



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Awareness

*Do others
notice
issues
since
your
brain
injury
that
you
do
not?*

What does this mean?

A person's ability to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses is extremely important. But such self-awareness requires complex thinking skills that are often weakened after brain injury; many individuals have trouble seeing that they have problems with memory, attention or reasoning. They may also be unaware of how their actions and behaviors have changed in ways to which others may object.

How might a brain injury affect awareness?

If individuals with brain injuries lack self-awareness, they won't know that they need to compensate for their thinking problems and won't recognize that their behavior may be inappropriate or offensive to others. The type and degree of difficulty in this area varies from person to person as time passes and may improve over time. Many people with a brain injury have some level of understanding that they are not the people they used to be. They may experience difficulties at work and in social situations, but may not understand how they themselves may be contributing to the problem. Instead, they may blame others. A lack of awareness could also prove potentially dangerous if it leads people to do things that they are no longer able to safely do, like operate potentially dangerous machinery or tools.

Common examples of awareness problems:

- ◆ Consistently hearing from others that you are having problems, even though you don't realize it.
- ◆ Denying that you have cognitive problems, or problems with inconsiderate or inappropriate behavior, even if these are obvious to others.

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Keep an open mind and consider the possibility that, when people tell you that you are making mistakes and doing things that make them uncomfortable, it may reflect a problem in you stemming from the brain injury and not a problem in them.
- ◆ Seek out feedback from those around you to know if you are having difficulties you are not aware of.
- ◆ Keep a journal/diary of your daily events so you can track, look back, and identify patterns to help increase self-awareness.

Source: brainline.org, WETA; acquiredbraininjury.com, The Rehab Group. Further, the information in this FACT SHEET is also based on a consensus of expert opinion of the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Departments of Neuropsychology and Resource Facilitation.

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatments.

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