

# WEEK 3

## EMOTIONAL REGULATION

### GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

This optional treatment module contains information to allow the participants to better understand how their TBI is related to their emotional dysregulation. This module should be utilized if several participants have expressed issues with mood swings, or if collateral information suggests client issues with emotional dysregulation.

**Emotional dysregulation** refers to the inability of a person to control or regulate their emotional responses to provocative stimuli.

The primary goals of this week will be for participants to:

- Identify what occurs during their mood swings
- Better understand their emotional responses to various situations
- Allow participants to practice coping skills to reduce or navigate emotional outbursts
- Provide psycho-education on how emotional dysregulation is related to TBI, and facilitate discussion during group about coping with emotional dysregulation.

### TIME:

Allow 1.5 hours for the session.

### NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

A minimum of four participants is recommended.

# WEEK 3

## PREPARATION



### VIDEO

Watch the following video:

<https://youtu.be/Y02clqBzrbs>

For trainer info on emotional dysregulation and TBI, see:

<https://tinyurl.com/ahead-trainerinfo>



### PRINT HANDOUTS

Brain Injury and Emotion Regulation

Mood Log

Take Home Impressions

*These handouts can be found in the handout section for this week, the facilitator's guide will indicate when these should be referenced.*



### WRITE

Write the following group rules on the white board for reference for participants throughout the treatment group:

- **Confidentiality:** The information we discuss in this group is private, and members are expected to keep it that way.
- **Respect:** Give your attention and consideration to participants, and they will do the same for you. Examples include:
  - No talking over each other,
  - Pay attention to the person talking (listen, don't just wait for your turn to talk), and
  - Encourage each other, etc.
- **Participation:** You are expected to take part in the discussion and contribute to this group. The pace of this group, however, may limit some participation. Let's briefly discuss one way that the group leader(s) can signal you when we need to wrap up discussion and move on.

**Note:** *If additional rules were agreed upon, be sure to include each additional rule during this review.*

# WEEK 3

# PREPARATION



## WRITE

Write the following learning objectives on the white board for reference throughout the treatment group:

- Structure and topic
- Homework review
- Emotional Dysregulation & TBI
- Break
- Group Activity
- Reflection/Homework

# WEEK 3

## ACTIVITIES



### ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to review the rules that we will follow throughout the duration of this treatment group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, I can help to clarify what is meant by that rule.

- 1. Confidentiality:** The information we discuss in this group is private, and members are expected to keep it that way. What is discussed in the group may be highly personal at times, and should not be discussed outside of the group.
- 2. Respect:** Give your attention and consideration to your fellow participants, and they will do the same for you. Examples of respectful behavior include:
  - Not talking over each other
  - Paying attention to the person talking (listen, don't just wait for your turn to talk)
  - Encouraging each other by responding to each other in a positive manner. Have the participants give other examples of how to show respect, and add those to the list as desired.
- 3. Participation:** You are expected to take part in the discussion and contribute to this group. The pace of this group, however, may limit some participation. Let's briefly discuss one way that the group leader(s) can signal you when we need to wrap up discussion and move on.

**Note:** Ask the group participants what other rules they believe should be in place, and add them to the list if they are applicable and constructive rules that are agreed upon by most or all the group members. It may be helpful to write the group rules on the board, or to create a written list on a large sheet of paper that may be posted in the group room for easy reference. Be sure to communicate to participants the expectations you have for their behavior (for example, how you would like people to excuse themselves from the group if a break becomes necessary, how the group should handle conflicts among group members, etc.). Setting these specifics out ahead of time will help to avoid confusion when these situations inevitably occur.



## DISCUSSION PROMPT

What other rules does the group want to establish?



## ICE BREAKER AND INTRODUCTION

5-10 MINUTES

*If incorporating new participants into the group, write the Icebreaker questions outlined in Group 1 on the white board so members can refer to them. The facilitator should utilize one or both of the following Icebreaker questions in order to warm up the group and build rapport. The facilitator should feel free to share their own responses to these questions alongside the group members.*

- If you were an animal, what animal would you be, and why?
- What famous person or people (athlete, scientist, author, etc.) inspires you, and why?

### **Review Take-Home Impressions Form**

- During the past week, have you done anything differently because of what you learned in previous groups? If so, please describe what you did.
- Were you able to use your new strategies/skills in any way? Please describe your experience.



## EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND PACING OF THE GROUP

2-5 MINUTES

- Because we only have an hour and a half for each group meeting, it is important that we cover everything that is necessary.
- Today, I will guide you through talking about emotions and how traumatic brain injuries may affect your ability to manage your mood.
- We will also talk about different strategies you can use to manage your moods.

- Lastly, we will do an activity centered on recognizing emotions in others.
- I will ask you to track your own mood as a homework assignment.
- **Remember:** To get through all the material, I will be keeping us on point by giving reminders when that section's time is almost up. If we are off-topic, I will redirect you to the relevant topic. If you would like to continue to discuss the topic that I redirected you from, please let me know after group so that we can discuss it at greater length. If necessary, we'll use the signal we agreed upon earlier to wrap up discussions.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?
- **Remember:** The facilitator's rationale for choosing to conduct this session of this treatment group is that it is deemed suitable for the unique needs of participants in this group. To decide if this session is appropriate for your group members, as yourself: What evidence is there that these participants have issues with dysregulated moods?



## HOMWORK REVIEW

5-10 MINUTES

During the previous week, you were asked to develop at least one S.M.A.R.T. goal using the S.M.A.R.T. Goal Log and share it with a member of your support person. By sharing this goal with them, they will be able to assist you and hold you accountable for maintaining progress toward your specific goal.

- How did it go?
- What are some of the goals you shared?
- What were some challenges?
- Do you feel you were successful in meeting or working toward your goal?

**Note:** *If participants have not completed the previously assigned homework, please ask the following question:*

- *What led to your decision to not complete the assignment?*
- *What do you need to do for yourself this week to help you be able to complete the homework assignment?*

# WEEK 3

## CONTENT



### CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

5-10 MINUTES

Facilitator should hand out the “Brain Injury and Emotion Regulation” handout (found in the handouts section for this week).

- What signs of emotional dysregulation have you noticed in your life? When was the last time that you experienced this?
- Had this emotional dysregulation occurred prior to their TBI? Did the emotional dysregulation happen more frequently or more intensely after your TBI?
- Have family members, friends, staff, etc., told you that you exhibit signs of emotional dysregulation?



### THE COMMONALITY OF MOOD SWINGS/EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS IN INDIVIDUALS WITH TBI

5-10 MINUTES

*WRITE the following bolded words on the white board to facilitate ease of discussion with the participants. The following section provides information regarding these common areas of emotional dysregulation and coping strategies.*

- **Mood swings**, or rapid changes in one's emotional state, may occur because of your TBI. These mood swings are a common symptom of TBI. General moodiness is a part of everyone's life, but in some circumstances, changes in mood may be severe and have a negative effect on your health, relationships, and daily life.

- **Tracking moods** can help facilitate a greater understanding of shifts and changes in emotions. Keeping written track of and journaling about moods may help some individuals to notice patterns in mood shifts as well as potential triggers that might affect mood.
- **Exercise** produces endorphins, which are hormones that help control stress and improve mood. Even moderate exercise can help relieve frequent or abrupt changes in mood.
- **Maintaining a schedule** can be helpful. Doing things at the same time every day can help regulate emotional highs and lows.
- **Sleep** can help improve mood. Sleep deprivation, which can affect appetite and energy level, can also contribute to sadness, irritability, and general lowness of mood.
- **Nutrition** is a vital component of mood management. Getting enough nutrients and avoiding the consumption of large amounts of sugar, alcohol, and caffeine may help reduce the frequency of mood swings.
- **Therapy** is also an excellent alternative to self-medication.



## DISCUSSION PROMPT

Open discussion for participants on their thoughts on the above. Also, prompt for other approaches (healthy and unhealthy) participants have used to manage their moods. If medications are discussed, allow for discussion of pros and cons of medication management (side effects, usefulness of medications in some areas of mood stabilization, etc.). Let participants know that medication management may be a useful strategy, but that because medication for Traumatic Brain Injury symptoms requires a highly individualized approach, it should be discussed with their physician. It is important that a prescribing psychiatrist is familiar with the treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury symptoms with medication.

Discuss how participants can approach communicating the following information to loved ones in their lives:

- When we have trouble keeping our emotions in check, it may be difficult to understand and make sense of them.



- Sometimes people that have a TBI will have sudden and unpredictable mood swings, which can be hard to deal with.
- We are going to have a discussion on how to be better prepared when you start to experience this symptom.
  - How will you know when you feel your emotions are getting out of control? (Examples: racing heart rate, eyes tearing up, fists clenching, breathing heavily)
  - What can your loved one/support person do to help you when you notice your emotions becoming difficult to manage? (Examples: suggest that you remove yourself from the area to calm down, use a previously agreed-upon code word to let you know you are approaching dysregulation, escort you out of the situation, etc.)



## OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION AND OTHER SYMPTOMS OF TBI

5-10 MINUTES

*Utilizing a white board or large sheet of paper, write out some mood-related symptoms of TBI that can appear with emotional dysregulation.*

- Impulsivity, Aggression/Anger, Depression, Irritability, Indecisiveness
- What else do members come up with?
- How can emotional dysregulation affect others? Can you give specific examples of times in the past that their swinging moods have affected your loved ones?

*WRITE the group's suggestions/input down.*

## BREAK

5 MINUTES

*Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we will be doing stretches. Stretching helps to relieve tension in the muscles and can help alleviate stress.*

- *Begin different muscle stretches (e.g. arms, shoulders, head, neck). These stretches can be based on the personal preferences of the group facilitator. Group participants may also be encouraged to walk around the room or do brief contained cardio exercises such as jumping jacks to "shake out" any tension or pent-up energy they may be feeling.*

# WEEK 3

## GROUP ACTIVITY

### **RECOGNIZING EMOTIONS OF OTHERS** 10-15 MINUTES

Now that we have discussed how to recognize this change of emotions within ourselves, it is important to learn how to recognize it in others. We are going to do an activity where you will learn to recognize different emotions. Being able to better identify the responses of others to emotions will allow you to better be able to understand when you are beginning to behave in a manner that may not be beneficial to you or others.

Play videos, clips, or use vignettes for examples of different emotions. (Click on the emotions listed below to be routed to short movie clips demonstrating the following emotional states.)

- **Irritability:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dncx6O5J4U>
- **Panicked/Overwhelmed:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lW2JBJSaXUI>
- **Depression:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoRkv5zY\\_io](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoRkv5zY_io)
- **Anger/Impulsivity:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuosfJ8Ki7Y>
- **Indecisiveness:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVAMX8XFNZs&t=7s>

What did you notice in each of the enclosed videos?

# WEEK 3

## REFLECTION/ HOMEWORK



10 MINUTES

As we come to the end of group today, I would like us all to take a minute to reflect on the topics we have discussed today.

- What things helped you today? What things would you like to explore more?
- For a homework assignment, I would like you to keep an emotional journal.

*Provide participants with the Mood Log handout (found in handout section).*

- For homework this week, I would like you to use this Mood Log worksheet to help you note every time you notice your mood changing.

*Facilitator may want to write these instructions on the board, noting that instructions are also contained on the handout itself.*

- When you feel yourself going through a mood swing, write down on this worksheet what day and time it is, what you are feeling at that moment and what you are doing at the time of the mood change.

*Facilitator should pass out the "Take-Home Impressions" handout.*

- I would also like you to take with you this Take-Home Impressions Handout and complete it, asking your Support Person for help completing it if necessary. Please use it to help you reflect back on what you learned in group today and to help you identify any questions you might still have. Please bring this sheet back with you to the next meeting of this group.



### DISCUSSION PROMPT

Do you have any questions?

# WEEK 3

# HANDOUTS

BRAIN INJURY AND EMOTION REGULATION

MOOD LOG

TAKE HOME IMPRESSIONS

# BRAIN INJURY AND EMOTION REGULATION

A brain injury can change the way people feel and express emotions. A person with TBI can have several types of emotional difficulties. These include:

## **DIFFICULTY CONTROLLING EMOTIONS, SOMETIMES KNOWN AS “MOOD SWINGS.”**

Some people may experience emotions very quickly and intensely but with very little lasting effect. For example, they may get angry easily, but get over it quickly. Or, they may feel like they are “on an emotional roller coaster,” meaning that they are happy one moment, sad the next, and then angry, and so on. This is called “emotional lability.” “Lability” means undergoing continuous change.

## **WHAT CAUSES THIS PROBLEM?**

- Mood swings and emotional lability are often caused by damage to the part of the brain that controls emotions and behavior.
- Often, there is no specific event that triggers a sudden emotional response. This may be confusing for friends and family members who may think they accidentally did something that upset the injured person.
- In some cases, the brain injury can cause sudden episodes of crying or laughing. These emotional expressions or outbursts may not have any relationship to the way the person actually feels (in other words, they may cry without feeling sad, or laugh without feeling happy). In some cases the emotional expression may not match the situation (such as laughing at a sad story). Usually, the person cannot control these expressions of emotion.

# MOOD LOG

## INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of tracking your emotions as they change throughout the week is to help you gain some understanding of times that you are prone to feeling that way, and to help you gauge the intensity and frequency of your mood changes. This can help you to tailor your responses (such as when you will use the exercises and strategies learned in this group) to your own emotions in ways that will help you stay in control and navigate when the emotional waters get rough. If you feel comfortable doing so, you may want to share this log with your support person and/or treatment provider when it is completed to get their input and help them to understand your mood swings from your perspective.

For one week, use this mood log to help you track your mood swings. For each day, track what emotions you felt and how intensely you felt them. Do this by placing a letter in the box next to the number that indicates how intense the emotion was. For example, if it is Monday and you are feeling very mad, you would place an "M" in the box under Monday and next to one of the high numbers (8, 9, or 10, depending on just how mad you feel.) Use "D" for depressed, "A" for anxious, "M" for mad, "O" for other, or make up your own symbols for your own unique emotions.

|                        | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| <b>10</b><br>(extreme) |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>9</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>8</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>7</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>6</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>5</b><br>(moderate) |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>4</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>3</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>2</b>               |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |
| <b>1</b><br>(mild)     |        |         |           |          |        |          |        |

# TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

You are encouraged to fill out this handout after attending each meeting of this group. Doing this is optional, but it is designed to help you retain as much of what you learned in today's session as possible. In your own words, please answer the following prompts:

## 1. SOMETHING I LEARNED ABOUT TBI TODAY THAT I DID NOT KNOW BEFORE IS:

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## 2. SOMETHING I LEARNED TODAY THAT I WANT TO SHARE WITH SOMEONE IN MY LIFE IS:

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I will share this with: \_\_\_\_\_

because: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 3. I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

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## 4. ONE STRATEGY I LEARNED TODAY THAT I BELIEVE WILL HELP ME IS:

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## 5. THESE ARE THREE SITUATIONS WHERE I CAN SEE MYSELF USING THAT STRATEGY/SKILL:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_