

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