

Initiation and Motivation After an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Initiation is the ability to start an activity.

Motivation is the desire to do an activity.

These 2 things are separate, but closely related. Many people with an acquired brain injury (ABI) have trouble doing tasks or taking part in activities. This is often caused by a problem with initiation, not with **motivation**.

If you have an ABI, your loved ones may notice your problems with initiation more than you do.

How will problems with initiation affect me?

- If you have an ABI, you may talk about plans, goals, and activities, but have trouble starting or finishing them. This may happen even if you are physically able to do the activities.
- Other people might think that you are being lazy, or that you are not making an effort. **But it is important to remember that problems with initiation can be caused by your ABI.**

What can I do to help with initiation?

Keep a routine.

- Follow a schedule of activities and tasks.
- Use checklists, a daily planner, and visual cues (like a whiteboard).
- Break bigger tasks into smaller steps. Write out the steps and follow them.
- Set alarms or reminders. Try setting up an alert on your smartphone or tablet.

Ask your loved ones to help.

They can:

- Keep a list of activities, chores, and things to talk about.
- Support you in deciding what to do and when to do it.
- When it is time to do a task, they can offer you a **structured choice**. This means they give you the option of **which** activity to do, not whether or not to do it. For example:
 - › “Will you wash or dry the dishes?” instead of “Do you want to do the dishes?”
 - › “Would you like to take a shower now, or in an hour?” instead of “Do you want to take a shower?”
- Link an activity to your interests, plans, and goals. For example:
 - › “Let’s go for a walk. It will help you get stronger.”
- Ask **open-ended** questions instead of yes or no questions, then take time to listen.

Make it fun.

- You will have more energy and motivation for an activity if it is something you like to do.
- Include fun activities, as well as chores, in your daily routine.
- Try activities you enjoyed before, as well as new things.
- Keep photos and keepsakes as reminders of activities that went well.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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