



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



## Conquer the Winter Blues

by Kelli Talley, PhD, OTR/L and Katherine Abbasi, MA

Short days, cold temperatures, bleary weather, and less sunshine are all clear signs that winter is here. In the bleak winter months, people sometimes feel sad and may be less motivated to go outside or engage in activities they used to enjoy. In addition to a seasonal cold or flu, people also may come down with the “winter blues.” Symptoms of the winter blues may include fatigue, sadness, difficulty concentrating, and a disruption in your sleep schedule. Here are some suggestions that may help conquer these feelings and put a little pep in your step:

- Find winter activities that are fun to do inside or outside. Cozy up before the fireplace with a cup of hot chocolate and a new book, podcast, or show. Find a new recipe online and make a batch of warm soup or chili. Walk to view the winter landscape, build a snowman, or make snow angels in the front yard with the kids.
- Spend time with other people. Sharing memories and laughter with a small group of close friends or family can be restorative during the winter. If needed, others can be responsible for transportation to a meeting place and you can contribute to the cost of gas or bring a snack to share. For information about groups that meet this month, see the Clubhouse Programs and Support Groups section on the next page!
- Try to get as much natural sunlight as possible by positioning yourself in your home close to any windows. If possible, give yourself an outside view from your couch or living room chair that will expose you to the sun. Waking early to take in the sunrise through your window while drinking your morning coffee could be a refreshing start to your day.
- Nourish your body with healthy food to maintain wellness. There are lots of superfoods to choose from for healthy snack options between meals. Apples, bananas, and avocados contain healthy fiber and are very tasty. Almonds are a popular nut that helps regulate blood sugar and provides a good source of protein for maintaining energy. Carrots and sweet potatoes are vegetables that taste great. Try pairing carrots with hummus or roasting a batch of sweet potato wedges. Avoid processed foods and high amounts of added sugar by swapping in one of these healthy options instead.
- Give yourself time to heal and move through emotional changes. You may find that joining a gentle yin yoga class at the local YMCA or virtually on YouTube will assist with processing emotions. It can take a little time for your mood to improve.
- If you feel down for more than a couple of weeks, experience mood swings, feelings of hopelessness, or notice a lot of interference from moodiness in your daily activities, talk with your doctor about your symptoms. Reaching out for help is an important first step to feeling better.

## Research Highlight:

### Emotional Changes After TBI

by Katherine Abbasi, MA

**TBIMS researchers developed a factsheet describing emotional symptoms and changes that may occur after a TBI. Information is included to help people better understand their experience and teaches friends and family members how to be supportive. Emotional changes after TBI can occur for several reasons. The area of the brain that controls emotions can be injured, a person may have difficulty adjusting to loss of independence, changes in thinking abilities may be overwhelming, and people with a history of anxiety, depression, or substance abuse prior to injury may continue to experience emotional and behavioral difficulties after injury. Certain signs of depression, such as fatigue and frustration, are also symptoms of TBI. Symptoms of anxiety and depression can co-occur and interfere with recovery progress. For more information about how to address emotional changes after TBI, and how family members, peers, and other resources can help, read the full factsheet [here](#).**

**\*NEW!\* Scan the QR code below to learn about the recent pain collaborative study! Thank you to our participants!**



## Virginia TBI Model System

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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)



## NEED HELP WITH HEATING OR COOLING?

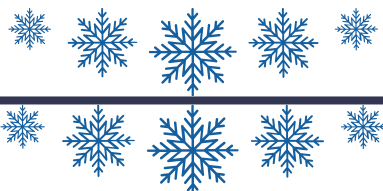
See if you might be eligible for assistance at:  
<https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/>

Applications for help with your heating and cooling bills or equipment needs are accepted in any of the following ways:

Go to: <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/>

Call: Enterprise Customer Service Center at: (855) 635-4370

Contact: Department of social services:  
<https://www.virginia.gov/agencies/department-of-social-services/>



## Clubhouse Programs & Support Groups

### RVA Aphasia Group

#### Monthly Meetings

**When:** 2nd Thursday of each month from 6:00 pm

**Where:** To be announced

**Contact:** [rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com](mailto:rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com) for exact dates and locations

### Coffee and Conversation Group

**When:** 3rd Wednesday of the month, 2:00 pm

**Where:** Ellwood Thompson

4 North Thompson St.

Richmond, VA 23221

**Contact:** [rvaaphasiagroup@gmail.com](mailto: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, 6:00 pm

**Contact:** Email Debra Holloway at [debra@biav.net](mailto: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, 6:00 pm

**Contact:** Christine Baggini at [christine@biav.net](mailto:christine@biav.net) or 804-355-5748 for an invitation to the virtual meetings

#### In-Person Support Group

**When:** 3rd Monday of the month, 6:00 pm

**Where:** Willow Lawn area of Richmond, Registration required prior to meeting to see exact location

**Contact:** Christine Baggini at [christine@biav.net](mailto:christine@biav.net) or 804-355-5748

### Community Brain Injury Services

#### Caregiver Support Group

**When:** 2nd Monday of the month, 6:30 pm

**Where:** ZOOM: <http://bit.ly/CBIScaregiversupport>

**Contact:** Jennifer Zemke at (804) 386-0925 x104 or [jennifer@communitybraininjury.org](mailto:jennifer@communitybraininjury.org)

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

## Community Connection: Lived Experience

### New Beginnings

By: Janelle Charlemagne

I am a traumatic brain injury survivor who always goes the extra mile to elevate myself. Twenty-one years ago, I suffered a TBI, and also experienced the tragic loss of my eight-month-old daughter. From my experience I share short stories about living life in a new way by finding ways to overcome tragedy. Whenever facing challenging times in life, I don't let the world determine my future. A tragedy can lead to a breakthrough. A setback can be both a challenge and a chance to grow. If we stay open to change, a new path may lead to a great recovery. For example, I am currently working full-time, and I do not let society or a disability define who I am. As I continue to find ways to overcome my tragedy, I turn my crisis into breakthroughs.

I choose to achieve goals by setting my mind on a target, and I take action to make my dreams a reality. Recently, I placed myself on a financial diet by writing out my pros & cons for buying a home. I prioritized my spending choices based on need, consistently budgeted, stayed flexible to small budget changes as needs arose, and kept growing my savings by asking myself the following questions:

- 1) What things on my list are necessary?
- 2) What things can I do without?
- 3) What things do I consider important, and do not prioritize highly enough?
- 4) What things do I consider not important at all, and spend too much money on?

I also used the SMART GOAL method:

S-specific: what do I want to achieve using the 5 W's & H?

M-measurable: how much to set aside, how to determine progress towards the goal

A-attainable

R-relevant: what is reason and am I willing to put the effort in?

T-time bound: when does this need to be finished?

The words "why" and "what" are really important in every decision one can make because both are motivational words. They go hand in hand when making decisions related to these questions: "What do you want?" and "Why do you want it?" For me, I wanted to accomplish buying a home. I had to find what motivates me, think about what I wanted, decide why I wanted it, and set goals with directions and purpose. I wrote down my goals, kept a money journal, and knew my core values. I had to ask myself what it would take for me to achieve buying a home and make sure I was on a monthly budget so I could accommodate my goals without sacrificing my major bills.

While on my financial diet, I prioritized meeting my goal on time. I viewed every setback as an opportunity to rebuild, renew, and ROCK; as listed below:

R=recognize

O=observe

C=communicate

K=keep moving forward

I started out on a financial diet about 3 years ago when I made up my mind about buying my first home. I made saving a priority, and I thought about the 4C's:

- 1) Cost
- 2) Condition
- 3) Capacity
- 4) Convenience

I overcame many obstacles to get where I am today, and I was able to accomplish buying a single family home. I always expect the unexpected because life is full of surprises and open doors. We never know what possibility lies ahead, so keep moving forward. We all can view every setback as an opportunity to rebuild, and we decide whether it is challenging, or a challenge. A challenge can also be a way for us to grow. We all hold the power to achieve and control our destiny with faith, courage, and integrity. We are people living our daily life like everyone else. We may not have control over what happens in the world around us, but we have control of what we make of it.

### 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.

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