

# FACT SHEET

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## Emotional and Behavioural Changes After Brain Injury Social Communication

### QUICK FACTS

- Social communication is necessary to have successful roles and relationships
- Social communication requires an individual to change how they communicate in different environments (e.g. at home, at work) and with different individuals (e.g. partner, employer)
- This can be very challenging for an individual with a brain injury
- Poor social communication may make it difficult for a person with a brain injury to participate in their community

### WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

- **Social dysfunction:**
  - Misinterpretation of social cues
  - Lack of consideration for another person's feelings
  - Inappropriate sexual aggression
  - Irritation, distress, frustration
  - Limited or faulty interpretation of another person's actions or words
- **Poor social communication**
  - Disorganized communication, gives too little or too much information
  - Rambles on and repeats themselves
  - Unable to read other people's emotions or body language
  - Reduced eye contact, limited facial expression
  - Difficulty starting a conversation, lack of turn-taking in conversation
  - Lack of awareness or sensitivity to the person they are talking with
  - Difficulty understanding personal space
  - Excessive swearing, quick to express anger or yell
  - Inappropriate sexual comments or jokes

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

#### Possible causes:

- Memory difficulties can lead to:
  - Repeating oneself during conversations
  - Losing track of the topic of conversation
  - Mixing up messages or instructions
- Cognitive difficulties, including:
  - Attention and concentration problems
  - Inability to resist distractions during conversation
  - Difficulty keeping track of what people are saying
  - Difficulty staying on topic
- Executive function difficulties can lead to:
  - Difficulty starting conversations
  - Interrupting others
  - Poorly organized speech
  - Excessive talking
- Lack of social understanding can lead to:
  - Difficulty understanding sarcasm or humour
  - Poor understanding of feedback from communication partners
  - Difficulty seeing things from a different perspective

*Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical doctor. Consult a health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.*

# FACT SHEET CONTINUED.

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### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

#### **Possible complications:**

- It may lead to the individual being unsuccessful in their roles and relationships in daily life, resulting in the breakdown of relationships and friendships
- Social isolation may occur as a result of difficulty:
  - Securing and maintaining friendships
  - Finding and maintaining employment
  - Participating in leisure activities

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Speak clearly and in concise terms to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation
- Assist the individual to understand words and social cues
- Prepare the individual for community participation by focusing on appropriate social behaviour
- Create social opportunities that are predictable to practice social communication and interactions
- Direct the individual to ask basic questions to start conversations (e.g. “how are you?” or “what have you been doing?”)
- Use positive reinforcement anytime the individual expresses an interest in another person’s feelings
- Provide the individual with clear, concise and frequent feedback on how their behaviour is affecting you (e.g., “your yelling makes it hard for me to help you because I can’t understand you.”)
- Anticipate potential social criticisms and have the individual rehearse appropriate responses

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