



CONNECTIONS

Brain Injury Canada's Newsletter

Happy Brain Injury Awareness Month! This is always a busy time of year for us, and we're excited to be sharing everything we've been up to since we last connected in the spring. Along with updates about what we're doing this year for Brain Injury Awareness Month, you'll learn about a new e-course; an opportunity with our partners at Neil Squire; and some tips on building a circle of support and nurturing your mental health as we transition into summer. Happy reading!

The Brain Injury Canada Team

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It's Brain Injury Awareness Month, and we're going Beyond the Injury

Here's how you can be a part of it

Every June, we participate in Brain Injury Awareness Month to share important facts about brain injury; its prevalence in Canada; and why we need more people to advocate for brain injury supports and services. This year, we have launched **Beyond the Injury**, an awareness and fundraising campaign to reach even more people and get them talking about brain injury and why this community needs more attention and support. There are lots of different ways you can be involved in Brain Injury Awareness Month this year.

1. Sign up to be an Awareness Advocate

Sign up as an Awareness Advocate to create your own fundraising page, and help drive real change for individuals and families affected by brain injury. Encourage your friends, family, and colleagues to donate to your campaign and help us develop more supports and resources.

Advocates who raise the most will be recognized nationally for their contribution to the cause.

Sign me up!

2. Make a donation

You can donate directly to Brain Injury Canada to support our programs and resources, including our awareness and advocacy initiatives.

Make a donation

3. Share our social media posts

The more people who know about brain injury, the more we can do. You can share our posts on Facebook, Instagram and Bluesky, or make your own posts and use the hashtag #BrainInjuryAwarenessMonth.



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Bluesky](#)

Thank you to our Brain Injury Awareness Month Sponsors

We're incredibly grateful for their support



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Your story can make a difference

Be a part of Stories of Brain Injury

People living with brain injury and their families are sharing their personal stories with Brain Injury Canada to help others learn; feel supported; and give them hope. Wherever you are in Canada, and wherever you are in your recovery journey, we want to hear your voice.

[Share my story today](#)



We're on Bluesky!

Connect with us on our newest social media channel

Brain Injury Canada is now on Bluesky! Join us on our brand new social media channel for updates, new resources, and more.

[Follow us on Bluesky](#)

Visit Brain Injury and Teens (BRITE), our youth resource website



britecanada.ca is our new resource website specifically created for kids to take charge of their own learning when it comes to concussion, brain injury and recovery. This website is available in English and French, and is a growing resource that has new information being added regularly.

If you have children in your life with a brain injury, encourage them to check out **britecanada.ca** and/or share their story through our community page.

[**Learn more**](#)



NEW: Brain Injury in Long-term Care E-Course

A professional development resource for health care professionals

We are pleased to share that we have recently launched our latest course for health care and service professionals. Long-term care is an essential health care service in Canada. It supports seniors and individuals with more complex health care needs that need places to live and people to care for them. Many seniors are at risk of brain injury or may have existing brain injuries prior to moving into a long-term care home. These homes may also support younger individuals with moderate to severe brain injury. Understanding how brain injury intersects with age and how effects of brain injury may impact how someone interacts with a long-term care environment can help workers provide the best quality of care to their residents.

In this course, we cover topics such as:

- Introducing brain injury and its possible effects
- Comorbidity and brain injury
- Managing challenging behaviours, including exit-seeking
- Supporting resident mental health
- Aging
- Palliative care and end-of-life considerations
- Self-care for the provider

This is an asynchronous course, meaning you can take it on your own time, at your own pace. Anyone who registers for the course will have two years to finish it and receive their Certificate of Completion.

Featuring lived experience from individuals with brain injury, health care and long-term care professionals, knowledge quizzes and critical thought exercises, this course is a valuable tool in providing high-quality resident care.

Take the course today—only \$50 plus HST

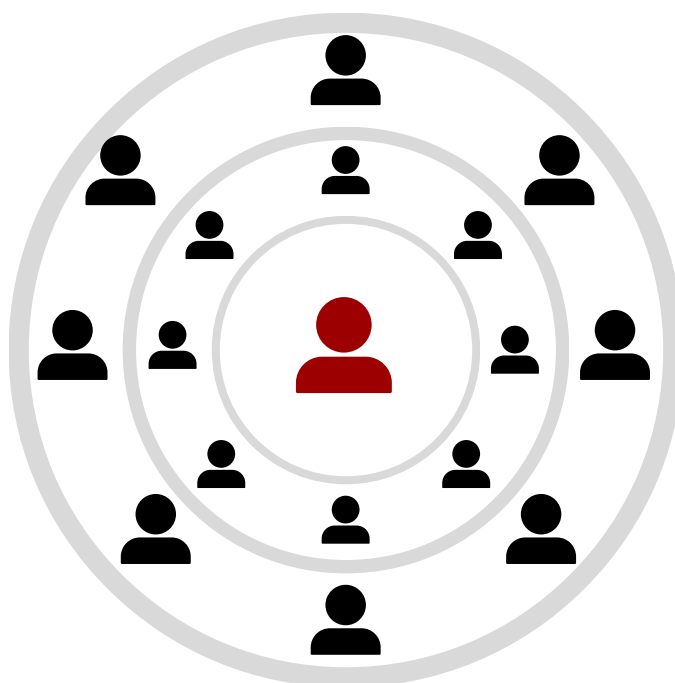
What are some ways to support your mental health?

Mental health refers to your emotions and thoughts, and how they affect each other. Your mental health is incredibly important and can have a big impact on your physical and emotional well-being as well as your recovery and rehabilitation. After a brain injury, many people experience challenges with their mental health. Everything you think and feel is valid – this can be scary when you are feeling negative or hopeless and don't entirely know why, or you feel different and don't know what to do to feel better. Whether you find your own support system or have a caregiver develop one on your behalf, mental health support is important. The following are some ways you (and other people in your life) can support your mental wellbeing.

First: What does your circle of support look like?

People who are in recovery and living with a brain injury most often need the support of others – but it's easy to think you are alone when you can't picture your support network. However, it's likely you have a whole group of people who can all play a part in building what we call your 'circle of support'.

An easy way to think of your circle of support is to draw a circle you at the centre. Depending on your relationships, your circle of support will have several different levels, like the diagram below.



What are some ways to support your mental health?

Inner circle

Your inner circle is usually those closest to you. This can include a spouse; a caregiver; children; parents; siblings; or close friends. These are the people you rely on the most and are more closely involved in your recovery and care.

Middle circle

The next layer in your circle of care are the people involved in your life, but perhaps not on a day-to-day basis. There may be a broad range of people here depending on your situation. Examples include:

- Aunts and uncles
- Friends and their spouses or partners
- Neighbours
- Spiritual/faith-based supports
- Peers or classmates and their families
- Colleagues

Outer circle

The outer circle is made up of supports that may not be specific to you or used daily, but can still be relied on. These can include:

- Local business owners
- Community groups
- [Community brain injury associations](#)
- Community support organizations (for example: meal delivery)

Additional circle of support members

Your circle of support can also include more formal supports such as paid caregivers. Depending on where you are in your recovery, they may be in your middle circle (such as a case manager or personal support worker), or your outer circle (like a psychologist or your family doctor).

The following people could be considered formal supports:

- Doctor
- Nurse
- Physiotherapist

What are some ways to support your mental health?

- Occupational therapist
- Social Worker
- Case Manager
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Psychologist
- Chiropractor
- Community pharmacist
- Lawyer

To help identify your support team, list all the people who have been in your life and have shown an interest in maintaining a relationship. Ask for help from the people who are close to you.

Identify areas where you need help

Having a list of the tasks or activities where you may need support is helpful to have on hand. Break the list up into different categories such as daily tasks, weekly tasks, or occasional tasks. For example:

- Help with getting to appointments
- A one-to-one visit over coffee
- Going outside for a walk
- Help with caring for a pet

You may often hear people say, “let me know if there is any way I can help,” and not take them up on the offer. Do not be afraid to let them know how they can best help you. The individual person and your relationship with them will determine where they fit in your circle of support. If they can help with smaller occasional things such as picking up your mail; dropping off a meal; driving you to appointments; or fixing a broken item in your home, they may belong in your outer circle. If the person can help with things that happen more often such as activities of daily living (ADLs), such as meal prep, cleaning, and personal care, they may belong in your inner circle.

Fostering your circle

It’s important for your circle to come together and understand how important they are to you. If you choose, you could introduce members of your circle to each other. By doing this, you are turning your circle of support into a true community.

You can also foster your circle by helping people understand what you need. Friends, family members, and caregivers may not realize it can be more difficult for you to communicate in noisy and busy environments of that you get tired/fatigued more easily.

What are some ways to support your mental health?

Set attainable goals

Recovery takes time, and one of the quickest ways to stress yourself out is expecting too much from yourself after a brain injury. Focus on setting attainable goals for your recovery- your doctors, therapists, and family can help. Depending on where you are in your recovery, these goals will change. By setting both short-term and long-term goals, you'll be able to better track your achievements and feel good about the hard work you've done.

Join a support group

No one understands or relates to you more than people who are in the same position as you. The brain injury community across Canada has many support groups, often run through centres or brain injury associations.

By joining a support group, you not only find a valuable resource for yourself, but you open yourself up to more social experiences and meet new people and friends.

- [Find a support group near you using this list](#)

Medication

One way to help improve your mental health is to work with a doctor to find a medication that helps you.

Medication should never be taken if it is not prescribed by a doctor who has met with you and given you an official diagnosis.

Participate in fun activities

When you do things that make you happy, they have a positive impact on your mental health.

While everyone has different preferences, here are a few possible activities:

- Cooking
- Crafts
- New hobbies
- Physical activity
- Puzzles
- Reading
- Walks

What are some ways to support your mental health?

- Yoga and meditation

While some of these may not be for you, there are plenty of activities out there. Ask your family or rehab team for suggestions.

- [Check out some examples of self-care activities](#)

Take care of your body

By taking care of your body, you also take care of your mind. The best ways to take care of your body include:

- Eating a balanced diet
- Exercising
- Maintaining regular sleep patterns

Create a schedule

When you have lots of things to do in a day, it can be overwhelming to look at one big list. It can have an effect on your mental health when you feel like you can't accomplish things. By making yourself a daily schedule – or having someone help you make a schedule – you'll have a more manageable list of things to do, and you'll be much more likely to complete them once time has been set aside for each task.

Engage in social activities

It's important to have social interactions on a regular basis. Engaging in social activities has positive long-term benefits for mental health.

Examples of social activities include:

- Attending a community workshop or class
- Having regular outings to a coffee shop or restaurant
- Joining a local club
- Participating in day trips or events
- Visiting friends and family members
- Volunteering

Attend therapy

Therapies are a great way to improve your mental health. After a brain injury, you'll be

What are some ways to support your mental health?

working with different therapists for different areas of your rehabilitation. Adding in therapy with a psychologist will give you a safe place to share your stress or concerns. In return they provide a professional ear and recommendations/treatment that can help your mental health. Depending on where you live, you may have to pay out of pocket for psychology services. You should consult with your insurance provider, any work insurance you have, and look at what is covered by the provincial, territorial or federal government.

If you are First Nations or Métis, there may also be support services available.

- [Programs and services for First Nations, Métis, and Indigenous communities](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority](#)

Mental health resources

- [Referral guide for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
- [Find your Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Association of Canada](#)
- [The Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Handbook](#)
- You can also check out [Wellness Together Canada](#) for mental health supports such as one-on-one counselling, articles, and more. If you need immediate assistance, [they have several helplines available to you](#)

Find your local brain injury association

Provincial and local brain injury associations are available across Canada and are ready to provide support, information, education, advocacy, and a variety of programs and services.

What's my local association?



Do you have opinions on emergency alerts?

Neil Squire is asking for your participation

The Neil Squire Society is looking for Canadians with disabilities to participate in a focus group to help improve how we send and receive emergency alerts. These are the alerts you get on your phone, radio, or TV, like when there is a weather warning. They want to learn about your experience with these alerts, like how easy or hard they are to understand and use.

They already did a survey, and now they want to talk more in-depth to people in focus groups. By joining, you can share your thoughts and help make emergency alerts better for everyone.

Who Can Join?

You can join if:

- You live in Canada
- You are 18 or older
- You have a disability

Before you join, you will need to answer some questions in a short pre-screen questionnaire. This helps them know if the focus group is a good fit for you. Your answers will be kept private.

You can fill out the questionnaire online at https://www.ns-access.com/survey_bic/ . You can also email a Neil Squire researcher at rd.info@neilsquire.ca to arrange a questionnaire over the phone.

If selected, you will be paid \$100 for your time.

Fill out the pre-screening survey to see if I qualify

Classify Moderate to Severe Brain Injury as a Chronic Condition

A significant collaboration between Brain Injury Canada and the Canadian Traumatic Brain Injury Research Consortium (CTRC) is calling for moderate to severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to be officially classified as a chronic condition in Canada. This move would significantly enhance nationwide healthcare strategies, policies, and patient outcomes.

Read the position paper

Matías's Story: "I'm happy to say I found my footing again"



In September 2013, I was involved in an accident that nearly took my life. Biking home from work, I was hit off my bicycle by a large vehicle on Elgin Street. This particular vehicle didn't account for me being on the road and left no room for me as it passed. In an instant I felt trapped as it accelerated past and hooked onto my handlebar causing me to lose control. All the fear and terror I have ever felt manifested in that split second. Then darkness.

The thing with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) is that when your brain impacts the inside of your skull it can cause bleeding, bruising, tissue damage, specific neurochemical changes and increased intra-cranial hemorrhaging. In my case, the doctors told me I had subdural bleeding in multiple spots and frontal lobe hemorrhaging which nearly required neurosurgery. After numerous CT scans and eight blurry days in the hospital, I went back home to London, Ontario to recover for two months. I effectively quit my job and hit the pause button on Ottawa Showbox, a local music website that I had started in 2012. My world basically stopped spinning. It's a strange thing, really. You wake up one morning, put on the coffee and have breakfast as usual. You put on your clothes the same way you did before. Then you walk out the door to face the world, but on the inside it doesn't feel like you. An otherwise beautiful, sunny day outside feels dim, cloaked in a certain type of shade that you can't quite put your finger on.

The first few months after the accident were grim. I had literally removed myself from society, hiding in my parents' basement avoiding light, noises, and most human contact. Apart from being completely sedentary I noticed that I felt different. I grappled with the reality that my Master's degree may no longer punch a ticket to a lifelong career path for me. I didn't know who I was, who I would become, or where I was going. The unknowns of my TBI were one of the toughest things to deal with. I would regularly stay up until 4 a.m. and have no concept of what time it was. I started to have panic attacks at night, which if you don't know, can feel like you're about to die at that very moment. I also started to lash out at my family and loved ones, having dramatic bouts of rage, sadness, and anxiety. With this came feelings of guilt and shame, because I knew they were trying to help me, but I was treating them so badly. But most of the time I was dull, with very little to no feelings of positivity and happiness. It wasn't long before I was diagnosed with anxiety and panic disorders, as well as depression. It's very difficult to describe what anxiety and depression feel like, because it manifests differently in each person. My

Matías's Story: "I'm happy to say I found my footing again"

anxiety is generally characterized by a feeling of dissociation with my own self, and a choking tightness in the chest that pushes and pulls until I can hardly breathe. At its worst, anxiety causes me to feel neurotic and unstable with grey tunnel vision obfuscating the real world as others may observe it. At its worst, my depression makes me feel as though the entire world is shrouded in black and grey, with very little or no joy left in it. Getting out of bed becomes nearly unthinkable, let alone doing work or socializing with others. These are the dark, endless caverns that we, the afflicted, must endure.

After a TBI, it usually takes the brain about two years to regain neuroplasticity and regenerate bruised neurons and pathways that were damaged in the trauma. After a few major breakdowns and panic attacks in the months following the accident, it became clear to me that I needed help. The best decision I made was to be proactive in my recovery. I recognized some initial cognitive and behavioural challenges, scheduled the appointments, and ultimately accepted my new self. At one point I decided that if I had two years to make progress and recover, then I had to take that opportunity – no matter how challenging. I also decided to avoid medication and focus solely on cognitive therapy, which was the right fit for me. Seeing a psychologist and digging deep has been incredibly beneficial, and I truly think everyone should do it. Opening up the wound and taking a better look inside helped me understand what it was I was dealing with, and how to live with mental health issues as opposed to fighting against them. How does one live life after suffering a TBI? How does one cope with mental health challenges? There's no single answer to this, and every person has different needs. Sometimes medication is the only option, sometimes cognitive therapy is sufficient.

It's been over two years since the accident, and I'm still coping with anxiety and bouts of depression. They tend to go in waves – a lot of the days are as happy and fun as they were before, but there are times that the cloud comes back and darkens my day. However, I've learned how to embrace this kind of pain and move through it, not against it. If you sail with the waves in a storm instead of against them, eventually you'll land with your feet on the shore.

In a way, music saved my life. I would be lying if I didn't attribute a big chunk of my recovery to Showbox and the music community here in Ottawa. Around the time that the accident happened, my website had been growing and seeing much more traffic. Although being unable to work was debilitating, I had a bit of income replacement insurance money coming in and I managed to stay afloat following the accident. This also gave me the chance to focus on creative writing and putting more time and effort into Showbox. I had to make the most of a bad situation, because I knew that stagnation and solitude would make my condition much worse. Music has always been an intrinsic part of my life. As a passive consumer of music, we may listen to an album or experience a

Matías's Story: "I'm happy to say I found my footing again"

live show and feel good after. This was certainly a therapeutic aspect of my recovery, and helped to focus my brain and ward off the chaotic thoughts. But as an active participant in the community, writing about music gave me a purpose at a time when I questioned my place in the world. It lifted me out of bed and into the office chair. I learned that creativity and expression of oneself can be an incredibly helpful way of staving off the demons. Whether you write, draw, paint, make cartoon caricatures, design tattoos, write poems, shoot videos, write lyrics, write a tune, make a zine, take photos, design clothing, make handmade jewellery, write code, or simply just scribble something original onto a page – creativity is a powerful antidote for the mind.

This is my new normal. It's not perfect, and it's not the way it was. But having a support network of friends and family, a creative outlet, and some professional guidance from a psychologist were integral aspects of my recovery. I'm happy to say that I found my footing again, and now almost 10 years later, charted a new career path for myself and am able to live a full and happy independent life. That doesn't mean I don't deal with the side effects of TBI anymore, but I've learned how to "turn down" the volume on many of the more troublesome effects and incorporate them into my life in a way that allows me to feel a sense of control and hope for the future. A close friend once told me that we all need to keep a little treasure chest inside of us, and fill it with all the things we love. Inside the chest we should put every good deed we've done, every gesture of kindness towards others, and a little reminder that we mean the world to someone else. When the darkest thoughts arise and it feels like all hope is gone, take the key and open that chest to see what's inside.

Brain Injury Canada Connect

Find services for individuals with brain injury & caregivers across Canada through our interactive service directory. And if you provide supports, list with us today!

[Access the service directory](#)



Join us in Victoria, BC on June 8 for a Concussion Information Session

The Canadian Concussion Network-Réseau Canadien des Commotions and partners are hosting a free public event featuring presentations from concussion experts and individuals with lived experience in Victoria, British Columbia on June 8, 2025 from 5-6:30PM Pacific Time. If you're interested in joining us, make sure you sign up!

[I'd like to RSVP](#)

Free E-Courses for Family Caregivers

Sign up for our free self-guided e-courses for family caregivers all about brain injury, caregiving, and more

[Sign up today](#)

Don't forget to sign up as an Awareness Advocate during Brain Injury Awareness Month!

You might also be interested in...



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