



Tips for people living with an acquired brain injury (ABI)

ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

For people living with cognitive impairment, there can be challenges to face each day. Then the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic started. The changes since the pandemic have been many and rapid. This information sheet will identify the increased challenges people with ABI may face and helpful tips to manage the challenges.

Challenges

Adapting is hard

- Learning new things is often difficult for people with ABI
- It takes mental flexibility to change from the usual routine
- Many changes with COVID-19 have happened quickly; this can overwhelm people with ABI

Fatigue may increase

- More thinking and adapting means more mental fatigue
- This may occur throughout the day, not just in the afternoon or at the end of the day

Problem-solving may take longer

- When unfamiliar problems arise, finding solutions is more difficult
- There are often limited old solutions that can be adapted to the new problems
- Increased stress and fatigue add to the problem

Shorter fuse

- Expect anger to flare up more

Helpful tips

Routine is good

- Get up at the same time every day
- Take regular rest breaks throughout the day
- Eat meals and exercise at the same time each day
- Complete harder tasks in the morning when well-rested

Be organised

- Make a manageable to-do list each day
- Tick off each item once completed
- Complete one task before going onto the next
- Carry over tasks not completed to the next day
- Use reminders: notes, alarm prompts, calendar (digital or analogue)

Enjoyment is key

- Find one or two enjoyable activities to do at home each day
- Be creative
- Listen to a favourite song every day
- Ask a friend or family member for ideas, if you cannot think of any

Stay connected

- Connect with a family member or friend each day by phone or online
- Use their minds for assistance when yours is feeling fatigued or confused

Seek additional support when needed

If you feel that the stress or anxiety you experience as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is getting too much, a psychologist may be able to help.

Psychologists are highly trained and qualified professionals skilled in providing effective interventions for a range of mental health concerns. There are many different types of psychologists with varied training backgrounds and skill-sets, therefore, you are able to select the type of psychologist that is specific to your needs. For example, if your needs are specific to the impact of the ABI on your brain function and changes to your abilities, you may wish to seek the advice of a neuropsychologist.

If you are referred to a psychologist by your GP, you might be eligible for a Medicare rebate. You may also be eligible to receive psychology services via telehealth so that you do not need to travel to see a psychologist. Ask your psychologist or GP for details.

There are number of ways to access a psychologist. You can:

- use the Australia-wide Find a Psychologist™ service. Go to [Findapsychologist.org.au](https://findapsychologist.org.au) or call 1800 333 497
- ask your GP or another health professional to refer you.

The APS has a number of resources available to assist Australians in managing their mental health during the coronavirus outbreak. Visit psychology.org.au for more.

Further information

Australian Government Department of Health

The Department of Health has developed a collection of resources for the general public, health professionals and industry about coronavirus (COVID-19), including translated resources.

bit.ly/380OwHe

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides reliable information about the coronavirus such as its symptoms, steps you can take to protect yourself, and what to do if you are affected.

bit.ly/39MEml8

World Health Organization

The World Health Organization provides information and guidance regarding the current outbreak of coronavirus disease.

bit.ly/3cQUwCw

See other APS information sheets for tips and strategies:

bit.ly/3cJG66d

Acknowledgments

This resource was prepared by the:



A clinical neuropsychologist is a psychologist who is trained to understand brain-behaviour relationships (across the lifespan):

- To assess thinking/brain abilities and difficulties to clarify diagnosis and identify the client's care needs and priorities
- To provide targeted intervention or rehabilitation for people with thinking/brain-related difficulties or disorders
- To adapt or modify treatments to take into account the effects of thinking/brain difficulties

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