

WEEK 1

CONTENT



CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF TBI

5-10 MINUTES

Ask participants to share their current understanding of the effect of their own TBI.

- What do you know about TBI in general?
- What has changed for you since you experienced your TBI?
- What symptoms do you know of that are associated with TBI?
- What symptoms have you experienced in yourself or noticed in others?



TBI SYMPTOM EDUCATION

10-15 MINUTES

Provide group with the TBI symptoms handout refer to during this psychoeducational section. Ask the following questions:

- What is TBI? What are its causes/effects?
- How is it different from bodily injury?
- How does TBI change your life?

1. TBIs, like any kind of illness or injury, have certain kinds of associated symptoms.

2. Many of these symptoms fall into one of four categories:

- Thinking/remembering
- Physical
- Emotional/mood
- Sleep

3. These symptoms could include





- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Balance problems
- Sleeping more than usual
- Irritability (explain if needed)
- Sensitivity to light

4. There are many cognitive issues that TBIs can cause as well.

- **Executive Functioning** refers to multi-tasking, making decisions, starting/stopping tasks and activities, and processing input from your environment. All these areas can be affected. *(Explain how these may be affected using the examples from the chart on page 13.)*
- **Issues staying focused** on certain tasks (problems with attention).
For example: forgetting to complete tasks you've started, such as putting in a load of laundry but becoming distracted and forgetting to move it to the dryer.
- **Difficulty controlling impulses** (reckless behaviors or difficulty "putting on the brakes"). *For example: When in an argument with someone, you find yourself unable to calm down, despite the urging of others and despite knowing you should walk away. Without thinking of the consequences, you may engage in behaviors you will later regret, such as physical violence or saying things in anger that you do not mean.*
- **Indecisiveness in situations.**
For example: When confronted with a seemingly easy decision, such as what to buy at the grocery store, you waffle back and forth and are unable to easily settle on one choice.
- **Poor long-term planning.** You may not be easily able to keep your eye on the future or be mindful of the long-term consequences of the choices you make today. *For example, you may impulsively decide to purchase something that is out of your price range because you really like or want it, without taking into consideration that you do not have the savings in place to pay for it without going into debt.*

- You may have **long-term and short-term memory issues** from loss of consciousness or being dazed. You may struggle to remember details of your injury, may struggle to remember the details of conversations and interactions with others, and may find it difficult to recall certain periods in your past.

Below is a chart outlining TBI symptoms. Use it as reference for the symptoms you will list on the board throughout the discussion.

<p>PHYSICAL</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Nausea • Vomiting • Balance problems • Dizziness • Vision problems • Fatigue • Sensitivity to light • Sensitivity to noise • Numbness/tingling in limbs • Feeling dazed or stunned
<p>COGNITIVE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling mentally “foggy” • Feeling slowed down • Difficulty concentrating • Difficulty remembering • Forgetting recent conversations or information • Confused about recent events • Answers questions slowly • Repeats questions
<p>EMOTIONAL</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability • Sadness • More emotional • Nervous
<p>SLEEP</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowsiness • Sleeping less than usual • Sleeping more than usual • Trouble falling asleep



DISCUSSION PROMPT

These symptoms are very common in other medical or psychological issues.

In what way can they sometimes look like other things? (If not mentioned, bring up other issues that might have overlapping symptoms: alcohol and drug abuse, dementia, bipolar disorder, etc.).

Does having a TBI change who we are?

Does it define us?

Facilitators should think of examples to share (especially if the group is struggling with these questions), and may say something like: “Just as with any lifetime condition, having a TBI does influence some parts of how a person can interact with the world and function day to day. However, it is important to remember that a person is much more than their injury or illness. For example, you wouldn’t define someone with diabetes only as a diabetic and not as a person, because you would realize that there is much more to what makes them who they are. While it may be true that you are living with the effects of TBI, what is more important is that you are LIVING! You are constructing a complex life full of interesting experiences and people. Your TBI cannot and will not define you, as long as you continue to define yourself.

BREAK

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we are going to practice a stress management technique (“4-7-8 Breath Relaxation Exercise” Handout, located in the Week 1 Handout section) that you can use when you are feeling angry or stressed; it is called guided breathing. Facilitator should read handout aloud.



SYMPTOM RECOGNITION

10 MINUTES

We are going to spend some time discussing how to recognize symptoms of TBI. To recognize the symptoms, you must be aware that they are present.

- How do we tell the difference between symptoms and other internal stimuli (example: psychosis)? Many of the symptoms of a TBI, such as intense changes in mood, feeling disoriented or confused, and difficulty resisting impulses, are similar to the symptoms experienced in other mental health conditions.
- How do we explain our symptoms to ourselves and others?
For example, you might explain TBI to a loved one by saying something like:

“Due to an injury to my brain, I sometimes have trouble remembering things and staying on track. As a result, I may need reminders and it may take me longer to read something, or to complete tasks, than it used to. What I need from you to help me is to_____.

(participants can fill in the blank)

I ask you to be patient with me as I learn how to function with these changes in my brain.”

Many symptoms of TBI have triggers. Facilitator should pass out “Dealing with Triggers” handout to group members, and read through the handout so that all group members are able to follow along.