

Peer Discharge Guidance



Introduction

This document was written by a former patient who suffered a severe brain injury, then went on to make a satisfying and purposeful recovery. He wanted to share observations about what worked for him, in the hope that it might provide insight or guidance to anyone facing similar challenges.

Recovery Progress

It's suggested not to consider recovery as a pathway to where you previously were. It can be beneficial to focus on contentment with progress related to your acquired brain injury starting point.

- Take baby steps towards realistic (achievable) goals, giving you the potential to exceed expectations
- Recovery is non-linear (not a straight line) - you may have three good days, followed by a dreadful one, then vice versa
- It's important not to be disheartened by inevitable dips on your recovery progression, when these happen you mustn't feel like you're back at *square one*

Diary Records

Make a habit of keeping daily diary records, comprising categories similar to the following:

- 😞 Feelings of general wellbeing 😊
- 😴 Sleep patterns and durations 🛌
- 🤕 Specific condition - headaches / limited dexterity / localised pain, etc. 🧑🏻

Use a simple scoring system for each category - an example may be to record 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad). A diary enables evidencing of positive trends over a period of time, rather than you becoming obsessive about occasional bad days. A diary can be a useful tool to review your progress when attending clinical appointments, rather than using your memory to recall matters.

Example: 01/02/2003 - Wellbeing 3, Sleep 4, Mobility 2 (*felt lousy in the morning, then OK in the afternoon - only had about two hours sleep*)

Commit to Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are integral to successful *adaptation* (dealing with problems), as they help you to circumvent some of your limitations. When discussing coping strategies with medical professionals, be prepared to give most of them a try, even the ones you're unconvinced of. If

you're close-minded and dismissive of suggestions, you'll minimise the likelihood of finding an elusive coping strategy that works for you. It may be that out of five candidate coping strategies, only one will turn out to be useful - those are good odds. 😊

Adaptation to events is part of everyone's life journey - your acquired brain injury event is likely far more challenging than what most folk encounter, but the adaptation process is similar.

General Wellbeing

- 🛌 The importance of rest can't be overstated, so don't be embarrassed by having sleep periods during the day - they're as essential to your wellbeing as diet and exercise
- ⚖️ Accept that you may now be a little different, but you're still normal - maybe you have a new normal
- 📺 Using apps and games such as crosswords / sudoku / chess / Tetris on mobile devices may help validate your cognition

Returning to Work

You'll likely be unable to rapidly return to your previous job / position, but volunteering can provide you with a fulfilling vocational purpose, and evidences a *can-do* mentality. Volunteering activities are a positive area to discuss during job interviews and facilitate you talking about what you can do, rather than what you can't do. Volunteering helps to avoid potentially long gaps on your CV; furthermore, it's typically a satisfying and enjoyable experience. 🙌 👏

Support Organisations

- **The Samaritans:** www.samaritans.org - helping people during difficult times
- **Citizens Advice Bureau:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk - general assistance
- **Headway:** www.headwaynorthstaffs.org - supporting people with head injuries
- **Royal Voluntary Service:** www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk - supporting people in need
- **Volunteering Register:** www.doit.life - database of volunteering opportunities
- **Brainline:** www.brainline.org - all about brain injury, and coping with it
- **After Trauma:** www.aftertrauma.org - supporting survivors and their families
- **UK Brain Injury Forum:** ukabif.org.uk - acquired brain injury signposting