

Anger after Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Anger is a natural emotion. People with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) sometimes have problems with anger. It is important to manage your anger, as it can hurt your relationships and make it hard for you to do things, like work or take part in social activities.

How might anger affect me?

You may find that you:

- › feel snappy or irritated more often
- › get angry about things that wouldn't have upset you before
- › get angry for no apparent reason
- › get angry quickly
- › feel less able to control your anger

Tips for managing anger

Try to figure out what might be causing your anger. Some common causes of anger after ABI are:

- › changes in the parts of your brain that control your feelings
- › life stress related to your injury (e.g., finances, work)
- › problems thinking quickly enough to control what you do or say
- › feeling bored, isolated (alone), or frustrated
- › problems with everyday activities
- › feeling tired
- › trying to do too much at once
- › busy or loud places
- › negative thoughts about yourself or others
- › getting stuck on ideas
- › trouble communicating with others

Common warning signs of anger include:

- › shoulders rising up
- › heart beating harder
- › breathing faster
- › clenching fists or teeth

When you notice your anger warning signs, try the following:

- Ask yourself: Is this really important? What can I do to change the situation?
- Try a different activity or task.
- Act on things you can change.
- Distract yourself by doing something you like.
- Think of someone or something calming.

When you feel angry, try to calm your body and thoughts. For example:

- Stop what you are doing.
- Take a deep breath and let it out slowly.
- Walk away, if you can.
- Splash cold water on your face.

The person you are talking with may need to leave the situation until you feel calmer.

Afterwards, think about what happened or talk about it with someone you trust. Ask yourself:

- What do I think triggered my anger?
- What helped me to get control or calm down?
- How did I act? How did my behaviour affect other people?
- What might I do differently next time?
- What are some ways that I can deal with the thing that made me angry?

Resources

These organizations provide information and connections to services and supports in Nova Scotia.

- Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS) information sheets
 - › www.health.qld.gov.au/abios
- Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia
 - › Phone: 902-473-7301
 - › www.braininjuryns.com
- Concussion Nova Scotia
 - › www.concussionns.com
- Headway – The Brain Injury Association
 - › www.headway.org.uk
- Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team
 - › Phone: 902-429-8167
- 211 Nova Scotia
 - › Phone: 211
 - › www.ns211.ca