

# CHANGES IN PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOUR

Damage to certain parts of the brain can change your personality and the way you behave. Your personality may be exaggerated or even totally different. These changes usually become more noticeable as you recover. Along with cognitive (thinking) problems they often have the biggest effect on your life. For your family and friends these changes are not as easy to understand. You could notice the following changes:

## **IRRITABILITY/OUTBURSTS**

- You may appear to your family and friends to have a very short fuse;
- It will more likely be trivial matters that trigger the outburst;
- You are more likely to use bad language than before;
- It is more likely that the situation may escalate to become physical.

## **SELF AWARENESS**

- Your self awareness could change and you could become unaware of the needs of others and focus only on your needs;
- This becomes a barrier to making friends and forming relationships;
- You could centre all conversations and plans around you own needs.

## **IMPULSIVE**

- You do things on the spur of the moment with thinking;
- You may find it difficult to manage your finances;
- You may not think of the consequences of you actions;
- You may find that you speak exactly what is on your mind without thinking.

## **SPEECH**

- You confuse people by jumping from subject to subject;
- You talk more;
- You may find it hard to get to the point;
- You may stay on the same subject for hours or even days.

## **EMOTIONS**

- You may find that you laugh or cry more easily, often at inappropriate times;
- You may find that you have less control of you emotions;
- Once you start laughing you may not be able to stop.

## **SUSPICIOUS OR OBSESSIVE**

- You may become wary of people' motives or think that people are always talking about you;
- You do like things to happen outside your routine.

## **DEPENDENCY**

- As you may lack self confidence to do things for yourself, you become dependent on other people to do things for you.

## **DEPRESSION**

- Because of changes after your head injury you may find that you don't enjoy things very much any more.

## **LACK OF MOTIVATION**

- You could find that lack of motivation could be because of depression or because sometimes people compare pre-accident behaviour to post accident behaviour.

## **SOCIAL IMMATURITY**

- Many people with severe head injuries have to totally relearn their general social manners;
- However, for some people this behaviour is hard for them and their families to understand.

## **COPING WITH PERSONALITY AND MOOD CHANGES:**

- Recognise that there is a problem;
- Pinpoint the behaviour that is causing the problem and describe it clearly. This helps everyone involved to know exactly what is happening;
- Try to find out when the behaviour is most likely to happen;
- Talk about the problem. Let the person know that their behaviour is distressing you and tell them specifically how they might improve it. Encourage them when change is made;
- Change how you react to the upsetting behaviour. Sometimes no reaction or a low key reaction may be better. Talk to a psychologist about it.

This can seem like a fairly long list of deficits. No two people with a head injury are alike any more than any other two people are alike, but most have a combination of some or all of these difficulties.

These cognitive deficits are so very much harder for people to come to terms with than the physical damage and of course, in many instances people with a head injury have little or no physical disability, which makes it more difficult for people to understand that there is something wrong.