

When someone experiences a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or concussion, other people in the person's family and support system are often affected, too. There can be changes to:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Social networks
- Financial security
- Relationship dynamics, including challenges and changes to communication
- Your loved one's physical, cognitive, and psychological functioning

These changes can have a significant emotional impact. Everyone needs time to adapt and adjust to that which is unfamiliar. The degree of impact varies based on the severity of the injury and the recovery timeline. With less severe injuries, such as mTBI and concussion, there might not be significant or long-term changes, as loved ones can recover within several months. Here are some tools to help both you loved one and yourself adjust, regardless of the severity or duration of change experienced.

How you can help your loved one heal after a mild TBI or concussion:

- Participate in your loved one's recovery by working with their healthcare providers to identify your role within their treatment plan.
- Attend family/support person education sessions to increase your knowledge about mTBI or concussion and increase your understanding of your loved one's symptoms. Ask questions when information is unclear, or you want to know more about something.
- Be patient, supportive, and understanding as your loved one adjusts to effects of their injury. Create a positive environment to minimize frustration and provide positive reinforcement for any gains made in treatment.
- Encourage independence while providing support as needed for safety or trying new things. Try not to jump in to help too quickly or frequently.
- Encourage your loved one to use thinking strategies and take breaks as needed.
- When providing instructions or new information, be specific and include only necessary details.
- Include and seek your loved one's input. Ask things like "What works best for you when you are in this situation?" Provide them the opportunity to regain some control in decision making.
- Encourage a consistent and structured routine.
- Help create a low-stimulation environment by reducing noise, light, and visual distractions when your loved one is feeling symptomatic.

How you can help yourself:

- When caring for others, people tend to put personal needs on the backburner. This can decrease overall well-being and lead to sleep problems, poor eating habits, limited exercise, and less participation in enjoyable activities. It is important for family members and other people in a person's support system to take care of themselves. When we first help ourselves, we can better help others.



Here are some recommended tools to reduce personal stress and improve overall well-being:

- Make an effort to get proper rest and nutrition.
- Attend to your own healthcare needs.
- Make time for leisure and/or pleasurable activities.
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Exercise regularly. Whether it be going for a quick walk, gardening, or a bike ride. Something is better than nothing. Walking 20 minutes a day, three times a week, can help.
- Learn and use stress-reduction techniques, such as yoga or meditation.
- Take a break from caregiving for personal time.
- Seek and accept the support of others.
- Seek out support groups or talk to a trust counselor, friend, or pastor.

Additional Comments:

