

Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:
what you and your colleagues can do in the workplace



Includes:

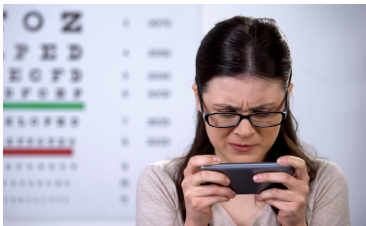
language impairment (often called dysphasia), receptive aphasia, reading problems, expressive aphasia, dysarthria and dyspraxia of speech.

Reading problems

Action you and your colleagues can take.



1. Check that reading problems have not arisen due to altered vision.



2. Encourage individual to seek specific advice.



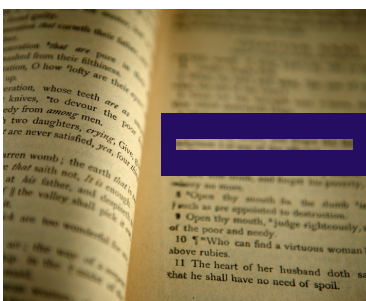
3. Enlarging print size.



4. Selecting a clear font.

Clear font **VS** **Difficult font**

5. Using a line guide to support looking at the full line of print.



6. Increasing contrast between paper and print, e.g. black type on orange paper.

2020 GOALS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Aphasia: Language loss

what you and your colleagues can do



This may be 'receptive' (difficulty making sense of what is said or read) or 'expressive' (difficulty finding the right words to say or write), or both.



This can be very frustrating for the person and for others, and patience is needed on both sides.

Remember - just because a person cannot express themselves, it does not mean they do not need or want to be heard.



A Speech and Language Therapist will be able to assess individual patterns of Aphasia. Treatment may then involve a mixture of therapy, advice and strategies.

1. Try, using nonverbal forms of communication that may help the person's understanding.



2. Consider trying spoken words and written words as the person with receptive aphasia may have better ability in one area than another.



They may also have retained some non-verbal skills (e.g. they may recognise gestures or pictures).

3. Listen carefully and try to understand long chains of words that have limited meaning (jargon); use incorrect words; or unintentionally created 'made-up' words.



4. Understand that a person with receptive aphasia may not be able to describe the word they mean as they may not be able to effectively link 'meaning' with the object or person.



Be kind and patient as the person may be unaware of their errors and expect the listener to respond.

Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Expressive Aphasia

What you and your colleagues can do.



1. Listen carefully to words and context to understand what the individual is trying to convey.



2. Recognise that words may be omitted.
"Tomorrow I'm going to the pub with my wife for our anniversary", may be expressed as:
'tomorrow... pub... wife... anniversary'.



Dysarthria

Actions you and your colleagues can take.

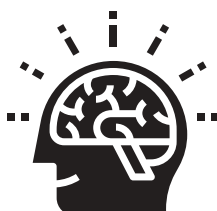


Dysarthria is a motor speech disorder in which the muscles that are used to produce speech are damaged, paralyzed, or weakened. The person with dysarthria cannot control his or her tongue, larynx, vocal cords, and surrounding muscles, which makes it difficult for the person to form and pronounce words.

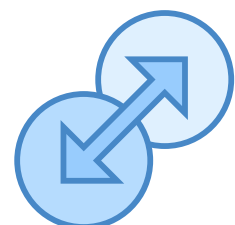
1. Listen carefully and be patient as person tries to form words.



2. Recognise that dysarthria will affect their ability to speak, but their ability to understand language and construct sentences may be intact.



3. Understand that often there are elements of both aphasia and dysarthria present.



Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Dyspraxia of speech

what you and your colleagues can do



1. Support individuals to access a Speech and Language Therapist who will be able to identify and assess dysarthria and dyspraxia of speech.



**SPEECH
THERAPIST**

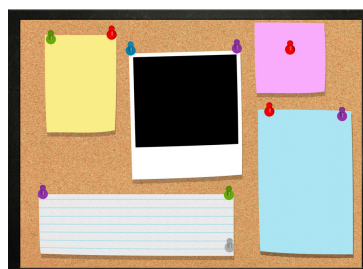


2. Recognise that recovery and degree of difficulties will depend upon the severity of the initial brain injury.



3. Support the individual when in severe cases, they may benefit from the use of an Augmentative Aid to Communication (AAC).

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) covers a huge range of techniques that support or replace spoken communication. These include gestures, signing, symbols, word boards, communication boards and books, as well as Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs).



Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Literal interpretation

Actions you and your colleagues can take.



1. Say what you mean.



Avoid sarcasm/irony, slang, vulgarity, flowery language, metaphors, Idioms, Puns, exaggeration/hyperbole, euphemisms, personifications of inanimate objects/ anthropomorphism, figurative phrases, implied assumptions or cliché sayings.

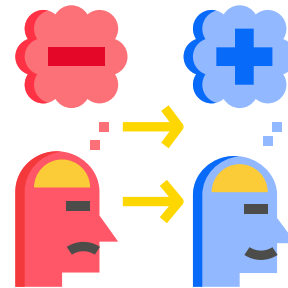
2. Be aware of what you say and consider alternatives that will not confuse e.g. instead of

"I'll be back in a minute"

say

"I'll be back in time for tea at 5.00."

3. Be prepared to calmly rephrase until you are sure that the person understands.



4. Be kind. In addition to celebrating differences, you should be compassionate and generous in your communication with a literal thinker.



5. When talking to a literal thinker try to identify their personal strengths and use communication practices in line with those strengths.

Because a literal thinker thinks in concrete terms, they are likely to be better at understanding rules, utilizing concrete information, visualizing information, and working through thoughts and actions that are rule-based.

Brain injury: Communication problems



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Impaired social communication

Actions you and your colleagues can take.



1. Be calm and clear and definite if a person has made somebody uncomfortable and does not realise it. Be kind but definite to tell them they need to stop now.



2. Explain to friends, family, work colleagues and professionals that the individual has difficulties and may not recognise everyday social cues, both verbal and non-verbal.



3. Be kind and make allowances.



4. Suggest that it would be helpful if the person wears a “hidden condition” lanyard with a card that explains that they have social communication difficulties and may not recognise and adhere to social norms.

Mention that they may not realise that someone is uncomfortable with the topic of conversation or that they are in a hurry to leave.



HIDDEN
disabilities 

5. Recognise that if the person changes subject it could be because they are:

- uncomfortable discussing that subject;
- are concerned they'll forget what they need to say about a different topic;
- are fixated on a different topic;
- have an altered ability to give information in an orderly and organised way;
- not using or 'reading' non-verbal cues accurately, such as facial expressions and body language.

Brain injury: Executive dysfunction



**Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:
what you and your colleagues can do
at your workplace**



Individuals with executive dysfunction will struggle with: planning and organisation; flexible thinking; monitoring performance; multi-tasking; solving unusual problems; self-awareness; learning rules; social behaviour; making decisions; motivation; initiating appropriate behaviour; inhibiting inappropriate behaviour; controlling emotions; concentrating and taking in information.

1. Be aware that the person may be unaware that their behaviour is inappropriate.



2. Be aware that an inability to prioritise and complete tasks also makes working life difficult.



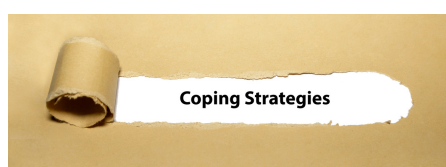
3. It is important to know these behaviours occur as a result of brain injury and are not intentional.



4. Specialised input from rehabilitation specialists, such as neuropsychologists and occupational therapists, can help to compensate for the problems.



5. Support individual to use coping strategies around planning, mood and social difficulties.



Brain injury: Executive dysfunction



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Planning

Action you and your colleagues can take.



Many strategies for overcoming memory problems can also be helpful for difficulties with planning. Helpful strategies may include:

1. Allow people plenty of time to plan activities and record their plans.



2. When planning the day, week, or an activity use a step-by-step approach, dividing the activity into manageable 'chunks' and write that down.



3. Use checklists and tick off each part of the activity that has been accomplished. This will help them stay on track.



4. Support the person to mentally rehearse plans.



5. Encourage person to discuss their plans for the day with others.



Brain injury: Executive dysfunction



Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:

Planning continued

Action you and your colleagues can take..



6. Similar strategies can be used for longer term planning, such as making appointments.



7. Schedule reminders to help the individual.



8. Provide step-by-step checklists and put them in key locations of the house or workplace. These will remind people of the different sequences that are needed to complete particular tasks.



9. Prepare a weekly routine for tasks.



10. Try to develop back up plans in advance, rather than when problems arise

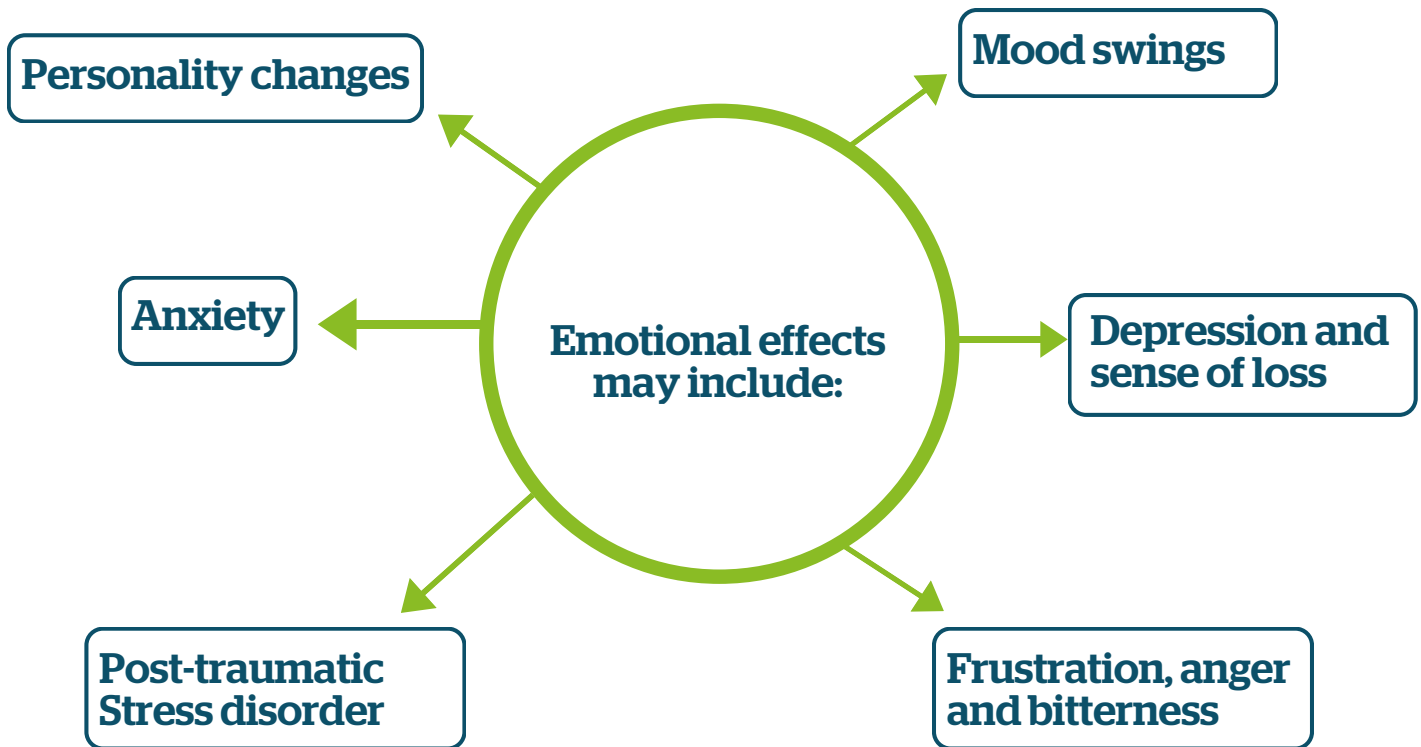




Brain injury: Emotional effects



**Work Place Reasonable Adjustments:
what you and your colleagues can do and
at your workplace**



Action you and your colleagues can take.



1. Recognise that for the person with a brain injury, losing a sense of their own identity is traumatic and frightening.

2. Be understanding, sympathetic, patient and supportive.

