



## **HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY FAMILY MEMBER LIVING WITH ABI?**

Acquired brain injury (ABI) impacts everyone in a family, not just the member with the injury. Family members/caregivers are important members of the team by providing support and structure to those recovering from an ABI.

There are some simple, but very effective things you can do to support those with an ABI. Initially, more support will be needed to help those with an ABI to be successful, but over time supports can gradually be reduced to allow the person with an ABI to slowly increase their independence with daily activities.

### **1. Provide structure to daily life**

- Establish and maintain a daily routine - this helps the person feel more secure in their environment.
- Place objects the person needs within easy reach in an area free of visual clutter.
- Have the person rest frequently. Don't let the person get fatigued.
- Be natural with the person and help them to maintain their former status in the family.
- Include the person in family activities and conversations.
- Keep a calendar of activities visible on the wall. Cross off days as they pass.
- Maintain a photo album with labelled pictures of family members, friends, and familiar places to help them with their memory.

### **2. Provide support in a respectful way**

- Point out every gain the person has made since the onset of the injury. Avoid comparing speech, language or physical abilities prior to the injury with how they are now. Look ahead and help the person to do the same.
- Treat the person as an adult by not talking down to them.
- Respect the person's likes and dislikes regarding food, dress, entertainment, music, etc.
- Avoid making the person feel guilty for mistakes and accidents such as spilling something.
- If the person has memory problems, explain an activity as simply as possible before you begin. Then as you do the activity, review with the person each step in more detail.

### **3. Avoid over-stimulation**

People who have an ABI can become overwhelmed more easily, especially early in recovery. To help support them, use the following techniques:

- Restrict the number of visitors (1 or 2 at a time).
- Not more than one person should speak at a time.
- Use short sentences and simple words.
- Present only one thought or command at a time and provide extra response time.
- Use a calm, soft voice when speaking with the person.

- Keep stimulation to one sense (hearing, visual or touch) at a time.
- Avoid crowded places such as shopping malls and stadiums.

## **Resources**

Ontario Brain Injury Association [www.obia.ca](http://www.obia.ca)

- Caregiver support resources
- Survivor support groups
- Education

Brain Injury Association Waterloo Wellington [www.biaww.org](http://www.biaww.org)

- Survivor support
- Caregiver support
- Art programs

Traverse Independence Brain Injury Services [www.traverseindependence.ca](http://www.traverseindependence.ca)

- Day Programs
- Caregiver support
- Brain injury education

<https://msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/Understanding-TBI/The-Impact-On-Family-And-How-They-Can-Help>

<https://www.caregiver.org/Taking-Care-You-Self-Care-Family-Caregivers>