



Mental Health

What is Mental Health?

Mental Health refers to a person’s emotional, psychological, and social well-being. *Mental health impacts our mood, thinking, feelings about ourselves. It also affects our feelings and how we interact with others.* Acquired brain injury, family history, life experiences, and trauma/abuse can cause mental health challenges.

Why Mental Health is Important for Brain Injury Survivors

Monitoring mental health is important to help cope with everyday stress, especially after an acquired brain injury. Mental health challenges can occur any time after an acquired brain injury – right after the brain injury and/or years later. Mental health, physical health, and cognitive health are all related. Good mental health positively affects physical and cognitive health. Mental health difficulties can negatively affect both. **Each person’s mental health matters, should be prioritized, and should be taken care of by each of us.**

Common Mental Health Disorders After Acquired Brain Injury

Common mental health disorders after acquired brain injury include: 1) **Anxiety**, 2) **Depression**, and 3) **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. In addition to these, other mental health disorders include:

- Anger
- Irritability
- Personality changes
- Sleep disturbances

Warning Signs

Each person manages their mental health differently. Listed below are some warning signs for the common mental health disorders listed above. If you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs, do not hesitate to reach out to your health care team, family, and/or friends and ask for help.

- **Anxiety:** Feeling nervous, impending sense of danger/doom, restlessness, difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- **Depression:** Feeling of worthlessness, loss of appetite, decreased energy, slowed thinking or movement, thoughts of suicide
- **PTSD:** Intrusive memories (flashbacks/unwanted thoughts), avoidance, negative changes in thinking, mood, emotions



How Can You Improve Your Mental Health?

Improving your mental health is a process that takes work every day. You can do this on your own AND with others. Here are a few approaches*:



- Get therapy. Meeting with trained professionals is helpful.
- Look for community support in common places. Community centers and religious organizations may help you find services in your area.
- Join a local support or community group.
- Talk with family and friends – share your thoughts and feelings and ask for feedback/advice.
- Engage in positive habits such as finding a hobby, healthy eating, exercising, listening to self-help podcasts, and meditation.

*Mental health strategies that are helpful to one person may not be helpful to another person. Talking with trained professionals and/or people who know you can help you choose good strategies for you.

Next Steps

Each individual's mental health matters, should be prioritized, and should be taken care of. It is not always easy to improve mental health. Mental health should be seen as an important part of recovery from acquired brain injury. Surviving a brain injury takes great inner strength, hope, and the support of others. It is important to stand up for one's mental health in all phases of recovery.

Below are some free resources for therapy or support. If you or a loved one are experiencing any form of mental health issues, talk to your doctor or PCP for more resources, information, and therapy options.

Government website with mental health information/resources: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/>

Remember, everyone's mental health experiences are valid and should be supported.

See below for more resources.



Cognitive-Community Integration Lab
“Active Brain, Healthy Brain”

National Suicide Hotline:

1-800-273-8255

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Hotline (services in English and Spanish):

1-800-662-4357

Veterans Crisis Line:

1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)

Signs of Anxiety resource:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>

Signs of Depressions resource:

https://www.brainline.org/article/depression-after-brain-injury-what-you-need-know?gclid=Cj0KCQjw0caCBhCIARIsAGAfMy3KvFzt8B-Kf2r2RZTOsPvGjZ-UzT190J-6APQ3pIMRZD3xtTPBRsaAsjSEALw_wcB

Signs of PTSD resource:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>

References:

Three Most Common Mental Health Disorders in America:

<https://www.achn.net/about-access/whats-new/health-resources/3-most-common-mental-health-disorders-in-america/>

What is Mental Health:

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

Mental Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine:

<https://medlineplus.gov/mentalhealth.html>

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June 2021