

WEEK 1

UNDERSTANDING CONCUSSION, TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AND SYMPTOM RECOGNITION

*Make sure you take time to acquaint yourself with this curriculum so you can be as engaged, energetic, and confident as possible when working with the kids!

GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

To introduce members to the group and facilitate a conversation about their current understanding of concussion and its related symptoms. In this meeting, you will:

- Designate group rules and explain the purpose of curriculum.
- Facilitate psychoeducation on concussion symptoms and symptoms recognition.
- Begin a conversation on utilizing memory aids, getting into good memory habits, and learning skills.
- Identify skills for coping with symptoms and the situations that trigger them.

TIME:

The entire session should last for approximately 60-90 minutes.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

A minimum of four participants is suggested.

WEEK 1

PREPARATION

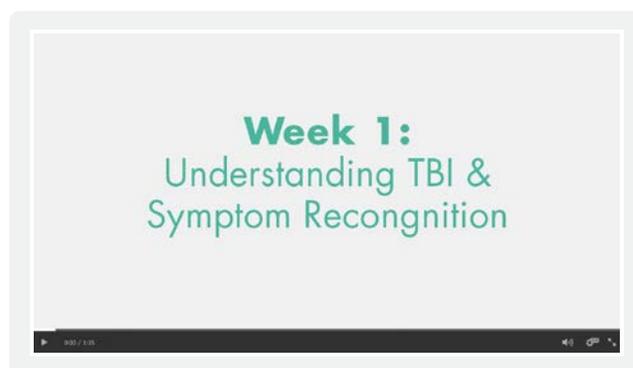
At the start of group take time to greet the participants, thank them for coming, ask them their names and share yours as well. Acknowledge this may not be the most fun way to spend their time, but these skills can be useful to them in the future. Overall, meet the participants where they are emotionally and developmentally to help establish a fun and engaging environment.



VIDEO

Watch the following video:

https://youtu.be/r_PfzyKW6Wo



HANDOUTS AND MATERIALS

- Take Home Impressions form
- Brain Injury Symptoms
- 4-7-8 Breath Relaxation Exercise
- Dealing with Triggers handout
- Symptom Recognition Log
- Candy/Food/Incentive for Group Activity

**All handouts/forms will need to be provided. Provide enough copies of handouts/forms for all participants and facilitators. Extra copies can be provided as needed for parents, teachers, probation officers, therapists, etc. Also, be sure to provide enough food/candy for all participants.*



WRITE

Write the following module outline on the white board:

- Structure, icebreaker, and topic
- Current understanding of concussion
- Concussion symptom education
- Break
- Symptom recognition
- Group activity
- Reflection

This curriculum uses the word 'concussion' but some people will better recognize or respond to 'brain injury.' Plan to adjust terminology as necessary.

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES



ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

2-5 MINUTES

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

1. Confidentiality
2. Respect
3. Participation

I am going to go over the rules for this group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, please ask, and I can help to explain what that rule means.

There are 3 main rules:

The first is:

- 1. Confidentiality:** This means that what we discuss today stays in this room and is not shared with others.

That brings us to our second rule:

- 2. Respect:** Please be kind to one another, by...
 - Listening when someone else is speaking,
 - Not talking over each other,
 - And encouraging one another

The last rule is:

- 3. Participation:** We ask that you take part in the discussion. Your ideas are important to the group. At times, I may need to cut discussion short. I will tell the group when discussion time is over.

Note: As a reminder, rules only need to be reviewed in depth if there are new members who have not participated in previous weeks. Rules are discussed at the start of each group and only a brief reminder should be utilized for groups with no new members.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

What other rules does the group want to establish?

Some participants may take these modules out of sequence. Review homework from previous group if applicable.



ICE BREAKER AND INTRODUCTION

10 MINUTES

WRITE the following self-introduction questions on the white board. You may want to do this before the group starts.

- What is one thing you love to do?
- Tell us about a time when you felt proud of yourself.
- What is one thing you want to get out of this group?

Have group members write their answers on a sheet of paper. Once they are finished, advise group members to crumple their paper and throw it into the middle of the room. Each member will then pick up a random paper from the middle and read the answers. Allow all group members to share, then facilitate a brief discussion.

- What surprised you?
- In what ways are we alike? Different?
- What questions do you have for other members of the group?
- Has anyone attended a concussion workshop before?



EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND PACING OF THE GROUP

2-5 MINUTES

- Because we only have 60-90 minutes for each group meeting, it is important that we cover everything that is necessary.
- I will provide a brief overview of what each group will be about, and then I will guide you through several topics about Concussions (such as symptoms, symptom recognition, triggers, effective habits, stress management, etc.).
- 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.

WEEK 1

CONTENT



CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF TBI

5 MINUTES

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

- All of you were asked questions about incidents in your past that may have involved a concussion or injury to your brain. Based on the questions you answered in the questionnaire called the OSU-TBI, all of you have experienced an injury to the brain or concussion that may be impacting you today.
- How many of you have heard of a concussion?
- What do you know about concussions in general?
- How many of you know that a concussion is, in fact, a traumatic brain injury or TBI?
- A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury or mild TBI. A traumatic brain injury is caused by a force to your body or head that changes how clearly you can think or how you feel physically. For example, after a concussion or TBI you may experience a headache, dizziness, or feel off balance. You may also have trouble remembering what happened or feel foggy. A traumatic brain injury or TBI can be diagnosed as either mild, moderate or severe by a doctor. After one concussion or mild TBI, you may have noticed some changes in how you think, act or feel and those may have gone away. If you have a few concussions, you may notice that some of those changes stick around longer and many continue to bother you today. You do not need to lose consciousness to have a concussion.
- If you have an injury to the brain that brought you to a hospital for a night or several days, say, after a car accident, bike accident, or fight, you may have had a more moderate or severe brain injury. The changes you or others notice likely have stayed around longer and continue to bother you today.

- As we move forward, whether you had a concussion or several concussions, a moderate or severe traumatic brain injury, I am going to use the words traumatic brain injury or TBI. Does anyone have any questions about why I am doing that?
- What has changed since you experienced your TBI?

**** It is important to use the term traumatic brain injury or TBI when describing a concussion with lasting symptoms or a moderate to severe TBI because it helps community providers and medical professionals understand how to support and the services to provide.****



SYMPTOM QUESTIONNAIRE

15 MINUTES

Provide participants with Symptom Questionnaire handout. Read the directions and each question. Allow participants enough to complete the questions before moving on to the next. Make sure all participants complete the Symptom Questionnaire before moving on.



TBI SYMPTOM EDUCATION

15 MINUTES

Have participants reference the completed Symptom Questionnaire for the following section.

TBI, like any injury, have certain kinds of associated symptoms.

1. Most commonly, you see headaches and dizziness with concussions or mild TBI; however, many other symptoms can emerge with mild, moderate or severe TBI
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
- Sleeping more than usual
- Sensitivity to light
- Balance problems
- Irritability (explain if needed)

4. Cognitive complaints can result from a TBI. 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. Here are some examples.

- **Difficulty staying focused on certain tasks (limited attention).** For example, forgetting to complete tasks you've started, such as beginning to take notes in class but becoming distracted and doodling instead.
- **Difficulty controlling impulses (reckless behaviors or unable to "put 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 t-shirt to put on in the morning, you waver back and forth and are unable to easily settle on one choice.
- **Difficulty with long-term planning.** You may not be 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 skip class to spend time with friends, without taking into consideration that you missed a big test that day.
- **You may have long-term or short-term memory issues from loss of consciousness or being dazed.** You may struggle to remember details of your injury, the details of conversations and interactions with others, and certain periods from your past or material from class. It is important to remember that not everyone who gets a concussion will experience long-term memory impacts.

5. Substance use, while not a symptom of a TBI, can increase your likelihood of getting a concussion or moderate to severe TBI, and delay your recovery as well.

Substance use is mentioned due to the high correlation between substance use and TBI in adolescents.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

Some of these symptoms can look like “typical” behavior for someone your age. It is important to be patient and forgiving with yourself and your symptoms. Recognize that you are living with the effects of a TBI while also trying to develop into adulthood. Be kind to yourself as you navigate both worlds.

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

10 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a ten-minute break. During this break, we are going to practice a stress management technique (4-7-8 Breath Relaxation Exercise) that you can use when you are feeling angry or stressed; it is called guided breathing. After the exercise, take the remaining time to use the bathroom and ask questions if you need to.



4-7-8 BREATH RELAXATION EXERCISE

2-3 MINUTES

Provide participants with the 4-7-8 Breath Relaxation Exercise. This breathing exercise should take 2-3 minutes. The remaining time is to be used for bathroom breaks and questions.

- Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth, holding count with the facilitator.
- Inhale for four counts, hold your breath for seven counts, and exhale for eight counts.
- Repeat 4 times.



SYMPTOM RECOGNITION

10 MINUTES

We are going to spend some time discussing how to recognize the symptoms of TBI.

- How do we tell the difference between TBI symptoms and other bodily experiences, such as hunger or exhaustion?
- How do we explain our symptoms to others? For example, you might explain a TBI to a friend, parent, or teacher by saying something like what you see on the board. How would you fill in the blank? You can write this down to help you communicate with the people in your life.

Provide participants with the Dealing with Triggers handout and read through it. Encourage participants to share that information with their parents, therapists, etc. as needed.

Many symptoms of TBI can be triggered or exaggerated by your emotions or the environment. You can feel triggered by internal stimuli (emotions, thoughts) or external stimuli (smells, sights, events). Something that triggers you will cause you to experience an unpleasant and often strong emotional response.

WRITE the following on the whiteboard for next activity: *Due to an injury to my brain, I sometimes have trouble remembering things and staying on track. As a result, it may take me longer to read something, or to complete tasks than it used to. I need you to help me with: _____. Be patient with me as I learn how to function with these changes in my brain.*

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 |

WEEK 1

GROUP ACTIVITY

DISCUSSION OF SYMPTOMS

15 MINUTES

Candy/food/incentive will be utilized during this activity. ASK participants if they have any food allergies prior handing out candy or food.

Five questions will be presented to you. Up to two people will be given the opportunity to share per question. These questions will be about your own experiences. Please raise your hand when you want to share, and you will be given candy for your participation.

1. Have you ever felt triggered? If so, why?
2. Can you describe a time when you had to explain symptoms of your TBI to a friend, family member, teacher, etc.? What was this like for you? How did they respond?
3. How can you advocate for yourself in school? What could you tell your teachers if you are experiencing symptoms in class?
4. What is one of your strengths?
5. How can you use your strengths when you are coping with concussion symptoms?
Use examples if necessary (i.e., "One of my strengths is that I am a good writer, so I might write in a journal when I feel triggered.")

WEEK 1

REFLECTION/ HOMEWORK



15 MINUTES

As we come to the end of our group, let's take some time to reflect on what we did today. You should practice what you have learned before the next session.

Provide participants with the Take-Home Impressions form and have them complete it (allow 5 minutes for completion of form). This form is for participants to fill out here but to utilize at home.

The following discussion questions will cover the material on the handout.

- Can you identify internal or external stimuli that make your symptoms better or worse (stress, noise levels, etc.)?
- How will you practice what we learned today in your own life this week?
- Think of a support person (friend, parent, behavioral health specialist, etc.) that could help you recognize your symptoms. Why did you choose that person?
- What was the most useful content in this workshop? The least useful?

Over the following weeks, we will be exploring more strategies to manage your TBI symptoms and stressors that may trigger them.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

Do you have any questions?

WEEK 1

HANDOUTS

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

BRAIN INJURY SYMPTOMS

4 -7- 8 BREATH RELAXATION EXERCISE

DEALING WITH TRIGGERS

SYMPTOM RECOGNITION LOG

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:

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

I will share this with: _____

because: _____

3. I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

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

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

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

BRAIN INJURY SYMPTOMS

BRAIN INJURIES CAN RANGE IN SCOPE FROM MILD TO SEVERE. THE IMPACT OF BRAIN INJURY CAN INCLUDE:



PHYSICAL

- Headache
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Numbness/Tingling
- Feeling dazed/stunned
- Balance Problems
- Dizziness
- Difficulties with interpretation of touch, temperature, movement, limb position and fine discrimination
- Trouble with integration or patterning of sensory impressions into psychologically meaningful data
- Partial or total loss of vision
- Diplopia: weakness of eye muscles and double vision
- blurred vision
- Problems judging distance
- Nystagmus: involuntary eye movements
- Photophobia: intolerance of light
- Decrease or loss of hearing
- Tinnitus: ringing in the ears
- Increased sensitivity to sounds
- Anosmia: loss or diminished sense of smell
- Loss or diminished sense of taste
- Convulsions associated with epilepsy that can be several types and can involve disruption in consciousness, sensory perception, or motor movements
- Spasticity: physical paralysis
- Chronic pain
- Control of bowel and bladder
- Menstrual difficulties
- Regulation of body temperature
- Loss of stamina
- Appetite changes



COGNITIVE

- Feeling mentally “foggy”
- Feeling slowed down
- Difficulty with concentrating and/or memory
- Forgetting recent information and/or conversations
- Confusion
- Repeating questions
- Difficulty with attention, distractibility, speed of processing
- Difficulty with perseveration, impulsiveness, language processing
- Struggling with “executive functions”
- Receptive aphasia: not understanding the spoken word
- Expressive aphasia: difficulty speaking and being understood
- Slurred speech or speaking very fast/very slow
- Difficulty with reading and/or writing



EMOTIONAL

- Irritability
- Sadness/Depression
- Nervousness
- Aggression
- Disinhibition
- Dependent behaviors/lack of motivation
- Denial/lack of awareness
- Struggling with emotional ability or being more emotional



SLEEP

- Drowsiness
- Trouble falling asleep
- Sleeping less than usual or more than usual

4-7-8 BREATH RELAXATION EXERCISE

Place yourself into a comfortable but upright seated position, with your back straight. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a “whoosh” sound.

- 1 Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- 2 Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- 3 Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- 4 This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

FAQ:

Are the numbers important?

The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

Why should I do it?

This exercise is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. Unlike tranquilizing drugs, which are often effective when you first take them but then lose their power over time, this exercise is subtle when you first try it but gains in power with repetition and practice. Use this new skill whenever anything upsetting happens - before you react. Use it whenever you are aware of internal tension. Use it to help you fall asleep.

How often?

Do it at least twice a day. You cannot do it too frequently. Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice. Later, if you wish, you can extend it to eight breaths. If you feel a little lightheaded when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned - it will pass.

DEALING WITH TRIGGERS

A **trigger** is something that sets off a reaction in you. Triggers can be internal (something that comes from a thought or emotion you create) and/or external (something in the outside world that causes you to react to it.)

INTERNAL TRIGGER REACTIONS INCLUDE:

- Feelings of anger, anxiety, or sadness
- Memories
- Loneliness
- Frustration
- Feeling out of control
- Feeling vulnerable
- Racing heartbeat
- Physical pain
- Negative self-talk

EXTERNAL TRIGGERS INCLUDE:

- Seeing something on the news or online that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Watching a movie or television show that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Certain smells
- The anniversary of a significant or traumatic event
- Holidays
- Visiting a specific place
- Seeing a person who reminds you of someone connected to your traumatic event

EVALUATE YOUR TRIGGERS

It is okay to sometimes avoid external triggers (as long as this avoidance doesn't negatively interfere with your day-to-day quality of life), but it is wise to continually evaluate your triggers and to practice good coping strategies. The physical and emotional symptoms of trauma can take some time to diminish in intensity. Continued coping strategy practice is essential. If you are struggling with symptoms of trauma, it is a wise idea to seek professional help from a counselor trained in helping clients process traumatic events. While it can be scary to ask for help, getting help in coping with your triggers will ultimately lead to a longer, healthier, happier life for you and yours.

When you find yourself faced with a trigger, do your best to ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of situation are you in? Are you safe?
- What is happening around you?
- What kind of emotions are you feeling?
- What thoughts are you having?
- What does your body feel like?

The following is a list of methods and practices for coping with the experience of triggers. More information on each of these methods can be found either within this curriculum or with a simple Internet search, and can be practiced on your own in privacy.

- ✓ **Mindfulness**
- ✓ **Safe place imagery/Guided visualization**
- ✓ **Grounding techniques**
- ✓ **Journaling**
- ✓ **Social Support**
- ✓ **Deep Breathing**
- ✓ **Coping Affirmations**
- ✓ **Relaxation/Self-soothing exercises**
- ✓ **Connect to your body**
- ✓ **Connect to others**
- ✓ **Regulate (exercise, focus on breathing, grounding)**

SYMPTOM RECOGNITION LOG

A helpful strategy is to create your own Daily Symptom Recognition Log. Each day, you should fill out the symptom log. Tracking the times and ways that you experience your symptoms will help you to better understand them, and that understanding can lead to better symptom management. Taking note of how you felt when you went through each symptom will help you to make a plan for how you are going to react next time you experience this.

Bring this log with you to the next meeting of our group!

Answer the following questions:

1. WHAT SYMPTOMS DID I EXPERIENCE TODAY?

(list the name of the symptom if you know what it is called, describe the symptom if you don't know what to call it)

2. I EXPERIENCED THESE SYMPTOMS WHEN I WAS

(list where you were/what you were doing)

3. I HAVE FELT THIS SYMPTOM BEFORE WHEN I WAS...

4. MY REACTION TO FEELING THIS SYMPTOM WAS...

5. THE WAY I REACTED MADE ME FEEL...

6. NEXT TIME WHEN I EXPERIENCE THIS SYMPTOM, I WANT TO...
