

FACT SHEET:



ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

Category:
Mental Health

Audience:
Person with ABI;
Family and Support
Workers; and
Professionals

For more information
contact the Acquired Brain
Injury Outreach Service
(ABIOS)

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Reviewed April 2021

For review April 2022
ABIOS Neuropsychologist

Depression and Suicide

People with ABI might be vulnerable to feelings of depression and loss of hope:

- An ABI can cause a sudden and lasting change in a person's thinking, how they react to certain situations, their work, and how they relate to others.
- People who have experienced an ABI might have increased stress, greater difficulty with relationships, difficulty managing their own emotions, but fewer skills for dealing with these problems.
- Even though a person with ABI may seem the same as they were before, they may feel a disturbing sense of change in who they are.
- They may also be more impulsive and may find it hard to consider other perspectives or think differently about things.
- Without appropriate support, they may find themselves feeling isolated and helpless.

Some people with ABI may become suicidal:

- It is important to realise that because of these and other factors, people who have experienced an ABI, might experience feelings of depression and may be at greater risk of suicide.
- It is particularly important for family members, friends and those who care about the person to know the danger signs, know ways of being helpful, and know who you can turn to for advice or referral.

Recognising the danger signs:

It is important to be alert to cues that someone may be considering suicide. Things to look out for include:

- If they make statements like "it would have been better if I had died", or if they talk about death or committing suicide.
- If they become very withdrawn or depressed.
- If they express feelings of being a burden, worthlessness, and hopelessness about the future.
- Drastic changes in mood and behaviour (e.g. putting self at risk, giving away belongings, withdrawing or isolating themselves, making funeral arrangements, substance use).
- If the person with ABI has tried to commit suicide before, you should particularly be aware of cues and try to assist them to seek professional help.

How others might help

A person who is considering suicide desperately needs to know that others care. Show your care by:

- Being with them. Sometimes just being with a person is helpful. They may not want to talk at that time.
- Listening to them and particularly listening to what they are saying about themselves and their life. Be open with them. Let the person know that you are worried about them. Ask them how they feel and if they will talk to someone else who can help.
- Thinking about ways you can help them to renew old friendships and form new ones.
- Making sure that you don't sidestep the issue by saying things like "You should be grateful that you're still alive" or "You'll get over it".
- If you are worried about suicide, ask the person 'have they thought about suicide/ ending their own life?' You cannot make a person suicidal by expressing concern. In fact asking about suicide can help the person feel supported and connected and give them an opportunity to discuss their feelings and reduce the risk of suicide.
- Making sure you let others know that your friend or family member needs help.
- Making sure they see a doctor to assist them with physical and emotional problems that might be caused by their ABI, and which can be helped with medical treatment.

Crisis Support:

- Beyondblue info line can provide information and referrals to relevant services
 - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/home>
 - **Phone: 1300 22 4636**
- Lifeline 24 hour counselling service
 - **Phone: 13 11 14**
- Suicide call back line
 - **1300 659 467**
- Queensland Health Mental Health Services
 - **1300 MH Call (1300 64 22 55)**



If you are in an emergency or there is an immediate risk of harm, phone emergency services on 000.

If you're considering suicide.....

If you are the person who has experienced an ABI and you're considering suicide, you should know that:

- You are not alone. Most people think about committing suicide at one time or another. Thinking about suicide does not mean that things can't get better.
- Thoughts of suicide are just thoughts..... they do not need to be acted on and may only last a few minutes. You may think and feel differently in a few hours.
- The crisis will pass. Sometimes problems seem unbearable, but there are always things you or others can do. If you have a brain injury, it might be particularly hard to see your way through some problems. That's why it is essential that you talk about your problems with someone who can help.
- Keep yourself safe. Avoid being alone. Avoid alcohol and drugs as these can heighten emotions and affect your thinking.
- There may be physical issues caused by your ABI that are making you feel as bad as you do. It is important to get professional or medical advice to help you deal with some of those physical problems.
- Others do care. There are always people who are willing to help you work out your problems. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Let family members, friends, your local doctor or other professionals know how you feel.