



“What’s my role?” Parenting after brain injury

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Objectives

By the end of this session:

- Participants will become familiar with how dynamics of parenting can change following parental brain injury.
- Participants will become familiar with experiences & challenges of parenting following parental brain injury.
- Participants will discuss strategies that can be used to help parent following parental brain injury.



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What is a parent?

- According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary a parent is "one that begets or brings forth offspring" or "a person who brings up and cares for another."



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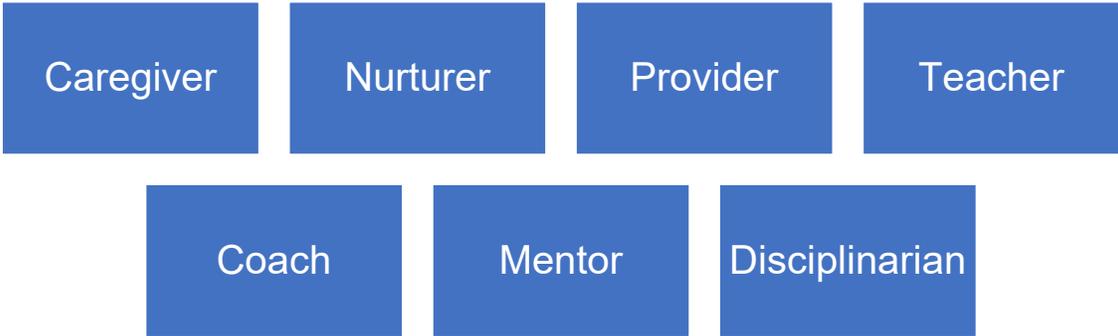
What is a brain injury?

- Wikipedia defines brain injury (BI) as "the destruction or degeneration of **brain cells**. Brain injuries occur due to a wide range of internal and external factors."
- According to the Ontario Brain Injury Association acquired brain injury (ABI) "can result in **cognitive**, physical, **emotional**, or **behavioural** impairments that lead to permanent or temporary changes in functioning."



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What are the roles of a parent?



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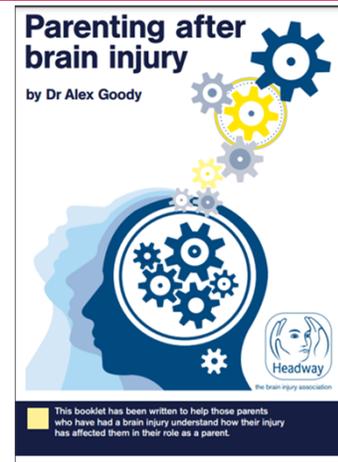
A New Parent...



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Why Parenting Changes After Brain Injury

- 1.) The person may have cognitive (thinking), physical, emotional or behavioral changes as a direct result of their injury.
- 2.) Often after a brain injury much of the pattern of family life is disrupted or changed



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Potential impacts of brain injury that can cause changes in family roles



- Memory deficits
- Fatigue
- Physical complications
- Irritability/Anger
- Disinhibition
- Perseveration
- Emotional lability
- Confusion
- Cognitive overload

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Impact of parental brain injury on children

A study conducted by S. Uysal et al. and published in the Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation found the following:

- parents with TBI reported less goal setting,
- less encouragement of skill development,
- less emphasis on obedience to rules and orderliness,
- less promotion of work values,
- less nurturing,
- and lower levels of active involvement with their children.



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Impact of parental brain injury on children (cont.)

The same study also found that spouses of individuals with brain injury:

- reported less feelings of warmth, love, and acceptance toward their children



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Impact of parental brain injury on children (cont.)

Finally, the study found that children of a parent with a brain injury reported:

- perceived both parents as more lax in their discipline,
- and the parent without TBI perceived as less actively involved in parenting roles.



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Experiences/challenges of parenting following a brain injury

- Kid's point of view: Change of "plans," no say in what just happened, have to change plans
- Understanding of what is happening
- Anger/frustration
- Changes in family roles
 - Child becomes the caregiver
- Mourning period, for all involved
 - Focus and energy is on getting better
- Kids not getting attention/focus that they deserve
 - Difficulties in school, at home, behaviors, etc.



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Challenges of Parenting...

- Increasingly there are many challenges for any parent.
- Being a parent means filling many different roles.



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Consequences of brain injury

- Emotional regulation
- Substance misuse/abuse
- Fatigue
- Cognitive fatigue
- Ability to multi-task
- Memory



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Challenges of Parenting with a brain injury



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- Executive Functioning deficits
- This can lead to feeling overwhelmed quickly
- Individual becomes unable to make decision or makes reactive decision



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How do family relationships change after brain injury?

- Financially, chores, planning, etc.
- New responsibilities such as medical, power of attorney, etc.
 - Families lose time for other things, events, etc.
 - Lack of adequate resources
 - Behaviors of the survivor
- Survivor is focused on getting better
- Lack of understanding on behalf of loved ones regarding recovery process/long term effects
 - Invisible injury
- Child becomes caregiver
- Changes in long term/life plans



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Becoming a parent after brain injury

- Fear
- Expectation vs. reality
- Changes in marriage role/single parent
- Support
- Medical issues
- Managing time/cognitive fatigue
- Impulsivity
- Preparedness
 - Roles/responsibilities
 - Organization “having a plan”



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Suggestions...

- Allow everyone to mourn
- Allow child/children to be angry
- Educate others about brain injury and the unique way it affects each individual
- All members of family should consider clinical evaluations
- Find the right support group
- Have the child be part of the recovery process, if appropriate



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Suggestions (continued)...

- Make time for child/children
- Consider respite, for everyone
- Allow for opportunities for kids to be special/center of attention
- Have consistent expectations & routines
- Have support available
- Be kind to yourself!!!



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Suggestions (continued)...

- Know your strengths
- Know your limitations and plan accordingly
 - You know yourself best. What works for you?
What doesn't work for you?
- Have a plan for when you become overwhelmed
 - as long as it is safe, walk away for a couple minutes if you need to
- Have a support network, and use the support network



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Thank You

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