

Taking Care of the Family After a Partner's Brain Injury



Any brain injury can cause some changes to the affected person and their family. Talk and plan with the rest of your family to help cope with your partner's injury. Your roles may change, but don't give up all the things you hold dear. Get help. Remember that there is often some improvement over time. Find ways to keep your family moving ahead.

Don't forget the rest of your family. Talk and spend time together. Make plans. The future still exists.

Expect conflicting feelings

As the extent of your loved one's injury becomes clear, it is normal to feel angry or guilty. Allow yourself and other family members to be honest. Personality changes can occur in people after a traumatic brain injury. Counseling may help you and your family adjust to these sudden changes in your lives.

Plan ahead

Will your loved one live at home or be able to stay alone? What's to become of the family? Ask the social worker about government support services. A financial advisor can help plan for the future.

You should know that there is a lot of research on brain injury. Hopefully, in time, new treatments may become available. But it is also important to have realistic expectations.

Rethink household habits

Now is a good time to rethink chores and old habits. List the tasks you do each day. Then ask yourself:

- Must this task be done?
- Does it need to be done this often?
- Is there a better way to do it?
- Who else can do it?
- Can we take turns?

Keep hobbies and friends

Life goes on, despite your loved one's injury. Take time to relax and do things you enjoy. Try to stay in touch with friends. Make new contacts. Talk about things other than your affected loved one.

Stay healthy

Take good care of yourself. Family caregivers are at higher risk of emotional and physical problems than the general population. Follow these tips:

- Exercise a little each day. Stretch. Go for a walk. Work out with friends or take a class each week.
- Eat fresh foods, such as fruit and vegetables.
- Reduce stress.
- Set attainable goals.

- Sleep when you're tired. A nap can help lighten your mood and give you energy.
- Visit your healthcare provider on a regular basis to take care of your own health.

Ask for what you need

You can't do it all by yourself. No one can. Only when you take care of yourself can you take care of others. Ask for help, and accept help when it's offered. Don't worry about repaying favors. Ask a friend to listen. Allow a neighbor to run an errand or pull weeds.

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