

Suggestions for Professionals Working with Persons with TBI

1. Carefully observe and assess the person's unique communication and learning styles.

- a)** Ask how well the person reads and writes; or evaluate via samples.
- b)** Evaluate whether the individual is able to comprehend both written and spoken language.
- c)** If someone is not able to speak (or speak easily), inquire as to alternate methods of expression (e.g., writing or gestures).
- d)** Ask about and observe a person's attention span; be attuned to whether attention seems to change in busy versus quiet environments.
- e)** Ask about and observe a person's capacity for new learning; inquire as to strengths and weaknesses or seek consultation to determine optimum approaches.

2. Help the individual compensate for a changed learning style.

- a)** Modify written material to make it concise and to the point.
- b)** Paraphrase concepts, use concrete examples, incorporate visual aids, or otherwise present an idea in more than one way.
- c)** If it helps, encourage the person to take notes or at least write down key points for later review and recall.
- d)** Encourage the use of a calendar or planner. If the treatment program includes a daily schedule, make sure a "pocket version" is kept for easy reference.
- e)** Write down homework assignments.
- f)** After group sessions, meet individually to review main points.
- g)** Provide assistance with homework or worksheets. Allow extra time for tasks that involve reading or writing.
- h)** Ask family, friends, or other service providers to reinforce goals.
- i)** Remember that something learned in one situation may not be generalized to another.
- j)** Repeat, review, rehearse, repeat, review, rehearse.

3. Provide direct feedback regarding inappropriate behaviors.

- a)** Let a person know a behavior is inappropriate. Do not assume the individual is making a conscious choice to act out or is even aware that he is misbehaving.
- b)** Be clear about the behaviors that are expected and provide direct feedback when inappropriate behavior occurs.
- c)** Redirect tangential or excessive speech, and establish a method to unobtrusively signal inappropriate behavior in public.

4. Remember that non-compliant behaviors may be symptoms of neurological deficits.

- a)** Do not presume that non-compliance arises from lack of motivation or resistance. Check it out.
- b)** Be aware that unawareness of deficits can arise as a result of specific damage to the brain and may not always be due to denial.
- c)** Confrontation shuts down thinking and elicits rigidity; roll with resistance.
- d)** Absences or lack of follow-through may be reasons to change treatment strategies. Don't rush to discharge.