The “Not So Mild” Consequences of a Mild TBI
Washington Speech Language Hearing Association
Annual Convention
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Presented by
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&
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Today’s focus

• Getting to know the “not so mild” TBI
• Evaluation and Treatment approaches
• How groups can jump start the therapeutic process
• Other state resources that can continue the recovery process long after treatment has ended
• Learning from the real expert, the patient!

Traumatic Brain Injury and Concussion

• Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
  – is a serious public health problem in the United States.
  – contributes to a substantial number of deaths and cases of permanent disability annually.
  – in 2010, 2.5 million TBIs occurred either as an isolated injury or along with other injuries.

• A TBI or Concussion
  – bump, blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head/blast injury
  – sports related injuries, MVA’s, falls, domestic violence, etc.
  – disrupts the normal function of the brain
  – range from “mild” i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness to “severe”, i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury.

National Hospital Discharge Survey (NHDS), 2010; National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS), 2010; National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), 2010. All data sources are maintained by the CDC.
Mild TBI or Concussion

Signs and Symptoms

• Thinking/Remembering
  – Difficulty thinking clearly and/or concentrating
  – Feeling slowed down
  – Difficulty remembering new information
• Physical
  – Headache
  – Fuzzy or blurry vision
  – Dizziness
  – Sensitivity to noise or light
  – Balance problems
  – Feeling tired, having no energy
• Emotional/Mood
  – Irritability
  – Sadness
  – More emotional
  – Nervousness or anxiety
• Sleep
  – Sleeping more than usual
  – Sleeping less than usual
  – Trouble falling asleep

But is it really “Mild”?

• “Mild” can be a deceiving label
• “Mild” should not be interpreted as nonsignificant
Cognitive-communication assessment

• Medical Record Review
• Patient/family interview
• Formal testing and informal Testing
• 1-2 hours
• Important to obtain information on client’s
  – Definition of current problems
  – Priorities for recovery
  – Their personal outcome goals.

Northwest Hospital Speech Language Services
Cognitive Communication Evaluation Questionnaire

• Physical
  • Medical
  • Vision
  • Hearing
  • Mouth
  • Speech
  • Other
  • Medications

• Social
  • Family
  • Caregivers
  • Education
  • Occupation
  • Recreation

• Psychological
  • Affect
  • Stressors
  • Mental Health
    - Dependence
    - on Others
  • Safety
    - Transportation/Driving
    - Independence at Home
  • Goals
    • Patient's concerns
    • Caregiver's concerns

Chart adapted from ICF Framework of Health and Disability (WHO, 2001)
The Rivermead Post-Concussion Symptoms Questionnaire

After a head injury or accident some people experience symptoms which can range from minor to severe. We would like to know if you now suffer from any of the symptoms given below. As many of these symptoms occur normally, we would like you to compare yourself now with before the accident. For each one, please circle the number closest to your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>0= Not experienced at all</th>
<th>1= No more of a problem</th>
<th>2= A mild problem</th>
<th>3= A moderate problem</th>
<th>4= A severe problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniversary of decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise and/or shouting</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise sensitivity, easily upset by loud noise</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep disturbance</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatigue, being more easily</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being irritible, easily anger</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling frustrated or impatient</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgetfulness, poor memory</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking longer to think</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurred vision</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light sensitivity, easily upset by bright light</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double vision</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restlessness</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you experiencing any other difficulties?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Cognitive Communication Treatment

3 Steps for Managing Cognitive Impairment

- **Self-awareness and Acceptance**
  - Learn about strengths and challenge areas
  - Reassuring them that they are not “crazy”
  - Be patient, forgiving and understanding with yourself
  - Working through denial

- **Develop Strategies to Help You Cope More Effectively**
  - Pace yourself and allow as many rest periods as are necessary
  - Deep breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, meditation or exercise to combat cognitive fatigue. Rest your mind.
  - Use timers, alarms, beepers, apps or other reminders

- **Communication**
  - How to describe cognitive impairments to others
  - Be your own advocate; asking others for what you need when you need it.
Hierarchy of Cognitive Functions:
Signs, Symptoms, and Strategies for Families and Survivors of Traumatic Brain Injury
Developed by Dr. Yahuda Ben-Yisha; Rusk Institute, New York

Treatment often described as “coaching”

- Individualized approach
  - help increase self-monitoring while learning the limits imposed by the symptoms.
  - doing everything at “subthreshold levels”.

- The goal is to help the patient live within the limits of their symptoms
  - to stop triggering the symptoms
  - to gradually reduce them, ideally to a very low level.
  - headaches common symptom of “overdoing it.”
  - to use a wide variety of strategies and closely watch activity and stimulation levels

- Incorporating family and helping the patient establish a network of support
  is a part of everyone’s treatment where possible.
  - inviting family to participate in treatment sessions & caregiver support group
  - encourage participation in support groups

Group Interventions

- TBI Support Groups
- Northwest Hospital & Medical Center Classes
  - Journaling for Recovery from Mild Brain Injury
  - Planning and Organizing Your Life Class for Mild Brain Injury
Why Journaling? The Benefits.....

– Powerful healing experience of telling their own stories
– Explore the challenges, losses, changes, emotions, adjustments, stresses, and milestones
– Work on written and verbal communication skills and provides cognitive retraining for following instruction within a group process.
– Helps promote self awareness as well as recognition of strengths and difficulties after brain injury.
– Is a tool for planning for the future and discussions with family members.
– Provides an opportunity to make goals for the future to continue the recovery process.

Journaling for Recovery from Mild Brain Injury

• Classroom format; 10 sessions; 6-8 participants
• Workbook provided; brief check in at start of class
• Short relaxation exercises done each session prior to writing
• Workbook journaling prompts selected each session to guide the journaling process
• After journaling exercise, participants choose to read what they wrote to the group or pass

My Story 1-2
How it feels to be me

Choose one of these prompts:
• This is how it feels to be me today....
• Next, if you don’t like the way you are feeling write about how you feel instead. It is sometimes possible to improve your mood and perhaps your physical state by actively thinking yourself into a better one.
• I wish I could feel this way instead....
• Free write.....
June 3, 2014
Journaling Class
(4 years post injury)

Journaling class evaluation comments...

• “the writing exercises were extremely beneficial and enriched my healing.”
• “journaling has given me voice which I’ve felt has gotten stronger through this process.”
• “it has helped me put some of the thoughts in my head into words, which helps me feel better at communicating thoughts and feelings”
• “I have cried a lot; grief and acceptance.”
• “so many emotions-my brain is who I am, growing through healing & recovery, learning from others.”
• “journaling specific to TBI is an absolute must”

“PLAN & ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE” CLASS FOR MILD BRAIN INJURY
Planning and Organize Your Life
A class for mild brain injury

- Weekly one hour sessions for 12 weeks
- Classroom format; 6-8 participants
- Sessions topics:
  1. Overview of the Planning Process
  2. Foundations for Success: Cognitive Strategies
  3. The Project Warehouse: Categorize
  4. Daily Activity Plan: Prioritize
  5. Appointment Book: Schedule
  7. How Planning Can Support Attention
  8. How Planning Can Support Memory
  9. How Planning Can Support Executive Functions
- Last session: class evaluation and celebration

Cognitive Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manage Health &amp; Well-Being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Improve Sleep, Reduce Fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve Mood, Reduce Stress &amp; Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reduce Pain and Headaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improve Nutrition</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simplify &amp; Organize</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Break things down into simple steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduce distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simplify your environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use &quot;compensatory strategies&quot;</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure &amp; Routine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Task routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Daily routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weekly routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creates automatic routines and habits</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consistency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent ways of doing things</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repetition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Necessary for new learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Important for developing new habits, routines, use of compensatory strategies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Alison McLean, OT, April 6, 2013, MS Education Conference

Planner Pad Organizer

Each Page Works like a Funnel

1. The top section replaces long lists written on tablets. This is the "Project Warehouse" - a place where you can organize business and personal activities by category. The horizontal layout gives you maximum visibility and makes it easy to group like activities and see all that needs to be accomplished. |

2. The middle section is your daily activity plan. Select things that need attention from the top section. Assign specific days for action. |

3. The lower section is your "appointment book." Schedule people to see, meetings to attend, and personal activities. Schedule time for yourself to work on projects and to get things done. |

With the Planner Pad system, you've funneled down all those tasks that were placing such a burden of stress on your life and broken them down into easily manageable tasks.
Planner class evaluation comments....

- “I have enjoyed this class; it has given me a new perspective on using my planner. I am not alone.”
- “Really liked the class. Planning emphasis well covered.”
- “Thanks for the safe and engaging and encouraging time and space to learn”
- “Have follow up class, same instructors, so we can be accountable.”
- “I loved the class size; instructors are awesome. Disappointed the class came to an end. Will recommend it to others.”

Resources – WA State

- BIAWA – www.biawa.org
  - Resource Line
  - Events
  - Volunteer Opportunities
  - Locate Support Groups State Wide
- TBI Council - www.tbiwashington.org
  - Annual TBI Conference
  - TBI Symposium
  - Info and resources
- Brainline – www.brainline.org
- TBI Life Coach – www.facebook.com/tbilifecoach
Resources – South Sound: BEST

- BEST - Brain Energy Support Team: http://www.brainenergysupportteam.org/
- BEST is committed to providing opportunities that create and improve personal well-being and quality of life for everyone in our community.
- BEST Space
- BEST Learning Center Programs
- Support Groups
- Support Group Facilitator Guidelines and Training

Resources – Seattle/Northwest

- TBI Model System – UWMC/Harborview – www.depts.washington.edu/uwtbi/
- TBI Support Groups
- Caregiver Support Group
- Seattle Brainworks - www.seattlebrainworks.org
- HeadStrong for Life – headstrongforlife.org/
- Young Adult Support Group - UWMC

Resources – E. WA

- TBI Survivors Network - www.tbisn.org
  - Annual TBI Camps and Events
  - Facebook presence
  - TBI Radio
  - Support Group Resource for E. WA
  - Blogs
  - Information
Additional References


• Concussion 101 for SLPs – Seminars in Speech and Language 2014; 35(03): 153-154 Thieme Medical Publishers 333 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, USA Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, College of Health Sciences, El Paso, Texas

• After Brain Injury: Telling Your Story, A Journaling Workbook – Barbara Stahura, Susan B Schuster, M.A., CCC-SLP, 2009

• "You Look Great!" Strategies for Living Inside a Brain Injury-John C. Byler, with Laura Ricard, PhD, 2012

Case Study