Managing Depression after Brain Injury

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Common Myths about Depression

“Depression isn’t real”

“It happens because of a bad/sad situation”

“Depression is a natural part of getting older”

“Depressed people cry a lot”

“You can simply snap out of it”

“Talking about it only makes things worse”
What is Depression?

- Common psychiatric disorder (15-20% of people have it in their lifetime)
- Top cause of disability in American adults
- Complex disease with many different possible presentations
- Frequently co-occurs with anxiety and other disorders
Symptoms of Depression

Two weeks or more of a cluster of symptoms (5 out of 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low mood</th>
<th>Loss of interest/appetite changes</th>
<th>Weight/appetite changes</th>
<th>Trouble sleeping</th>
<th>Slowing/restless</th>
<th>Fatigue</th>
<th>Guilt/low worth</th>
<th>Trouble thinking</th>
<th>Thoughts of death</th>
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Affects your ability to take care of yourself, work, do chores, or get along with others etc
Depression is more common following brain injury than in the general population
  • ~50% are affected by depression within the first year after injury in TBI

Multiple causes contribute to development of depression
  • Physical changes in brain
  • Difficulties adjusting to disability
  • Other risk factors unrelated to brain injury
Treatments for Depression

Psychotherapy  Pharmacotherapy  Combined
Stressed with school, recently failed an exam

"I’m not smart enough"  
"I’m a failure"

Tired most of the time, legs feel heavy

Sad Hopeless

Give up on homework, skip class
Recovering from stroke six months ago

“I’m never going to get better”

Trouble sleeping, low energy

Apathetic Hopeless

Stop going to therapy, avoid friends
Environment

Thoughts

Physical Reactions

Feelings

Behaviors
Cognitive Strategies

Reflect
Challenge
Remind
Reflect and Capitalize on the Positive

- Take your time to reflect on positive events
- Share with someone or write them down
- Be specific and descriptive

Potential topics for reflection:
- What went well today?
- What am I grateful for?
- What am I looking forward to?
Challenge Your Automatic Assumptions

- Is this thought helpful?
- Is there any evidence supporting this thought?
  How about evidence against?
- What’s a more helpful or balanced perspective?
Challenge Your Automatic Assumptions

“I’m never going to get better” – Not very helpful, assumes the worst possible outcome

Evidence for: I’m using a cane but I didn’t need one before
Evidence against: My left side was numb but now I have full control

More helpful or balanced perspective: There is still more to work on in my recovery, but I have made a lot of improvements
Remind Yourself with Coping Cards

• Keep it short
  • Helpful thoughts
  • Positive self-statements

• Keep them nearby!

• Read regularly (3x/day and as needed)
Sample Cognitive Coping Card

My feelings are like waves, they come and go. This too shall pass.
Sample Cognitive Coping Card

List of my good qualities:

- Funny
- Honest
- Dependable
- Generous
Sample Cognitive Coping Card

I am grateful for ...
Summary of Cognitive Strategies

Reflect

Reflect on positives events
- What went well today?
- What am I grateful for?
- What am I looking forward to?

Challenge

Challenge automatic negative thoughts
- Is there any evidence for/against this thought?
- What’s a more helpful alternative?

Remind

Remind yourself by writing down helpful thoughts on coping cards
Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviors

Physical Reactions

Environment
Behavioral Strategies

Track

Schedule

Remind
## Track Your Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
<td>Slept in</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended brain health class</td>
<td>Did yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A=0, P=2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A=5, P=5</td>
<td>A=7, P=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Called friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A=4, P=6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watched TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A=2, P=3</td>
<td></td>
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**A-Accomplishment**

**P-Pleasure**
**Schedule Activities**

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<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon</strong></td>
<td>Take a walk</td>
<td>Take a walk</td>
<td>Take a walk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take a walk</td>
<td>Skype w/ family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
<td>Watch a movie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Call Susan</td>
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Activity Ideas

- Regular exercise
- Spend time with friends
- Learn a new skill or hobby
- Complete a task or chore
- Take care of your body
Remind Yourself with Coping Cards (Again!)

• Keep it short
  • List of favorite things
  • Useful strategies

• Keep them nearby!

• Read regularly (3x/day and as needed)
List of my favorite things

• Earl grey tea
• Fuzzy socks
• Videos of kittens/puppies
• Fresh towels from the dryer
• Family photos
Sample Behavioral Coping Card

Strategies for when I’m feeling down/unmotivated

- Go for a 10-minute walk around the neighborhood
- Pet my dog
- Call Susan
- Do a jigsaw or crossword puzzle
- Put on some nice-smelling lotion
## Summary of Behavioral Strategies

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<th>Track</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Remind</th>
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<tr>
<td>Track your activities</td>
<td>Schedule regular activities</td>
<td>Remind yourself of your favorite activities on coping cards</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How are you spending your time?</td>
<td>• Motivation follows action</td>
<td>• Friends and family can help provide structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are these activities giving you feelings of accomplishment or pleasure?</td>
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- **Track your activities**
  - How are you spending your time?
  - Are these activities giving you feelings of accomplishment or pleasure?

- **Schedule regular activities**
  - Motivation follows action
  - Friends and family can help provide structure

- **Remind yourself of your favorite activities on coping cards**
Coping with Stress from Coronavirus

- Stick to a routine
  - Regular sleep and wake times
  - Schedule activities
- Engage in social interactions
  - Reach out to family/friends
  - Help others
- Limit news
  - Two 30-min chunks per day
- Shift your focus
  - From what you don’t have to what you can do
What if I Don’t Remember These Strategies?

• Make some coping cards!

• Print helpful strategies and place them in an easily accessible place

• Family and friends can help create a routine schedule, and get you started on activities
When Should I Seek Professional Help?

• If you have any symptoms of depression, talk to your doctor

• They can help screen and assess for depression, and help you decide if you need additional treatment

• If you have thoughts of wanting to harm yourself or others, contact emergency services
How Do I Help My Loved One?

• Listen to their experience and allow them to express their feelings

• Help plan and engage in enjoyable activities together

• Encourage them to discuss their symptoms with their care team
Where Can I Find More Resources?

• Brain Injury Alliance of Washington (BIAWA)
  https://www.biawa.org/support/support-for-adults

• Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)
  https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/depression

• Crisis Connections  https://www.crisisconnections.org/