



Impact of brain injury on daily function

October 9, 2023

Barriers to task completion



Individuals with brain injuries, depending on the severity and type of injury, can face unique challenges that impact their ability to complete tasks effectively. These challenges can vary widely, but here are some common barriers that brain-injured individuals might encounter when trying to complete tasks:

- **Cognitive Impairments:** Brain injuries can lead to difficulties in thinking, memory, attention, and problem-solving. These impairments can make it hard to plan, initiate, and execute tasks.
- **Executive Function Deficits:** Brain injury can affect executive functions, which are responsible for tasks like organizing, prioritizing, and managing time. Individuals might struggle to break tasks into manageable steps or plan their day effectively.
- **Fatigue and Energy Levels:** Many individuals with brain injuries experience fatigue more quickly than before their injury. This reduced energy can limit their ability to sustain focus and complete tasks over longer periods.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Sensory sensitivities, such as sensitivity to light, noise, or touch, can be heightened after a brain injury. These sensitivities can disrupt concentration and make it challenging to work in certain environments.
- **Communication Difficulties:** Brain injuries can impact communication skills, including speaking, understanding language, reading, and writing. These difficulties can hinder effective communication with colleagues and superiors, leading to misunderstandings.
- **Emotional and Behavioral Challenges:** Brain injury can lead to mood swings, irritability, anxiety, and other emotional challenges. These emotional states can interfere with concentration and task completion.



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- **Reduced Processing Speed:** Brain injuries might slow down information processing, making it harder to respond quickly to stimuli or complete tasks that require rapid decision-making.
- **Reduced Flexibility and Adaptability:** Adapting to changes or unexpected situations can be difficult for individuals with brain injuries, leading to difficulties when tasks deviate from the original plan.
- **Lack of Self-Awareness:** Some brain-injured individuals might struggle with recognizing their own limitations or overestimating their abilities. This can lead to taking on tasks that are too challenging to complete successfully.
- **Motor Impairments:** Physical coordination and motor skills can be impacted by brain injuries, affecting tasks that involve manual dexterity, fine motor control, or mobility.
- **Medication Side Effects:** Medications commonly prescribed after a brain injury might have side effects that impact focus, attention, or energy levels.
- **Support and Accommodations:** Lack of appropriate support, accommodations, or understanding from colleagues and employers can create barriers to task completion.
- **Disrupted Routine:** For individuals with brain injuries, maintaining routines and consistency can be important. Changes to routines can disrupt their ability to plan and complete tasks.

Overcoming obstacles to optimize function

Addressing these barriers requires a supportive and understanding environment. Employers and colleagues can play a crucial role by providing accommodations, clear communication, flexible work arrangements, and realistic expectations. Brain-injured individuals can benefit from breaking tasks into smaller steps, using reminders and technology aids, seeking therapy or rehabilitation, and practicing patience as they adapt to their new capabilities.

