

Welcome to the
Military Families Learning Network Webinar
A Family Members Guide to Coping with TBI

A few days after the presentation, we will send an evaluation and links to an archive and resources.

We appreciate your feedback. To receive these emails, please enter your email address in the chat box before we start the recording.

All chat will be recorded and archived.

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This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Family Policy, Children and Youth, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Numbers 2010-48869-20685 and 2012-48755-20306.

Welcome to the
Military Families Learning Network

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To receive notifications of future webinars and other learning opportunities from the Military Families Learning Network, sign up for the Military Families Learning Network Email Mailing list at: <http://bit.ly/MFLNlist>

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Military Families Learning Network
Military Caregiving

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Additional Resources Available
<https://learn.extension.org/events/1466>



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CEU Process

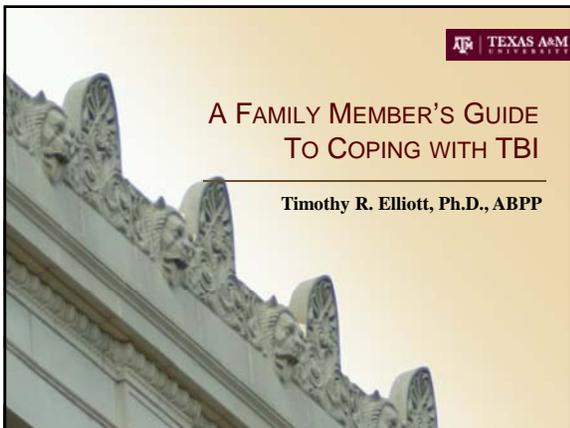
The Military Caregiving Concentration team has applied for 1.00 CE credit from NASW.

For more information on CE credit contact woundedwarrior@ag.tamu.edu

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Timothy Elliott, Ph.D. ABPP



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- Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University
- Research has examined adjustment processes among persons living with chronic and disabling health conditions
- Appointed to the Defense Health Board's Neurological/Behavioral Health subcommittee



Traumatic Brain Injury

the Signature Wound of OIF/OEF/OND



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- A large number of returning war Veterans incurred a brain injury in the line of duty
- Innovative treatment strategies are required to assist these individuals and their families over the lifespan
- Although family caregivers are to receive education about TBI as early as possible, many families find they need additional and ongoing support

Traumatic Brain Injury

the Signature Wound of OIF/OEF/OND



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- In this presentation we will review many issues family members face living with TBI
- I will present several recommended strategies to help families that have a Veteran or active duty member living with TBI
- Some of this information is available at websites for military personnel and their families and at DoD and VA websites, and other sites sponsored by others active in TBI rehabilitation

What is a TBI?

We Need to Know the Basics



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- A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a direct blow or jolt to the head, penetrating head injury, or exposure to external forces such as blast waves that disrupts the function of the brain.
- Commonly results in a change in neuronal activity, which effects the physical integrity, the metabolic activity, or the functional ability of the individual
- Not all blows to the head or exposure to external forces results in a TBI.
- *TBI can cause a wide range of problems, including short or long-term changes in thinking, sensation, language, or emotions.*

The Informed, Prepared Family Member



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Excellent materials and resources for families of military personnel and Veterans:

<http://www.extension.org/pages/68059>

Site includes information on

- BrainLine Military
- Brain Injury Association of America (BIAUSA)
- Defense & Veterans Brain Injury Center

...and so much more.

THINKING AND COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS:

Memory or remembering
Paying attention or focusing
Problem solving
Organizing
Goal setting and planning
Reading and/or writing
Awareness of self, safety, or current abilities
Reasoning
Self-monitoring
Word finding
Understanding what is said to them
Expressing themselves with words

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PHYSICAL PROBLEMS:

Sleep disturbances

Headaches

Walking

Dizziness

Poor hand-eye coordination

Vision and/or hearing

Swallowing

BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS:

Depression

Change in personality

Increased aggressive behavior

Lack of humor

Abnormal sexual behavior

Lack of socialization

Differences in TBIs

- The severity of TBI may range from "mild"— a brief change in mental status or consciousness — to "severe," an extended period of unconsciousness or confusion after the injury
- Mild TBIs (mTBIs) are often described as concussions
- Most TBIs incurred by our military personnel are mild
- Blasts account for the majority of TBIs
- Most military personnel are exposed to many blasts, increasing the likelihood of multiple concussions/mTBIs over time

Causes of TBI Among Military & War Zone Personnel

In 2008, the Department of Defense (DoD) reported that:

- Seven out of 10 TBI injuries were due to a blast
- More than 1 in 10 were due to a fall
- More than 1 in 20 were due to a vehicular incident
- One in 20 were due to fragments
- The rest were due to other causes.

The Army reported that 88 percent of TBIs among soldiers were mild. Six percent were moderate and another six percent were severe.



Understanding Mild TBI

- Often described as concussion or as a post-concussive syndrome (PCS)
- It is associated with a variety of symptoms that will manifest immediately following the event, and may resolve quickly, within minutes to hours after the injury event, or they may persist longer.
<http://www.traumaticbraininjuryatoz.org/Interactive-Brain>

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Injury	6 months	1 Year	2 Years	>2 Years
	very fast improvements	slower improvement but still many changes	much slower improvement	improvement levels off; changes in support systems and use of strategies can result in change

Strategies Must Be Tailored to Meet the Needs of the Individual



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- Brain injury can lead to different problems, depending on the parts of the brain that are damaged.
- Adjustment is also influenced by the individual characteristics, resources, and supports
- The following strategies are examples that have been recommended for specific issues

...from "Picking Up the Pieces" by Sander

How You Interact is Important



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- Treat the person as an adult don't talk down to them
- Include them in family activities and conversations
- Avoid making them feel guilty for mistakes
- Use a calm, soft but clear voice when speaking to them

Movement Problems



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- Moves much more slowly
- Difficulty picking up objects and moving them around
- Weakness on one side of the body (or weakness in arms or legs)
- Seems more clumsy, uncoordinated, or unsteady, loses balance

Possible Solutions for Movement Problems



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- Accept that your family member will take longer to walk and to move around. Allow extra time
- Ask for a referral to a physical therapist
- Inquire about assistive equipment
- Place things within easy reach
- Keep clutter out of hallways and walk ways
- Remove small rugs that may cause falls

Visual Problems, Visual-Spatial Problems



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- Double or blurred vision
- Trouble seeing things in some parts of space

Possible Solutions for Visual Problems



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- Ask to see to an ophthalmologist
- Arrange things in the house to make it easier on them. For example, if they are eating, put all the things they need on their good side.

Problems with Fatigue, Tiredness



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- Always complains of feeling tired
- Sleeps longer than usual at night, or sleeps a lot of the day
- Can only do a little activity at a time. For example, must sleep several hours after a trip to the grocery store

Possible Solutions for Fatigue



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- Feeling tired is normal after injury
- Allow extra time for rest between activities
- Schedule shorter activities at first, and gradually increase activity little by little
- If your family member has trouble sleeping at night, talk to your doctor about medications
- Schedule important appointments and activities for times of day when your family member is most alert

Memory Problems



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- Forgetting appointments
- Forgetting peoples' names
- Need to have things repeated many times
- Forgetting things very quickly
- Frequently losing or misplacing things
- Forgetting to take medications (or taking them again)
- Repeating questions or the same story over and over again

Possible Solutions for Memory Problems



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- Help your family member make a memory book. Possible sections include: a calendar; daily lists of things to do; and an address book with important phone numbers and addresses
- Make sure that the notebook is part of your family members' daily routine. In order for the book to help them, they need to carry it with them everywhere and use it often.

Routines are important

Possible Solutions for Memory Problems



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- Allow extra time for your family member to learn new things
- Repeat things that you want them to remember more than once
- Write all important information down for them.
- Keep household items in specific places. For example, have a hook for keys or a special drawer for medical papers. Label drawers with the contents and write locations
- Write important information in the memory book
- Use a pill box for medications

Attention Problems



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- Trouble keeping their mind on one thing
- Easily distracted by noises
- Trouble concentrating on reading
- Difficulty doing more than one thing at a time
- Difficulty "switching gears" or changing focus from one thing to another

Possible Solutions for Attention Problems



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- Make sure your home is free of clutter. Keep things organized. Try to keep things in the same place
- Make sure that everything is put away except the things they are working with
- When telling your family member something you want them to pay attention to, turn off the T.V., radio. Minimize distractions
- Encourage work on only one thing at a time
- Encourage them to take notes when reading something
- Use gentle reminders and "redirects"

Problems with Communicating



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- Difficulty finding the right words
- Getting off topic when telling a story or answering a question
- Trouble understanding what others say to them
- Difficulty keeping up with a conversation

Possible Solutions with Communicating



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- Allow more time for your family member to answer you
- Encourage them to speak slowly and not be nervous
- Encourage them to use gestures or signals
- Develop a signal that will let your family member know when they have gotten off topic (hold up a finger). Use gentle prompts like "We were talking about..."

Possible Solutions with Communicating



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- When talking to your family member, ask occasionally if they understand what you're saying. Ask them to repeat the information to you
- Encourage them to ask for information to be repeated
- Try to have only one person speaking at a time

Problems with Organization



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- Difficulty organizing their time to get things done
- Trouble setting goals and with follow-through
- Trouble completing tasks
- Trouble getting ready for appointments

Possible Solutions for Organization Problems



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- Use the memory book to make lists of things to do, make a daily schedule. Stress that they should check it everyday and make it a routine
- Break activities down into smaller steps
- Use the memory book to review upcoming activities and appointments

REMEMBER: *Write, Organize, Picture, Rehearse*
"WOPR"

Problems with Motivation



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- Seems to sit all day staring at the TV or playing video/computer games
- Doesn't seem interested in the things he or she liked before
- Needs to be reminded about personal grooming
- Knows what needs to be done, but just doesn't seem to be able to get started

Possible Solutions to Motivational Problems



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- Understand that lack of initiation may be part of the TBI
- Come up with daily activities for them to do. Provide options and choices
- Make activities routine and use the memory book to schedule them in
- Use favorite activities like games to reward them for doing planned, routine activities

Problems with Depression



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- Seems sad
- Lost interest in previous activities
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Negative statements (e.g., "would have been better if I died...")
- Little appetite
- Low energy

Possible Solutions for Depression*



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- Depression is a common problem post TBI
- Talk to their physician about possible medications, be sure to list specific symptoms
- Consider a support group or an experienced counselor for your family member
- Be open to discussing feelings with them and encourage communication
- Consider therapeutic recreation and activities

Problems with Inappropriate Behavior



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- Tells strangers about personal matters that people are usually quiet about.
- Asks personal questions of others he does not know well.
- Makes embarrassing sexual comments or gestures in public.
- Intensely angry, throwing tantrums

Possible Solutions for Inappropriate Behavior*



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- Calmly inform them that this behavior is wrong or bothers others. Don't yell or lose your temper
- Come up with a signal that you can use to let your family member know when he or she is acting inappropriately
- Use rewards and contingencies. Leave if the behavior is inappropriate, reward if appropriate, use praise

Understanding the Problems You See

The changes that result from TBI are the direct result of the injury, and not a result of your loved one intentionally trying to act or think in a way that may be different from how he or she used to act and think.

Taking Care of Yourself

- **Findings Way to Cope**
 - Emotion Focused Coping
 - Be an Effective Problem Solver (<https://learn.extension.org/events/1296>)
- *We know that caregiver well being is associated with greater well being among their family members with TBI*

Frequently Encountered Problems

Caregivers of Persons with TBI

- Dealing with everything by myself
- Feeling overwhelmed with responsibility
- Finding time to be alone
- Loss of husband/wife relationship
- Dealing with violent behavior
- Dealing with their negative, pessimistic attitude
- Dealing with changes in personality
- Keeping a positive attitude all the time
- Having to re-teach and watching the struggle
- Not being able to go places
- Dealing with their anger
- Financial issues

Emotion Focused Coping



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- Ways to manage negative emotions and emotional consequences of stress.
 - Shopping
 - Happy hour
 - Music
 - Going out
 - Eating chocolate
 - Watching TV, etc.

Positive Emotions Promote Well Being



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- Increases a sense of worth
- Enjoyable, pleasurable
- Facilitates personal relationships, strengthens family, personal and social bonds
- Facilitates creative problem solving

Long-term caregiving associated with a decrease in pleasurable activities and a decrease in positive emotional experiences

Problem Focused Coping



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- Instrumental, goal-oriented tasks to change a situation, change aspects of the environment, or change the way you respond to or perceive a stressor.

Two Components of Problem Solving: Part I



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- Problem Orientation
 - Ward Off Negative Emotions
 - Promote Positive Emotions
 - Inhibit Impulsive Reactions
 - Motivate Person toward Problem Solving

Regulating Emotions

...because negative emotions get in the way



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- Positive self-statements
- “Read” emotions for cues
- See problems as challenge
- Re-goal
- Rational thinking

Two Components of Problem Solving: Part II



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- Problem Solving Skills
 - Generate Solutions
 - Make and Implement Choices
 - Evaluate Progress and Outcome
 - Can be rational, impulsive, careless, or avoidant

Be an Effective Problem Solver!
<https://learn.extension.org/events/1296>

Concluding Thoughts
Know Your Stress Buffers



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- Wellness behaviors
 - Good diet
 - Meaningful activities
 - Routine exercise
 - Daily health regimens
 - Leisure and relaxation

Questions or Comments?



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Military Families Learning Network
Military Caregiving

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 10, 2014 @ 11:00 am EST
**Preparing Caregivers to Communicate
Effectively Using Three Types of
Communication Skills**
<https://learn.extension.org/events/1467>

For more information on MFLN–Military Caregiving go to:
<http://www.extension.org/pages/60576>

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Military Families Learning Network

Find all upcoming and recorded webinars covering:

Military Caregiving, Family Development,
Personal Finance, Network Literacy

<http://www.extension.org/62581>

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