

ORGANIZATION NEWS

Information/Education Page

Living Well After Traumatic Brain Injury



What is meant by “living well”?

- Living well means taking care of ourselves and treating ourselves well!
- It means paying attention to, learning more about, and doing more of the things we know are good for the body, mind, and spirit.

Why is this important for people with traumatic brain injury (TBI)?


- After a TBI, some people find it more difficult to “live well.” TBI can create barriers to healthy activity, such as:
 - Physical limitations or pain;
 - Difficulty with remembering and carrying out healthy behaviors;
 - Low mood or reduced motivation;
 - Practical problems, such as limited transportation and finances.


There ARE ways to live well with a TBI. Here are some tips that may help you feel better, both physically and mentally. Living well can help you live longer, too!


Keep in mind:


1. *Each of us makes choices every day that affect our health and wellness.* You can choose to adopt a healthier lifestyle.
 2. *Change is hard.* This is true for everyone with or without a TBI! The best way to change your life for the better is to do it gradually...
- Tip: Set goals that you can achieve in *1 to 2 weeks* to prevent discouragement.


How do you get started? The very first step is to ask yourself, what are you doing right now to improve or maintain your health? Everyone knows that good health means exercising and eating right. But there’s more to it than that! **The Wellness Wheel** helps you look at 5 areas of healthy living:

 **PHYSICAL:** Staying active, eating healthy, and keeping up with medical needs;

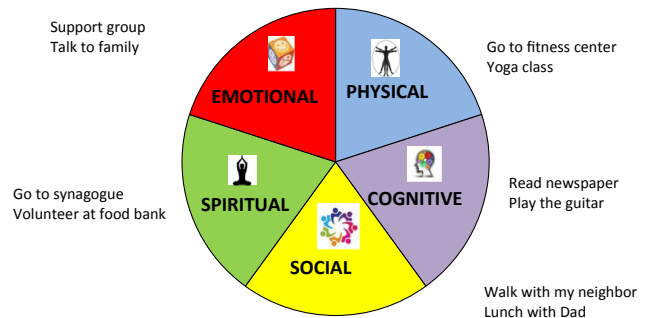
 **COGNITIVE** (mental): Stimulation from learning, thinking, and solving problems;

 **SOCIAL:** Having satisfying relationships, being involved in a community;

 **SPIRITUAL:** Anything that refreshes the spirit, whether it’s religion, meditation, nature, or creative activity;

 **EMOTIONAL:** Being able to surf the normal highs and lows, and being able to tell when they *aren’t* normal, so you can seek help from others.

The Wellness Wheel*



Here are some examples of healthy activities in each section of the Wheel. What activities could you put in *your* wheel? Is it balanced? Or are there some areas that might need more attention?




Here are some ideas you might want to try for adding to your wellness wheel:

• Get moving:

- Walk with a friend once or twice a week.
- Limit TV time to an hour a day. Stand up and move, even at home.
- Try new activities that might be *fun* for you—yoga, Frisbee, Ping-Pong, skiing. You can join a team or class at your recreation center.

- Remember to wear a helmet to protect your brain during any activity where you might hit your head (biking, skiing, etc).
 - **Choose healthy food and drink:**
 - Eat whole grains, vegetables and fruits, colorful food, fish, lean meats.
 - Substitute vegetable oils, like olive oil, for animal fats.
 - Cook at home at least several times a week. You could invite a neighbor to join you!
 - Carry a water bottle and sip it during the day.
 - Limit alcohol, and watch its effects carefully—an injured brain is more sensitive to alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
 - **Exercise your brain:**
 - Join a book club, start a card or game group, take a class.
 - Go to the library—it's free, and libraries have a lot more than books!
 - Learn to play an instrument or take a singing class.
 - Keep up on a topic of interest by reading the paper or internet news.
 - **Look for meaning in life:**
 - Join a religious or spiritual group, or a nature club.
 - Get a free app on your phone for mindfulness or meditation exercises.
 - Volunteer to do something you feel is important.
 - Get a pet and take good care of it!
 - **Get organized for your health:**
 - Keep a list of your medications and what they are for; take this list when you go to the doctor.
 - Keep a list of your doctors, what they do, how to reach them, and when you have your appointments.
 - **Aim for calm and happiness:**
 - Join a support group.
 - Confide in someone you like and trust, in person or by phone.
 - Ask your doctor for a referral for counseling if you need to talk to a professional.
 - Sleeping can be difficult for some people after TBI. If you're having trouble, talk to your doctor.
- **Tip: Try activities that touch on more than one area of the wheel!**

There are lots of activities that improve wellness in *more than one area*. For example:

-  **Taking a walk** with a friend can help your *physical, social, and emotional wellness*.
 -  Learning about **mindfulness** can help your *emotional, spiritual, and cognitive wellness*. Add *social wellness* if you learn in a class!
 -  **Volunteer**—helping others can make you feel good emotionally, and make you think. It can also get you up and moving and meeting new people!
- **Tip: Keep it simple!**

There are lots of free, easy ways to improve your wellness. Don't forget that the best change is gradual. Small accomplishments add up! **Here are some Healthy Living Resources you can find online:**

- ❖ **American Heart Association:** <https://healthyforgood.heart.org>
- ❖ **American Academy of Sleep Medicine: Tips for Better Sleep** <http://www.sleepeducation.org>
- ❖ **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving>
- ❖ **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/prevention-and-wellness>

Authorship

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