

FACT SHEET:

Category:
Behaviour

Audience:
Person with an ABI

For more information
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ABIOS Neuropsychologist



ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

Learning to Manage Anger

Introduction

Problems with irritability and anger are common after acquired brain injury. Specific concerns can include:

- Feeling irritable or snappy
- Having a short fuse
- Losing a temper over small things
- Throwing, breaking or damaging things
- Hitting, pinching, punching, shoving, slapping, poking, spitting at other people
- Swearing
- Yelling
- Threatening to hurt yourself or someone else

Why Should I Manage My Anger?

Anger can be stressful for you and for other people, it can damage relationships, and make it harder to get back to work, study, driving or prevent you being as involved in social or leisure activities.

What Causes My Anger?

Like other behavioural changes that can occur after brain injury, there are many reasons why people with abi have trouble with anger. Understanding each cause is important in deciding what to do about it.

Angry behaviour can be a result of:

- Changes caused by the brain injury, for example, general irritability, restlessness, agitation, or aggression are common after a brain injury.
- Reduced ability to keep track of and stop angry behaviour (including irritability, temper, swearing, and aggression)
- Some people are impulsive and may not be able to think about what to say or do before doing it so irritability and anger may be shown more easily.
- Increased stress, physical demands, and fatigue after a brain injury can all be triggers for irritability, frustration and anger.
- Alcohol and drug use can also reduce your ability to control a range of emotions including anger.

Tips for Coping with Anger :

Anger can sometimes be caused or triggered by other problems. Try to work out the kinds of things that make you more angry or likely to lose your temper.

Some examples of things that might make you feel irritable or angry are:

- Fatigue and tiredness
- Memory difficulties
- Frustration
- Changes in thinking or being unable to think quickly or clearly
- Being unable to do simple things for yourself
- Telling yourself (or thinking) that you can't control your anger
- Feeling that you cannot make your own decisions
- Money worries
- Boredom and lack of things to do
- Loss of independence with work or driving
- Living with other people you don't get along with

Try to find out what is making you feel angry or agitated – have a think about things that might **trigger** your anger, and what you can do about them.



Triggers for me are:

1.	
2.	
3.	

Finding ways to **calm down** may help with anger. Strategies might include:

- Relaxation or breathing exercises
- Talking about feelings and thoughts when you are calm
- Walking away or doing some exercise
- Listening to music
- Having a shower or cold drink
- Trying a different activity or task
- Taking a break and trying again later
- Changing the topic

Strategies I can try to calm down:

1.	
2.	
3.	

When your angry behaviour has stopped, think about:

- What helped you get control or calm down?
- The behaviour and how it affects other people?
- Consequences for you—making amends?
- What you could do differently next time?
- Strategies or solutions to deal with a problem that caused the anger?
- Do you need to apologise or work things out?

If you can't leave a situation and you are already angry, other people (family, friends) need to:

- leave the situation if there is any physical risk
- sit down with you afterwards and talk about what happened to find out why you got angry, and discuss what you could do differently and what they could do differently next time.

Family members, friends and carers may find it useful to learn about your brain injury and how to help you with your angry behaviour.

Make sure you get enough sleep and rest because fatigue can be a big cause of anger problems.

Find someone to talk to about your problems with anger: You could learn some strategies to manage anger from:

- friends or family
- your doctor
- psychologists or other counsellors
- psychiatrists
- brain injury services

Who would I talk to about anger?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Resources

See other Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS) Information sheets at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/>

Quick Relaxation Tip

Stop what you are doing

Sit down

Close your eyes

Breathe in slowly and deeply counting to four

Breathe out slowly, counting to four

Do this several more times

As you breathe in and out, say to your self "relax"

When you feel more relaxed open your eyes

Notes:
