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## Learning to live with Brain injury



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How a brain injury might affect you and what you can do to help.

# Learning to live with brain injury

These are feelings that people with brain injury have shared about what has happened to them.

Recovery from brain injury challenges both you and those close to you. It may often seem like a see-saw where your feelings go from hope to despair.

These feelings may continue for some time. It may feel as though obstacles block your return to your former life. As well as the physical effects of brain injury, these may be the emotional and social consequences of having a brain injury.

**“I know myself.... I’m not the same.”**

**“I’ve accepted how I’m going to be.”**

**“It’s tough at times but I’m managing.”**

## Since your brain injury you may have asked yourself:

- Will I be normal?
- Why did this happen to me?
- Is life worth living?

These questions are normal and understandable.

Sometimes you find the changes that are happening may make you feel embarrassed, frightened or tired, as well as other feelings. Remember not everyone is aware of the effects of brain injury therefore may not understand what you are going through.



You may have experienced feelings of:

- Shock - you are overwhelmed by what has happened
- Anxiety - you feel nervous or stressed
- Depression - realisation of loss of capabilities
- Denial - you tell yourself you’ll be back to normal soon
- Anger - ranging from irritation to rage
- Blame - it must be someone else’s fault
- Guilt - as you may feel you are putting extra pressure on your family and friends
- Dependency - you may have lost confidence in your ability to do things for yourself
- Frustration - you may not be able to do the things you used to
- Worthlessness - you don’t feel useful
- Living in a fog - you can’t seem to think clearly

## Along your path to recovery you may:

- Feel like you don't fit in or belong any more
- Have trouble getting along with your family, friends and work mates
- May lose some former friends
- Feel alone and isolated
- Lose your job or have trouble doing your old job
- Lack motivation or initiation
- Feel that people are over-protective
- Have trouble doing things you used to enjoy

### What can I do?

Talk to your Case Manager, Doctor, Liaison / Field Officer or Support Group if you are worried or need information. They may be able to help you.



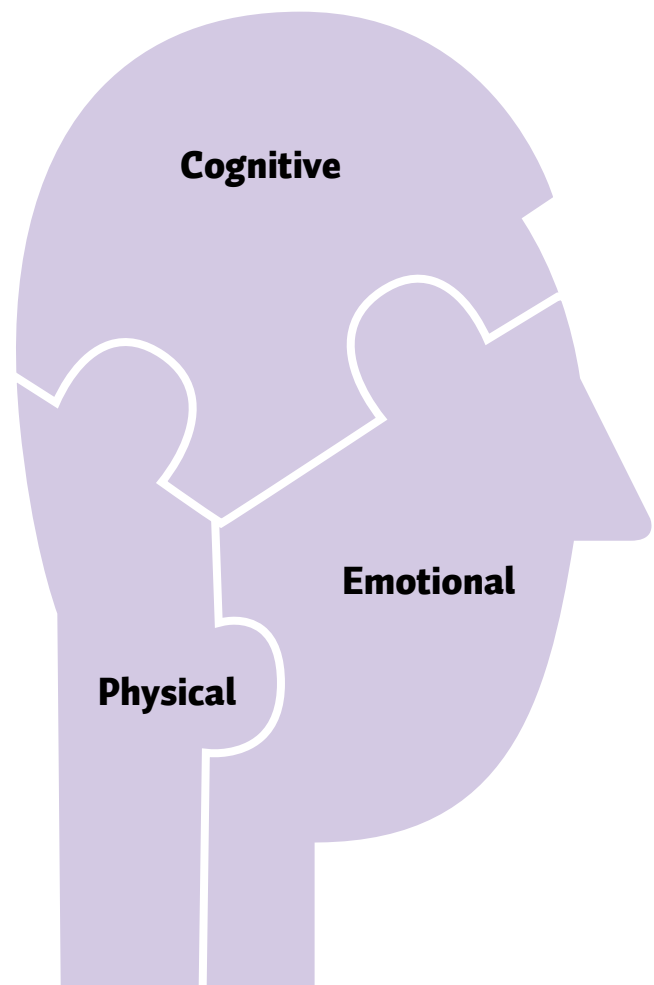
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## Getting on with life

Recovery and adjusting to the changes due to brain injury may mean that you have to re-think what you want out of life. Many people with a mild brain injury fully recover, however some people with severe brain injury may have to adapt to a new routine and a new way of life.

Accepting these changes is an important step in being able to get on with your life. To do this you may need to grieve for the losses you have had. Feelings of grief may come and go and may form a very important part of your recovery. It may be helpful for you to share these feelings with your doctor/ support person.

Your family and friends may have to make adjustments to their own lifestyles too in order to understand and be supportive.



It can take time after an injury for all the pieces to fall back into place.

## Be positive

### Take up new activities so you can enjoy your leisure time

- Take care of yourself
- Take time out to do things you enjoy
- Ask for help when you need it
- Stay healthy through diet, regular exercise and sufficient rest
- Learn relaxation techniques
- Find services that can help you
- Stay in touch with old friends and try to make new supportive networks
- Attend a support group e.g. your local Brain Injury Association
- You may enjoy doing things you wouldn't have tried before



Stay healthy through diet, regular exercise and sufficient rest

## Looking to the future

Knowing yourself as you are now and letting go of who you were will be important

### Over time you will:

- Feel the joy of getting things right
- Start to feel confident about things as time goes by
- Enjoy doing things you wouldn't have tried before
- Learn to get the most out of life
- Learn a new way of being you

## For further information

Some of the other leaflets in this series may help or you can contact your local Brain Injury Association, ACC, Ministry of Health or Disability Resource Information Centres.

For more information go to:  
[www.brain-injury.org.nz](http://www.brain-injury.org.nz)

### My important contacts:

Brain Injury Association:

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Case Manager:

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Doctor:

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Other contacts:

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