

Webinar 6

Common Misunderstandings about Brain Injury and Additional Resources



Common Misunderstandings about Brain Injury – The Survivor’s Perspective

- It is scary to think that an injury might affect “your mind” – many survivors will say “Well, I was not very smart before” as a way to minimize the effects of an injury. Other examples include “Well, I have always had a temper/been impulsive/been distractible”.
- Many survivors think that you are telling them that they are “mentally retarded” when they learn that they have had a brain injury. In fact, brain injury does not typically affect intelligence or the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) unless it is severe.

Common Misunderstandings about Brain Injury – Perspectives from Others

- It is also scary for family members that their loved one had a brain injury. They often say “Oh, he’s always been this way” as a way to minimize their fear.
- If the family doesn’t understand their injury, they may attribute the survivor’s behavior to:
 - “He’s just lazy,” “he could if he wanted to,” or “he’s just doing it to get what he wants.”

Other Beliefs or Biases

- “Everyone is able to control their behavior if they really try” – not necessarily true if you have had a brain injury
- “If his behavior is better at some times than at others, that’s proof the patient can control it” – no, inconsistency of behavior is a sign of brain injury
- “If we say behavior is because of the injury, that’s an excuse for him to do whatever he wants” – people don’t usually want to have “brain damage” or the effects of a brain injury
- “What this guy really needs is for everyone to quit coddling him” – behavior is affected more often in brain injury than movement. But if someone was paralyzed from brain injury, we wouldn’t say this.

Brain Injury and Behavior

- Behavior is the result of many things:
 - Previous learning
 - Medications
 - Environmental conditions
 - Psychological factors
 - Medical conditions
- But in the case of brain injury, first assume that problems in behavior are due to the brain injury, and then rule out the other possible factors!

Additional Resources

- For access to 25 Brain Injury Fact Sheets, go to:
<http://www.resourcefacilitationrtc.com/fact-sheet-catalog>
for topics ranging from Brain Injury and PTSD, Sleep, Medications and many others
- For great a CDC Fact Sheet on Brain Injury in the Prison, see:
https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/pdf/prisoner_tbi_prof-a.pdf
- For a great brain injury fact sheet specifically developed for criminal justice professionals, go to:
http://www.brainline.org/content/2010/03/traumatic-brain-injury-a-guide-for-criminal-justice-professionals_pageall.html

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