

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.*