

The Road Ahead: Next Exit Hope!

A look at how brain injury affects the whole family



For ages 11 and up



Fraser Valley Brain
Injury Association



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Names have been changed or omitted to protect the privacy of the artists and their families.



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Introduction

When someone in our family gets hurt, the first question is often “are they going to be okay?” When everything seems like it will be fine, a sense of relief overwhelms the family.

If you’ve ever had this experience, you know how hard the first couple of days can be because nobody really knows what’s going to happen.

This booklet is filled with stories, poems, art, thoughts and feelings shared by real people of all ages to help others know they are not alone.

Acquired brain injury affects the whole family. Families have so many questions and often feel like there are no answers. Brain injury can be unpredictable and challenging, so learning as much as you can is really important.

This book doesn’t have all the answers but it is designed to help families understand what might be ahead and to let them know that they aren’t alone.

Parts of this book are educational, but the quotes and art are from kids, teens, young adults and parents who have had some kind of experience with acquired brain injury.

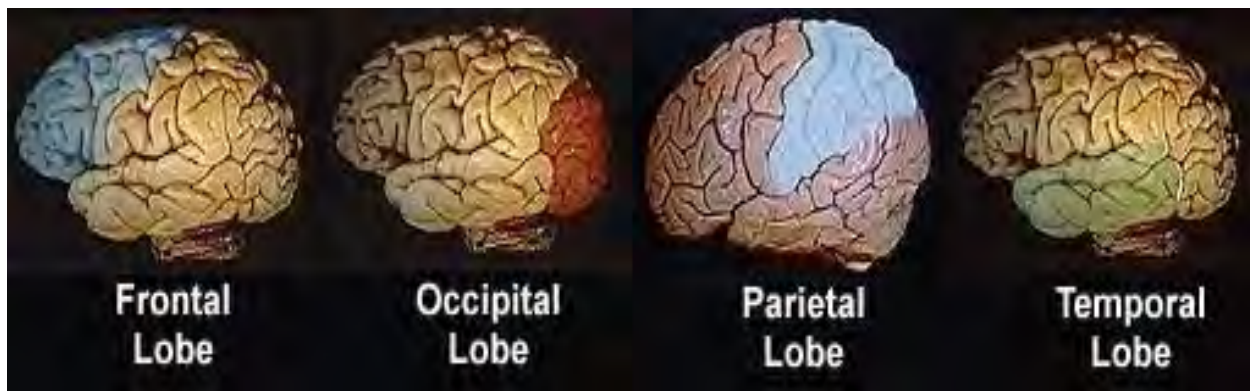


What's an Acquired Brain Injury?

An acquired brain injury is any injury to the brain that happens after the person is born. This can happen from a hit to the head from car crashes or fights or from things like a tumour or drug and alcohol use, just to name a few.

Our brain is a very important and complex part of our body. This is a short and simple explanation of what the brain does and what happens when the brain gets hurt.

Our brain controls our whole body and everything we do, feel and think. Each section of the brain controls different parts of our body and has different jobs.



This picture shows the different lobes of the brain. Each lobe has its own job. Each lobe of the brain must be able to talk to and listen to all the other lobes of the brain.

- Ⓢ Frontal Lobe: Personality, Memory and Emotional Control
- Ⓢ Occipital Lobe: Vision
- Ⓢ Parietal Lobe: Movement and Sensation
- Ⓢ Temporal Lobe: Hearing and Balance

If the lobes can't talk to each other because one part of the brain has been hurt, the person can have a hard time doing things they used to or they will seem like a different person.

Think of what would happen to your video game if the controller couldn't talk to your gaming system.

Things don't happen as quickly as they used to, some buttons stop working and the players get frustrated. That's kind of like what happens after a brain injury.



Some Important Things to Remember

- Ⓢ No two brain injuries are ever the same. Brain injuries are complex and it's nearly impossible to tell what kind of problems the person might have and how they might recover.
- Ⓢ The brain doesn't heal like a broken arm or leg. It takes time to learn how to use this new brain.
- Ⓢ After someone in the family has a brain injury there are usually a lot of changes in the home. Maybe the person sleeps a lot more or acts differently. Everyone needs to understand the changes and know what will help and what won't.
- Ⓢ There may be a lot of changes and healing that happen during the first year after a brain injury.



Possible Changes after Brain Injury

The kinds of problems the person might have after a brain injury depends a lot on what part of the brain was injured and how badly it was hurt. These are a few of the possible changes:

- Ⓢ Problems with sleep
- Ⓢ Low energy
- Ⓢ Irritability
- Ⓢ Memory problems
- Ⓢ Sensitive to lights and sounds
- Ⓢ Can't drive or work anymore
- Ⓢ Personality changes

Rehabilitation

Many different professionals can be involved in the rehabilitation of the person with an acquired brain injury:

- Ⓢ Physical Therapists
- Ⓢ Occupational therapist
- Ⓢ Psychologists
- Ⓢ Psychiatrists
- Ⓢ Other Specialists (neurosurgeons, plastic surgeons, Neurologist, etc.)

Hope



The first year is full of hard work and determination to get things back to “normal” or back to the way it was before.

Families may say things like “they are going to be back to normal in no time” or “at the rate they are healing, they should be back to (school, work or their old life) in a few months”.

The first year on the road to recovery is full of hope for the future.

Hope keeps people going and it’s important, but when the person doesn’t return to their “normal” self, it can be very frustrating and scary for everyone.

Stages of Grief

Families and friends often say that the person with the brain injury is just not the same person they used to be even though they look the same.

It’s okay to feel upset about that and to grieve the loss of the person they used to be before the injury.

Most people go through a natural and normal process of accepting what has happened. These are called the “stages” or “steps” of grief. These feelings are normal.

Stage 1: Denial

This is the first stage and is usually filled with disbelief.

This can’t be happening. This must be a joke!

Things will get back to normal as soon as they get back to school or work.



Grief is a normal part of healing from a trauma and loss.

Family, friends and the person with the brain injury grieve the loss of what things were like before.

Stage 2: Anger and Frustration

When things don't go back to normal right away, people can get frustrated and angry.

Why did this happen? It's not my fault!

This stage can be full of negative emotions and fear. Fear brings out anger because people aren't sure what is happening or how to deal with the new situation.

Stage 3: Depression and Withdrawal

When everything starts to sink in and becomes more real, some people may withdraw physically and emotionally or even stop taking care of themselves altogether. It may feel lonely and like nobody understands.

Families really need each other and help from outside support during this stage.

Stage 4: Acceptance

People begin to accept changes and heal during this stage. They may be still 'grieving' the loss of the person they knew, but they will also be getting to know this new person.

Each person will grieve in their own way. Some of us skip stages, repeat stages or go back and forth between stages several times a day (talk about a roller coaster ride!).

People may say that they felt that they were grieving "the wrong way" because it hurt too much for too long or because the person they were grieving for, had not actually died.



There is no right or wrong way to grieve a loss.

Everyone goes through the stages of grief in their own way, for their own reasons and in their own time.

Feelings

Everyone has a right to their feelings but sometimes people get stuck. It's okay to ask for help from a counselor at school, a nurse, a doctor or even a trusted adult to get past certain stages or feelings.



“I have layers of feelings... some good and some bad. Sometimes I'm angry and I don't know why...”

Life after brain injury will change. Things aren't going to feel the same and sometimes it can be really hard and frustrating.

“I never really know what I'm feeling...I have balls of feelings in my stomach all the time but I don't know what to do with them...”



Emotions can run high in the home because of the high levels of stress, but know that **you are not expected to be perfect all the time.**

It can feel like you are supposed to hide your feelings and just behave, but it is important to talk about your thoughts and feelings instead of bottling them up.

Instead of acting out (like getting in fights at school, letting your grades drop, or staying out all night), talk to someone and get the support and help you need.

It's normal to have thoughts that may seem like they are wrong. Everyone has them. Most people just don't like to admit it.

Some thoughts that other family members have had are:

- Ⓢ "I wish this never happened"
- Ⓢ "I want to run away and never think about this again!"
- Ⓢ "They deserved what they got..."
- Ⓢ "I wish they would just go to the hospital and stay there"
- Ⓢ "I wish they would grow up"
- Ⓢ "I wish they would be back to normal, like they were before"
- Ⓢ "I don't want to help them. I think they're stupid and selfish"
- Ⓢ "I wish they just would have died"

These kinds of thoughts can feel wrong or make you feel ashamed for thinking them, but it is okay to feel the emotions. Maybe you are worried that you will hurt someone by saying these out loud, but do find someone safe to talk to about them anyways.

You have the right to your own thoughts and feelings.

These kinds of thought and feelings are normal and you are not the first or only person to have them. Our emotions are our own; nobody can tell us what or how to feel. Our feelings help us to cope with life changes and it's important not to cover them up, but talk to someone who can help you figure them out.



"Now I always feel like I live in a volcano, I never know what is going to happen next and things are so much different than they were before."

How to Take Care of Yourself

People use different ways to make themselves feel better. You and your family have gone through something traumatic and it is important to take care of oneself in the best way possible

Using drugs or alcohol are **not** healthy ways to deal with feelings and it could make things worse. If someone is hurting themselves, it's really important to get them the help they need. Some people go to the opposite extreme to become the "perfect" child and take care of everyone else. This isn't healthy either.

There are lots of ideas on the internet and apps that you can download onto your phone to help with self-care techniques. These are just a few ideas you can try when you are feeling overwhelmed or really stressed:

- ☉ Write down your feelings in a journal, write poetry or music.
- ☉ Imagine other places that feel safe and comfortable.
- ☉ Hang out with your pets or friends.
- ☉ Use meditation or yoga.
- ☉ Listen to your favourite music.
- ☉ Help care of the person who was injured. Working together can make it easier for everyone.
- ☉ Use drawing or painting to describe thoughts and feelings like the artists in this book did.
- ☉ Find some place that is supportive and relaxing to hang out for a while.
- ☉ Talk to someone like a teacher or counselor, a friend of the family, nurses, doctors, counselors or psychologists.
- ☉ Talk to someone at the Kidshelphone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>, any time of the day or night.



Keep your mind open to new possibilities and opportunities to make the most out of this new situation. Even though things are different now, it doesn't mean things will never be good again. With time and patience, the world will begin to make sense again. It might never be quite the same, but people can learn to accept change.

"This is my happy place. In the middle of the mountains in a secret door that nobody knows about but me. I could play in the trees and hide from the storms..."

“I would love to go and live under the sea; I could swim with the fish and make as much noise as I wanted. I could just swim with my friends all day.”



“I would live in the middle of nowhere all by myself. Nobody would yell at me or get angry with me; I wouldn't be in the way all the time. I would worry about whales though...”



The only time you have to worry about your thoughts and feelings is if they get scary to you. If you are thinking of hurting yourself or if you feel like you've been sad too long or feel too much anger then you need to ask for and accept help.

This can be just as simple as talking to someone and getting your thoughts out into the open.

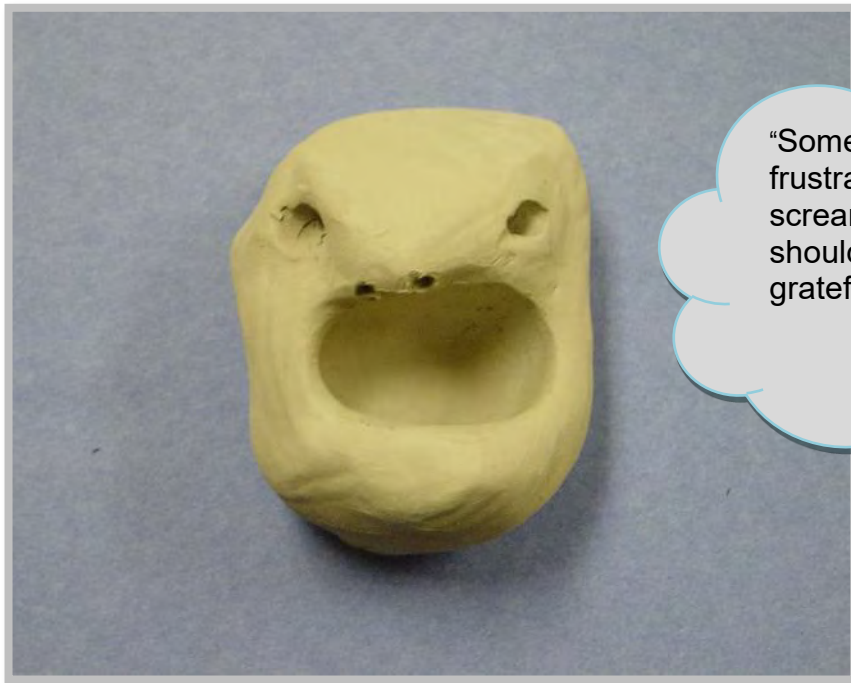
Sharing and talking about these emotions can make a huge difference in how intensely you feel them and may even let you begin to let them go. When we are young, we feel things so much differently than everyone else.

Our emotions are raw and intense and they can be very hard to keep under control. This is where help from other people can be used.

Sometimes it may feel like there isn't anyone you can trust in talk to, especially your family so looking outside of the family for someone trustworthy might be a good idea.

"I feel like I am wearing a mask all the time... I feel like I have to hide what I am thinking and feeling because I don't want to upset anybody or make anybody worry about me."

Maybe a family doctor or a counselor at school, a favorite teacher or even a friend's mom or dad, a coach or friend of the family, it doesn't really matter who you ask as long as you do ask for help.



"Sometimes I get so frustrated I just want to scream... but I know I shouldn't. I should just be grateful..."

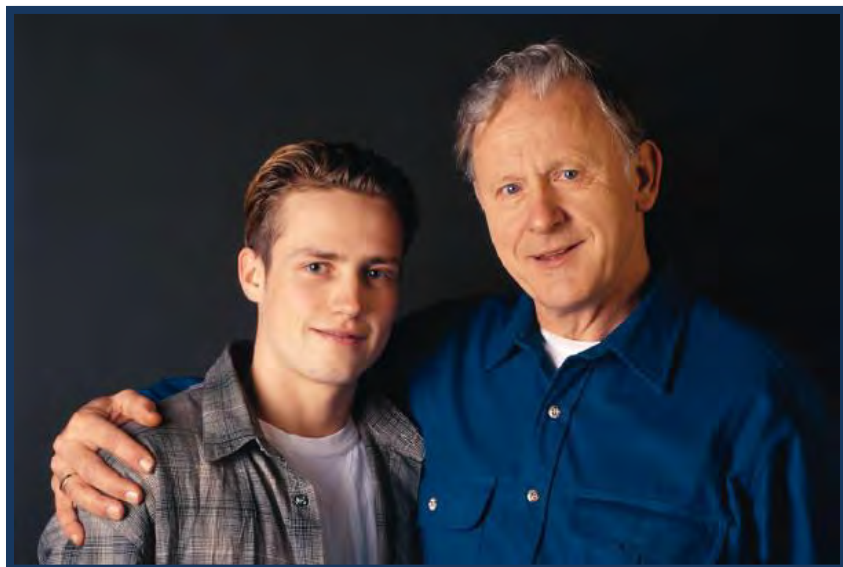
“I got an extremely frightening phone call early in the morning about 5 years ago. My step dad had had continuous grand mal seizures all night long. He has always been the healthiest person I know. He was never sick. His body, 2 days before his 38th birthday decided to stop working properly.

He had been over exposed to H₂S, a deadly gas emitted from oil rig sites. He went from working 10 to 16-hour days, then playing softball with us, to having to take a nap after mowing the lawn. Every time we have a major family function it puts too much stress on him and he has a seizure. We then have to stop our event and take him to the hospital.

My mom went from carefree, loving and deep sleeping wife and mom to stressed out, tired constantly and always being worried. I went from calling my step dad when I had a problem or good news to get his opinion to him calling me crying that he hates his life and he hates himself. He was told 3 years ago that he was unable to work and was placed on permanent disability.

My 43-year-old step dad is retired, but we don't get any of the perks to him being retired. It is too stressful on his body to travel. He has obtained a great dislike for being around a crowd of people. He can barely make it through a round of golf without throwing up because of the stress the exercise has put on his body.

Our family went from having a man to look up too, to having a man we have to take care of. I love my step dad and would not trade him for the world; I just wish I could have him the way he used to be. There has been one good thing that has come from his brain injury. He has had to take a very good and close look at himself and he has become a much more affectionate and caring person for it. Even if he can't remember we had dinner together last night.”



When Your Mother or Father Gets Hurt

In some cases, our mom or dad might spend lots of time in the hospital or rehabilitation center. Maybe you don't get to see them very much and it might feel like everyone around you is worried all the time and they may seem upset, angry, frustrated and maybe even a combination of all of these. This time can be full of chaos and uncertainty which are two things that are really hard to deal with (how can you start to cope with something when you don't even know what is wrong!).

- 🕒 This is a good time for you to talk to the adults around you, ask questions and help out as much as you can.
- 🕒 After your mom or dad comes home from the hospital, they might act differently or seem a little strange. Maybe they need to sleep more or go to the doctor's a lot more. This is normal.
- 🕒 It is still important for you to talk to the parent who is taking care of everything and try to be as helpful and understanding as possible.
- 🕒 They might tell you that your injured mom or dad needs it to be really quiet around the house or that they can't understand the same things anymore.
- 🕒 It can even sometimes feel like your home has changed so much that it doesn't even feel like your home anymore.
- 🕒 Talking with others in the home should help you understand what is going on and how you can help make it a good, safe and comfortable place for everyone.
- 🕒 It's okay to not always like what is happening at home and it's okay to be angry with what has happened. It's normal to have thoughts that may seem to be wrong. Everyone has them; just most people don't like to admit it.
- 🕒 You will notice that everyone in the family is feeling something different and dealing with it in different ways. Their feelings are just as important as yours. Sometimes it helps to talk to someone away from the home about all your thoughts. This can be good because they don't know your parents and you don't have to worry about hurting anybody's feelings when you talk to them. You can say everything that is on your mind or talk about any topic you want.

"I hate it when my mom forgets all the time. It's her job to take care of us and she can't like she use too. She used to make our lunches in the morning before school and now I have to make mine and my sister's. I hate doing that. Now we have to have a lot more people around to help us with the cooking and cleaning and stuff; since she can't do all those things anymore. I wish I had my mom back. I don't like this new person as much."

Sometimes the people around us might need help or even a hug and they might not know how to ask for it.



When Brothers or Sisters get hurt

Having brothers and sisters isn't always easy at the best of times, but when one is injured, it can put a lot more stress on the family and make a lot of new changes in the family life.

When a brother or sister gets a brain injury it's very normal to feel like things have changed and it's even more normal to not like what is happening. They may behave differently than they did before and they may need a lot of extra support and attention from your parents because of the injury.

It can be frustrating to feel like you are not as important as you were before your brother or sister got hurt because of how much of your family's time is now dedicated to them. This is not true. You are just as important as your sibling.

They may need more help right now and may need to go to lots of different appointments for medical checkups, rehabilitation and all kinds of other appointments because of the injury. You may not understand everything that is going on and that can make the whole situation kind of frightening but remember that your whole family is scared and going through a lot right now too.

It is important for you to talk to your parents about your feelings and thoughts. The more you show you are trying to be supportive and patient the more they will appreciate and include you in the process. This is a new situation for everyone in the family. You are not the only one adapting and coping with the new changes and everyone will need to support each other.

There is a pretty good chance that you will have to be more independent and helpful around the house. This could include helping your parents to remember important dates or appointments, or driving your other siblings to appointments, or making your own lunch for school. Sometimes giving someone a hug or a pat on the back and letting them know that you care can make a huge difference to them as well.

As uncomfortable as it might be, it is okay to ask your brother or sister how they are feeling and about how the brain injury has affected them. Talking about the brain injury will make it less of a mystery for everyone and the more you know and understand something the less it will scare you.

"My sister is annoying and gross. I spend a lot of time trying to get away from her as much as I can!"



"This is the family I hope my brother can have one day..."



“Things aren’t the same. I knew they wouldn’t be but I had hope. My brother was a victim of assault and it has changed not only his life, but the lives of everybody around him.

I don’t like the way this has affected him. Since he lost his eye, he has to cope with his new self-image and low self-esteem. He suffers from depression and has suicidal thoughts. He is so angry... all the time. We have to be so careful what we say and when we say it and how we say it. Anything can set him off.

He has made me physically, psychologically and emotionally tired. I never wanted to be my brother’s caregiver but it’s something I do because I love him. It’s something I do because we are family. Not that he is the same man that I grew up with; he is not my “brother”, not really. My brother was funny, good natured, strong, independent and charismatic.

This man is none of these things. It has been a year since this new man appeared and we are all still adjusting. He is grieving for what he has lost and we are grieving for my brother has died, not his body but his personality.

I hate feeling guilty because I am happy. I hate hiding the love I feel for my husband because I know my brother is lonely. I hate celebrating good news because I know he doesn’t have any. I hate that every time something good happens I have to stop and wonder how this is going to affect him first. The only hope I have now is that one day our lives will get back to some version of “normal”, that one day my brother will be able to care for himself...”

Hope keeps us going.



What about the person with the injury?

When we talk about how brain injury affects the whole family, we have to remember the feelings and frustrations of the person who was injured.

We call people who have an acquired brain injury, survivors, because they are. Not only did they survive whatever may have caused the injury (stroke, accident, violence, fall, etc.), they survived everything after that as well. They survived the hospital stay, the seemingly never-ending rehabilitation, the frustrations and the change.

Many survivors feel guilt and shame; they feel responsible for why everything has changed. Unless you have ever felt these feelings yourself, it is very difficult to imagine how deep and intense these emotions are.

“On more days than not, I hate myself. I hate what I have become, I hate what I have done to my wife and I hate what I have done to my children. On more mornings than not, I convince myself that today things might get better and that I should give it a chance. Everyday so far, I have been wrong....”

One consequence of an ABI can be intense emotions. Remember that the survivor has lost so much, sometimes permanently, and they need to cope with their feelings of loss and grief as well. Sometimes they need to learn to walk, talk and eat again. They may lose their driver’s license which means they may have to rely on others to get around now, making them feel dependent. Parents may be embarrassed that they need help from their spouse or children.

Many survivors suffer from depression and isolation because they feel like nobody understands them or even wants to understand them. Many of their friends from before the injury don’t understand what has happened and may now feel uncomfortable around them.

When survivors are learning to cope and deal with their anger and frustrations, they can seem angry a lot of the time. This can be frustrating for the family because they may not have done anything to deserve being yelled at.

“I wanted to be a good role model to my daughters. Have I failed to be that role model? Or have I succeeded by showing my strength to overcome extreme difficulties?”

Celebrate successes, no matter how small

The great thing about the brain is that it is always changing. Even though things might be hard right now, people with brain injuries can learn new ways of doing things. Be kind to each other and celebrate small successes. Focusing on the small gains, rather than the negative things can keep your spirits up.

“I spend much time thinking about how this injury has changed my life and those around me. Do I spend too much time? Am I self-absorbed? When I am rested, I feel almost “normal” when I am not in that state, I feel worried about my future, the patience of the people around me and whether I might have another stroke which in turn could leave me feeling like a vegetable.

When I first woke up, I could not understand why I had such a bad headache and why things sounded so strange, it was as if there was an echo in there, I soon realized it was because some of the “stuffing” had been taken out of my head and this caused everything to echo.

I had difficulty balancing and a simple walk across a room was a nightmare, I had to grab hold of chairs, tables, banisters, people, just about anything to get from one side to the other. Entering into uncharted territory was particularly frightening. It felt as if objects were floating and I had absolutely no depth perception.

I preferred to keep my eyes closed in the car (obviously I wasn’t driving at the time); the movement made me feel sick. But that was then and this is now, five years later, I am now able to drive myself when I am fully rested and the traffic is quiet.

I still don’t like to be in noisy places or anywhere there is a lot of hustle and bustle. If I am somewhere new, I worry because I will probably get lost and the exertion from trying to remember the route will exhaust me.

When I am tired or nervous my mind goes blank; I am nervous when I meet people or socialize with friends from before because I get lost in the middle of a sentence, my face reddens and I haven’t a clue what I was talking about, I feel embarrassed.

Unfortunately, even the most well-intentioned friends, don’t understand. They say they know what it feels like to forget things, forget names, places etc., that it is part of getting old, but for people with brain injuries it is not the same. It is more like someone has erased their blackboard (and taken the chalk).

Of course, the fatigue is overwhelming. However, I am grateful to be alive. I am thankful for the prompt medical help I received, for the case workers who got me back on my feet and last, but definitely not least, my family who has cared for me and inspired me every day.”

“I am thankful...for my family who has cared for me and inspired me every day.”

For Parents and Partners

It's easy to reason that you were lucky because your child or partner survived the brain injury, but the uncertainties that follow are very difficult. It is very common for families to feel that since it is **their** loved one that is sick or injured, it is their responsibility to take care of them.

Some families don't ask for help because they think it may show that they can't care for their own loved one, or there is a stigma around brain injury so they don't want anyone to know what they are going through, or they don't know how to find help.

Without help, caring for a sick or injured person can be extremely stressful and life consuming. This can wear out even the most energetic person.

If you feel stressed and tired, it is harder to care for the person with the brain injury and any other family members who probably need you even more now.

In order to care for others, one needs to care for themselves first. Just like on an airplane when they say to put your oxygen mask on first and then help others. You need to do the same for yourself with self-care, counselling, time on your own and whatever else you need to "fill your cup" so you can get through the next day.

"I was lost. I didn't know what to do or where to turn. One doctor was telling me one thing, another doctor telling me something else... I was so confused. When it was time to take my son home I thought I was ready. He seemed to be getting better so quickly. I remember thinking "he should be back to normal in no time!" I didn't need help from anybody; I could do this all by myself. He is my child and nobody can take better care of him than I could.

As time went on, I started to realize I was very wrong. Things had to get worse before they got better. My son's progress slowed and his frustration level increased. I was burning out at both ends. I started to lose hope... This isn't the way it was supposed to be! My son should have been getting more independent and becoming a man; instead, he was almost completely dependent on me and seemed more child-like than ever before. I'm happy that it's never too late to ask for help, without it I don't know where we would be."

One of the most helpful things for a family that is new to brain injury, can be spending some time with others who have gone through it as well. Even though no two brain injuries are the same, situations and experiences can be very similar.

While there is no one that can really understand what you are going through, learning from other families can help prepare you and your family for the future.

It can be very challenging dealing with all the emotions that come with a child or partner that is sick or injured. The feelings of guilt, shame and worry can be overwhelming. They can consume a person if not kept in check. Some family members report thinking:

- 🌀 “Is this my fault?”
- 🌀 “How is this going to affect our future?”
- 🌀 “I am a bad parent/partner”
- 🌀 “How could I let this happen?”
- 🌀 “What did I do to deserve this?”

For the health and well-being of everyone in the family it is very important for parents and partners to take care of themselves physically, emotionally and mentally. Getting help from others is usually the best way to help everyone else.

Here are some ideas:

- 🌀 Accept help from extended family members and ask for it when needed
- 🌀 Do a help exchange with friends or family. Do something for them that works with your schedule (i.e.: make extra food for them when you are making a meal) in exchange for the help that you need.
- 🌀 Talk to professionals
- 🌀 Find experienced people to share with (such as local support groups)



“My son was injured when he was pretty young. We thought we were lucky because he looked normal and could act okay at times. As the years went on, things got worse and the future was looking bleak. My husband and I divorced because we couldn’t agree on how to deal with all the trouble our son was getting into.

Our family fell apart because we didn’t know how to ask for help. Over the years my son sustained several more brain injuries and he got in more and more trouble. He was even in trouble with the law a few times.

It wasn’t until I went looking for help that I realized that he was suffering from a brain injury and that there was help for him out there. With the right rehabilitation and supports, my son has learned to cope with his disability and learned to be independent and productive. I learned how to help him instead of enabling his behaviors while learning to help myself and what was left of my family. It’s never too late to get help and to turn your lives around.”

Grief and Loss

Families experience grief while their loved one is in a coma, experience grief when the brain injured person is changed by the injury, and everyone in the family including the person with the brain injury feels grief over what they have lost.



Grief is complicated when you face the pain of a loved one that passes away, but the loss after someone has a brain injury can be even more complicated. The person is still with you physically, but brain injury can change their personality and the dynamics of your family.

Dreams and plans for the future change in an instant and yet the person is right in front of you.

It is normal to go through the same stages of grief that you would go through if they had died.

Learning more about brain injury, how it affects everyone, understanding grief and loss and finding the resources you need to support yourself can be a first step in healing.

Resources for Parents and Partners:

<https://www.braininjurycanada.ca/en/caregiver/mental-health-caregiver/grief>

<https://www.braininjurycanada.ca/en/caregiver/mental-health-caregiver#SelfCompassion>

<https://cmha.ca/brochure/care-for-the-caregiver/>

https://www.healthcarecan.ca/wp-content/themes/camyno/assets/document/PolicyDocs/2012/External/EN/RespiteCare_EN.pdf

<https://www.braininjury-explanation.com/life-with-brain-injury/consequences-for-the-family/siblings>

<https://www.braininjury-explanation.com/life-with-brain-injury/loss-and-grief-after-brain-injury>

Kids and Grief

Kids affected by brain injury in the family experience grief as well. While it can seem difficult to talk to a teen or pre-teen about sickness or injury, it is important to be honest with them and help them to understand what has happened.

- Ⓢ Tell the truth in a simple, direct way.
- Ⓢ Use concrete words that kids know (sad, mad, sick, hurt ...).
- Ⓢ It may help to use videos to explain what has happened and how they feel.
- Ⓢ Kids are curious. Be prepared for questions and give them details simply and honestly.
- Ⓢ If you are too distressed to answer your child's questions, ask an adult that you both trust to talk to them about brain injury.
- Ⓢ Don't pretend that you are not sad - express your feelings. This can help them feel able to express their own feelings.

Reactions to Grief

Like adults, kids can be deeply affected by grief experiences. While everyone has different ways of grieving, common grief reactions in children include:

- Ⓢ Acting out feelings, rather than talking.
- Ⓢ Changes in eating, sleeping and behaviour patterns.
- Ⓢ Being angry, frustrated and restless.
- Ⓢ Lacking concentration and energy at school.

Sharing Grief

Kids can sense and experience grief. They will be aware if their parents or other adults are sad or having difficulties with a particular situation. Sharing your own feelings of sadness with them, can help them understand why you are sad and see that it is alright to express their sadness.

Sickness and injury can also cause kids to worry about their parents or themselves getting sick or injured. Reassure them that everyone is safe and make sure that they are cared for during times of grief.

It is important to remain open and willing to talk about the various experiences of the situation. As time passes, they will have different reactions to grief. A teen who doesn't react to, or talk about, the changes in the early stages may want to talk about it later so let them know that you are always there when they are ready. Find professionals that can help you support your teen or pre-teen, such as counselors, a trusted teacher, doctor or nurse.

Where do I go for Help?

Many families come across their local Brain Injury Associations by accident or by word of mouth. We hope this section gives some ideas of where to look for help in your community or at least will get you and your family networking, which is an important step in finding the support and help most people need.

Find your local Brain Injury Association

Search the internet for local brain injury organizations, call 2-1-1, or get in touch with the community services in your town. Brain Injury Associations can be very useful in helping people negotiate government systems and finding services and resources that are relevant to brain injury. They sometimes offer support groups, case management and other programs for people with brain injuries and their families.

Local Community Services

Community Services usually have contacts and networks with other non-profit organizations in the area, which means they can be a great starting place for networking. This can include where to access support groups, food banks, counselors and many other services that can be very helpful.

Internet

Searching the internet can be very useful in finding out information on the brain, brain injury, local resources and support sites. Use a variety of key words until you find the information relevant to you. If you are researching information or resources, be sure to check your sources and make sure the site you are using is credible.

Specific Government agencies

Every province has their own government agencies which means that every province has a different way to access these services. Some of the services that can be accessed through the provincial government are Mental Health Services, Social Assistance (which usually includes Disability Benefits), Addiction Services and Health Authorities that may have brain injury programs).

The Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping survivors and their families improve their quality of life through advocacy, education and providing case management. If you have any questions or comments about this booklet or acquired brain injury, you can contact:

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info@fvbia.org www.fvbia.org



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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKbhePbXu5mazHxtJ9medkw>

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