



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



Tools and Tips to Enjoy the Holidays by Kelli Talley, PhD, OTR/L

The time for many holidays are upon us. This is the season for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year's, all within a two-month period. Holidays can be overwhelming with visiting relatives, shopping responsibilities, and traveling. It is important that you take the time to ensure your physical and mental health, reduce your stress, stay calm and positive, and maintain a good mood. Here are some tools and tips to enjoy the holiday season.

1. Get plenty of sleep. This is something that has been mentioned before. Do not let stressful events get in the way of getting a good night's rest. Or, find ways to take small power naps throughout the day.
2. Maintain a schedule and stay organized. Write down plans for the holidays. Decide if you will be at home and cook for visitors or if you are going to visit family and friends for the holidays. Make sure you map out the entire months of November and December as much as you can.
3. Shop early and ask people what they want for gifts. Buying gift cards makes things easier.
4. Make your holiday dinners potluck. Ask people to bring their favorite dishes. If you have to cook, do it early and freeze the food.
5. Try to include some physical activity in your daily routine. Getting some exercise is always a great way to feel healthy and get in a better mood.
6. Buy small gifts ahead of the time. This could be a gift for an unexpected guest. Small items like scented candles or cozy socks will do the trick.
7. Make yourself a budget and try to stick to it. Many people overspend during the holidays and it makes things more stressful. Identify how much you will spend for the holidays and do your best to stick to that limit.
8. Avoid excessive alcohol and overeating. Drinking excessively and overeating are common during the holidays. Still try to enjoy your favorite drinks and holiday treats, but pay attention to the amount you drink and the portions you eat.
9. Set boundaries. Be assertive and understand what you can and cannot do. Let others assist or assign roles for others to help.
10. Try a gift exchange. Instead of running around and trying to buy gifts for everyone, have a gift exchange with your family. Then you will only feel responsible for getting one gift instead of many.

If you are able, spend some time during the holidays on self-care. Go get a massage, enjoy a movie on your own, or find somewhere nice and quiet to meditate and concentrate on your own well-being. You have to take care of yourself before you can take care of those you truly love. This will help you enjoy the holidays!



Research Highlight: Caregiver resilience following traumatic brain injury: Findings at six months postinjury. by Katherine Abbasi, MA

TBIMS researchers studied what factors may contribute to a caregiver's resilience, or ability to adapt, after a loved one's TBI. The researchers looked at responses to questions about resilience, family needs, care responsibilities, and emotional well-being. Caregivers reported levels of resilience, family needs, emotional distress, and care responsibilities that are similar to the general population. They also learned that when caregivers had emotional support, they had higher resilience. This research has shown us how important it is for caregivers to get emotional support after a loved one's TBI. This work would not have been possible without TBIMS participants and their caregivers, so thank you to our wonderful study participants!

[For the full article visit here](#)

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VISIT OUR WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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



Community Connections:



DARS' Pathways to Careers (P2C) Program

Pathways to Careers (P2C) connects Virginians with disabilities to the **education, training, and industry-recognized credentials** they need to secure good, high-demand jobs. Focusing on career opportunities in high-growth industry sectors, **specialized counselors work directly with jobseekers with disabilities** to help them **secure marketable credentials, qualify for skilled jobs, and earn a livable wage**. The program is managed by DARS through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, in close partnership with the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI).

To learn more about P2C activities for participating counties and cities, visit:
<https://www.dars.virginia.gov/drs/cpid/>

Upcoming Events



RVA Aphasia Group

Monthly Meetings

When: One Thursday each month from 6-7 pm

Where: To be announced

Contact: rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com for exact dates and locations

Coffee and Conversation Group

When: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm

Where: Ellwood Thompson
4 North Thompson St.
Richmond, VA 23221

Contact: rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.rva-aphasia.com>

BIAV

Online Caregiver Group

A meeting for caregivers who live in Virginia.

When: 1st Wednesday of the month, 6-7 pm

Contact: Email Debra Holloway at debra@biav.net to register and for location information

Online Support Group for people living with BI, their family and their friends

When: 4th Tuesday of the month, 6 PM

Contact: Christine Baggini at christine@biav.net or 804-355-5748 for an invitation to the virtual meetings

Supportive Survivors

When: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 6-7:30 pm

Where: Regency Mall Food Court, 1420 Parham Road, Richmond, 23229

Contact: Ted Taylor at (804) 781-2144 or taylor58@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 x104 or jennifer@communitybraininjury.org

What is a DARS?

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) mission is to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families.

The Brain Injury Services Coordination Unit at DARS supports several initiatives:

- Administers state funding for brain injury services through contracts with nine community-based organizations that provide direct supports for people living with brain injury and their families and provide statewide information and referral services.
- The Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI) provides grants to Virginia-based organizations, institutions, and researchers to address the needs of people with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury.

DARS partners with other community-based partners to provide access to brain injury services and resources, including:

- Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) to develop resources and supports for family caregivers.
- Pilot screening for brain injury at Community Services Boards and homelessness programs.
- Virginia's No Wrong Door program to assist people with brain injury and their families to access information and services related to brain injury.

How can I get involved or learn more?

Visit DARS' website to learn more about its Brain Injury Services Coordination Unit.

The Brain Injury Council advises the DARS Commissioner and is made up of a mix of people living with brain injury, their family members, professionals and other interested advocates. The Council meets quarterly and meetings are open to the public.

What drives the team at DARS to do this work?

The Brain Injury Services Coordination Unit (BISCU) is driven to make sure that people with disabilities have what any of us want: a safe stable home, genuine relationships and being productive in our communities. BISCU believes that people with disabilities have the right to these things and the community is better for everyone when BISCU makes it accessible for some.

Sidewalk curb cuts don't just help people in wheelchairs, they help parents with children in strollers and older people who may have problems with balance. Supports for family caregivers help people with disabilities and older adults enjoy a better life, but they also keep those caregivers healthier and allow them to continue to work if they need or want to. BISCU shares an overriding belief that older adults and people with disabilities, including brain injury, have a lot to contribute to our communities.

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!