



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

DEPRESSION AFTER TBI

Depression is common after moderate or severe TBI; about one in three people with TBI experience depression. Depression often happens after TBI because the injury changes how the brain controls mood, and/or because life changes in work, relationships, or independence can be hard. Depression is more than just feeling sad from time to time. Depression can also make you feel hopeless, tired, and not interested in doing things you used to enjoy. Depression may cause trouble thinking, and may cause you to sleep or eat too much or too little. If symptoms last more than two weeks and make daily life harder, it may be depression. Depression is a medical condition, not a weakness. The good news is that it can be treated. Doctors can make the right diagnosis, and prescribe medicine or help you find counseling. For severe depression, both taking medicine and getting counseling works best. Exercise, following sleep routines, and staying connected with others can help prevent depression. If you ever think about hurting yourself, get help right away by calling 988, 911, or going to an emergency room. Help is available, and feeling better is possible.

[Click here to read more!](#)

The Virginia TBI Model System has a new website!

It's called the **Brain and Spinal Health Hub**.

This site offers helpful tools and info for:

- People with brain or spinal injuries
- Their families
- Doctors and teams who support them



Living with Brain Injury

Researchers that followed people with moderate to severe brain injury—over several years—found something many people may find surprising:

- Many people say their life is “okay” or “good,” even if they still have disabilities
- Most do not feel deeply depressed or anxious, especially when they have support
- Feelings about life often stay stable over time, not worse
- How life looks from the outside often differs from how it feels to the person living it

This does not mean life is easy. It means people often adapt in ways others do not expect.

- People frequently experience their lives differently after injury
 - Meaning and satisfaction can come from new places
 - Independence is not the same thing as happiness
- Research and lived experience suggest that people often feel better when they:
- Set and keep routines
 - Feel safe and supported
 - Stay connected to others
 - Have a sense of purpose
 - Achieve a small goal every day
 - Feel accepted for who they are now

[Click here to view the article!](#)

Virginia TBI Model System

Project Director Ronald Seel, PhD, FACRM

Dissemination Director Kelli Talley, PhD, OTR/L

Research Team

- Katherine Abbasi, MA
- Mark Bender, PhD
- Karen Brooke, MT
- Rochelle Brown, MPH
- David Cifu, MD
- Carolyn Frey, BS
- Amol Karmarkar, PhD
- Daniel Klyce, PhD
- Richard Kunz, MD
- Isabel Pedro
- Robert Perera, PhD
- Eunice Richardson
- William Walker, MD

If you would like to continue to receive the paper version of the newsletter, please let us know!

For all listserv and for paper newsletter requests, email us at: tbi.modelsystem@vcuhealth.org

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

TBIMS.VCU.EDU | SAI.REHAB | BIAV.NET | MSKTC.ORG



Virginia's Social Drivers of Health Network

The following list of needs link to service providers that are dedicated to supporting folks with brain injury and their families across Virginia.

- **Housing:** SPeaco@supportworkshousing.org or call 804 921-3466
- **Food:** <https://feedmore.org/help-line/>
- **Transportation:** <https://virginianavigator.org/>
- **Medical Care:** <https://www.biav.net/resource-directory/>
- **Medical Insurance:** <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/>
- **Mental Health:** <https://www.biav.net/resource-directory/business-category/mental-health-professional/>
- **Return to Work:** <https://www.biav.net/resource-directory/business-category/return-to-work-services/>
- **Childcare:** <https://easyaccess.virginia.gov/search/node?keys=child+care>
- **Financial Assistance:** <https://www.ssa.gov/disability>
- **Utility Bill Relief:** <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/relief/ea/>
- **Legal services:** <https://www.biav.net/resource-directory/business-category/attorney/>
- **Urgent Needs:** <https://help1rva.org/>
- **Gas:** <https://211virginia.org/> (for work, interviews, and/or medical appointments)

Community Support Groups

Aphasia Support Group

For Monthly Meetings, Contact:
community.engagement@sai.rehab

Caregiver Support Group

Visit the link for upcoming meetings:
<https://shelteringarmsinstitute.com/caregiver-support-group/>

BIAV Online and In Person Monthly Support Groups and Network Events

Visit **info@biav.net** for updates

Community Brain Injury Services Caregiver Support Group

When: 2nd Thurs. of month, 6:00 pm
Where: 12725 McManus Blvd. Ste. 2E Newport News, VA 23602
Contact: **The Denbigh House: 757-833-7845**

Clubhouse Program for People Living with Brain Injury

Call **804-261-7050**

Advocacy for Life After TBI

Why Advocacy Matters

- Traumatic brain injury affects millions of people across the United States. Advocacy helps ensure that people living with TBI have:
- Access to healthcare and rehabilitation
- Long-term services and supports
- Legal protections and civil rights
- Public understanding of brain injury as a lifelong condition

The **Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)** leads national efforts so that people with lived experience shape the policies that affect their lives.

Ways You Can Get Involved

- Share Your Story

Your lived experience matters. Policymakers listen when real people explain how brain injury affects daily life.

- Join Advocacy Campaigns

You can take action by signing letters, contacting legislators, or participating in organized advocacy days.

- Stay Informed and Take Action

Advocacy starts with information.

- Get Involved Locally

Many states have Brain Injury Association affiliates that work on local laws and services.

- Participate in Brain Injury Awareness Month

Every March, BIAA leads Brain Injury Awareness Month.

- Attend Advocacy Events and Conferences

BIAA hosts national conferences, webinars, and Awareness Day events that bring survivors, families, and policymakers together.

- **Remember**

You do not have to do everything. Advocacy can be:

- Sharing a story
- Sending one email
- Attending one event
- Staying informed

Every action—small or large—moves the brain injury community forward.

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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** to access back issues!

DO YOU PROVIDE CARE FOR SOMEONE WITH A DISORDER OF CONSCIOUSNESS*?

DOC 101: A GROUP FOR CAREGIVERS OF SEVERE BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS



FREE EDUCATION & PEER SUPPORT GROUP

- Open to individuals in the United States who have been providing care to someone with a DOC for at least one year Facilitated by
- Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) mental health providers



12-week group



Tuesdays
4:00-5:15pm CST



Meets virtually
over Zoom

WHY JOIN?

- Learn about topics that are important to caregivers of people with a DOC
- Connect with and receive support from caregivers and mental health professionals
- Recognize that you are not alone in your experience

*WHAT IS A DISORDER OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

A DISORDER OF CONSCIOUSNESS(DOC) IS A CONDITION THAT FOLLOWS

A SEVERE BRAIN INJURY.

PEOPLE WITH DOC HAVE NOT RECOVERED THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE OR MAKE DECISIONS. THEY REQUIRE A CAREGIVER TO ASSIST WITH ALL PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE NEEDS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL:

claire.burdick@vumc.org



Scan here to complete our interest form!



CRITICAL ILLNESS, BRAIN DYSFUNCTION,
and SURVIVORSHIP (CIBS) CENTER