Community Support Groups

**RVA Aphasia Group**  
Monthly Meetings  
Contact: [rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com](mailto:rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com) for upcoming monthly meeting information

**Coffee and Conversation Group**  
Contact: [rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com](mailto:rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com) for upcoming coffee and conversation groups

**BIAV**  
Online Caregiver Group Virtual meeting for caregivers who live in VA.  
When: 1st Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm  
Contact: [info@biav.net](mailto:info@biav.net) or 804-355-5748 ext. 102.

Online Support Group for people living with BI, family and friends  
When: 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:00 pm  
Contact: [info@biav.net](mailto:info@biav.net) or 804-355-5748 ext. 102.

In-Person Support Group  
When: 3rd Monday of the month, 6:00 pm  
Where: Willow Lawn area of Richmond  
Contact: [info@biav.net](mailto:info@biav.net) or 804-355-5748 ext. 102. (Advanced registration is required).

**Community Brain Injury Services**  
Caregiver Support Group  
When: 2nd Thursday of the month, 6:00 pm  
Where: 12725 McManus Blvd. Ste. 2E  
Newport News, VA 23602  
Contact: The Denbigh House: 757-833-7845

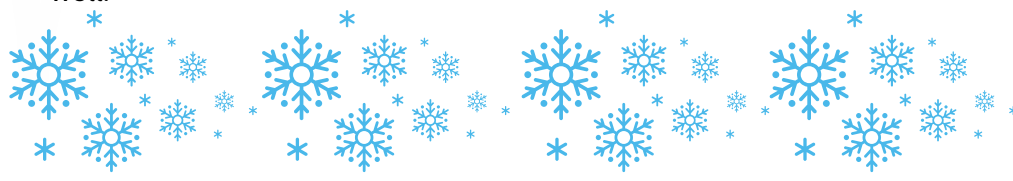
# HOW TO ENGAGE IN MOMENTS THAT MATTER WHILE CAREGIVING

By: Karen Grazionale

The end of the year is often filled with a flurry of activities designed to bring joy. For caregivers, these events can be a source of stress and anxiety. But with some thoughtful planning, you can enjoy them once again.

- Frequency. Before my husband acquired traumatic injuries to his brain, we hosted our children, their spouses and kids, one Sunday a month. We now meet four times a year which is a pace both my husband and I can handle.
- Length of time. Family Day previously ran from 2-10pm. We now schedule it from 4-8pm. When we attend events, I let the host know we can only commit to an hour to set expectations ahead of time. This has allowed us to participate in numerous celebrations in a limited capacity.
- Engaging Help. Our kids now prepare most of the food, clean up the kitchen, and take out the trash, making Family Day an easy event for my husband and me. Our oldest son often says, "You enjoy the party. I've got dad." You may find you need help transporting your loved one to and from an event including getting them in and out of the venue. Ask the host if someone can pick you up and bring you back. This will teach others how to help you in the future.

Our lives have changed. Hopefully these examples help you create ways to joyfully engage in the moments that matter most to you. Be well.



**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.



Visit [tbims.vcu.edu](http://tbims.vcu.edu) to access back issues!



# How To Manage The Holiday Season for People with TBI

By: Jannelle Charlemagne



As people with TBI, we should aim high, make goals, and stick to them. Be open to change and always try to get better. Adjust to new chances while learning to face challenges.

During a difficult time, you don't have to join every event. It's okay to take it easy. Watch a movie, listen to your favorite music, sing along, or dance like no one is watching. It's alright to feel different emotions and let yourself express them without worrying about what others think.

Remember happy times and let your feelings flow. Find a quiet place and think good thoughts. Don't worry about what you can't do. Every challenge helps you grow and can help you support other people with TBI.

## HAVE FAITH 2024

During this holiday season, believe in yourself and regain control of these 3R's:

1. Reflect: Think about why you feel a certain way and plan how to move forward with confidence.
2. Reframe: Look at the situation differently and think about what you can do to stay in control.
3. Refocus: Keep positive thoughts, plan for success, and believe in yourself.

Having faith means seeing beyond what is right in front of you. Focus on healing and let your belief in yourself guide you. Don't let yourself feel down. Set limits, believe in yourself, and never give up. Stay calm and remind yourself, "I am blessed, confident, creative, determined, strong, motivated, and valuable."

Important Reminders:

- Timing: Timing is key.
- Recovery: Recovery takes time.
- Uplift: Encourage yourself.
- Stay Positive: Keep a positive attitude.
- Trust: Trust your progress and keep moving forward.

Faith helps us not to be scared, to act like good things are happening before they do. Stay strong and grow through what you face.

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