

GRIEVING AND TBI RECOGNITION AND STRATEGIES

Without question, dealing with loss and change after brain injury can take a toll on survivors, family members, and their friends. Think about this question for a moment: How have you reacted to the life changes or losses?

Check off the items below that describe you:

- Feeling down, blue, or hopeless
- Having crying spells
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Wondering whether or not life is worth living
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Experiencing low energy, getting tired easily
- Eating a lot more or a lot less
- Keeping to yourself
- Not enjoying things like before
- Feeling restless, having difficulty sitting still
- Can't stop worrying about problems or the future
- Having difficulty making decisions, concentrating, or remembering things

Look over the items you've checked. The more items you check, the greater your distress and the more likely you need help. Talk with trusted family, friends, and professionals about the items you've checked.

Most people want to feel better and learn to cope with life changes, but don't know how. Here are a few strategies that have worked for other people. Check off which ones you think will work for you:

- Realize that your feelings are a common, normal response to a difficult situation.
- Be kind to yourself. Give yourself and others time to adjust.
- Think about the future you want and the best ways to get there.
- Appreciate the value of patience and persistence in reaching your goals.
- Take one step at a time, set goals for each day.
- Avoid thinking about and making comparisons to how things were.
- Recognize there is a natural human tendency to worry and focus on the negative.
- Learn to focus on your successes, strengths, and resources.
- Recognize the good things in your life and changes for the better.
- Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't.

- Be hopeful. Say positive things to yourself and others (e.g., “We will make it through this,” or “We’ve come so far.”)
- Make a list of things you are thankful for and qualities you like about yourself. Refer to the list often.
- Talk to and spend time with people who care about you.
- Join a support group. Talk to others for support.
- Build new relationships and improve old relationships.
- Remember that others face similar challenges. Ask others how they deal with losses and changes.
- Give up some old responsibilities when you take on new ones.
- Allow yourself to ask others for help and support.
- Remain active, try to do things you enjoy.
- Distract yourself with music, a book, a movie, television, or another activity you enjoy.
- Try to find new interests and activities.
- Give yourself breaks and try to be patient with yourself.
- Learn about treatments, resources, and recovery.

Remember, you must take care of yourself to effectively deal with the losses and changes you are facing. But, sometimes coping with losses and changes may be too difficult for one person to handle on his or her own. Research and experience have told us that depression is a common reaction to brain injury. If you have concerns or questions about how you are feeling, talk with a mental health professional or church about ways to get help.