

Webinar 3

Cognitive Impairments that Affect Prison Adjustment: Attention and Memory



These webinars were developed because as many as 60-70% of people who are in prison have had a brain injury, and the brain injury may have a lot to do with how they ended up in prison. We need to understand brain injury so that we can better help them adjust in prison and stay out of prison once they are released.

In this webinar, we will address:

How to understand and manage:

- a. Attention Impairments
- b. Memory Impairments

Attention

- Almost all people with brain injury have problems with attention.
- There are different types of attention, for example:
 - Staying focused on one thing and ignoring others at the same time
 - Switching back and forth between two different things at the same time (multi-tasking)



Attention Impairments

- People with brain injury:
 - Get distracted easily
 - Can't stay focused
 - Have difficulty finishing tasks or conversations
 - Get restless or fidgety
 - Don't finish tasks
- Sometimes people look like they don't care because they are not able to stay focused.



Management of Attention Impairments

- Get rid of distractions
- Take frequent “brain breaks” with no stimulation or do relaxation training
- Focus on one thing at a time
- Ask the person to slow down and take their time – don’t rush through tasks
- Ask the person to repeat what you said to be sure they were paying attention

Memory

- There are many different types of memory
- We will focus on:
 - Episodic Memory
 - Semantic Memory
 - Prospective Memory



Episodic Memory

Definition:

- Episodic memory is memory of our experiences, events or “episodes”, for example:
 - What we did on our vacation
 - The last movie we saw
 - What was said at the last meeting
- Episodic memory impairment is very common after brain injury.

Episodic Memory Errors:

- Forgetting instructions
- Forgetting how to get somewhere or what something looks like
- Forgetting what you said the day before
- Forgetting something that you just learned

Semantic Memory

Definition:

- Semantic memory is memory of the knowledge that we have learned, for example:
 - Who was Abraham Lincoln?
 - What does red look like?
 - What does the word “memory” mean?
- Semantic memory can be impaired after brain injury.

Semantic Memory Errors:

- Forgetting how to do arithmetic
- Forgetting what the rules are
- Not being able to remember what a word or a symbol means
- Knowing how to use a telephone

Prospective Memory

Definition:

- Prospective memory is remembering to remember tasks or actions you need to do in the future, for example:
 - Remembering to set your alarm clock because of a change in your schedule
 - Remembering to pick-up groceries on your way home
 - Remembering to notify your boss when a task is done

Prospective Memory Errors:

- Forgetting to do things of all types
- Prospective memory errors are very common following brain injury
- These errors might look like the person doesn't care or isn't being "compliant"

Management of Memory Impairments

- Keep a notebook with you at all times to make notes and review things that need to be scheduled
- Use a calendar or the alarm on a cell phone
- Don't try to do too many things at the same time when one of the tasks is critical
- Carry out important tasks immediately instead of putting them off until later
- Create reminder cues that stand out and put them in an obvious spot
- Link the target task to a habit that you have already established

What are the Main Points?

- Problems with attention and memory are very common after brain injury.
- People with brain injury not only forget things from the past (episodic memory), but also to do things in the future (prospective memory).
- When it is clear that someone has a brain injury, their impairment with paying attention is not caused by a bad attitude.

In The Next Webinar, We Will Address:

- Other cognitive impairments that follow from a brain injury and how to manage it



This presentation is funded - in part - by

US Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources and
Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau Traumatic Brain
Injury Implementation Partnership Grant
Grant Number H21MC26914

And with funding from the
Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Foundation