

Anger After an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Anger is a natural emotion. People with an ABI sometimes have problems with anger. It is important to manage your anger. If you do not manage your anger, 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 irritated or snappy more often
- › Get angry about things that would not have upset you before
- › Get angry for no obvious reason
- › Get angry quickly
- › Feel less able to control your anger

Tips for managing anger

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

- › Changes in the parts of your brain that control your feelings
- › Stress related to your injury (like finances or work)
- › Problems thinking quickly enough to control what you say or do
- › Feeling bored, isolated (alone), or frustrated
- › Problems with everyday tasks
- › Feeling tired
- › Trying to do too much at once
- › Busy or loud places
- › Negative (bad or hurtful) thoughts about yourself or others
- › Thinking about the same thing for a long time
- › Trouble communicating with others

You may feel the following warning signs of anger:

- › Shoulders rising up
- › Heart beating faster
- › Breathing faster
- › Clenching your fists or teeth

When you notice the 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.
- Ask the person you are talking with to leave the situation until you feel calmer.

After, 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 others?
- What might I do differently next time?
- What are some ways that I can deal with the thing that made me angry?

Resources

For more information, and to find services and supports, visit:

- Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)
 - › www.health.qld.gov.au/abios
- Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia
 - › Phone: 902-422-5000
 - › Phone (toll-free): 1-833-452-7246
 - › www.braininjuryns.com
- Concussion Nova Scotia
 - › <https://braininjuryns.com/concussionns/>
- Headway – The Brain Injury Association
 - › www.headway.org.uk
- Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team
 - › Phone: 902-429-8167
 - › Phone (toll-free): 1-888-429-8167
- 211 Nova Scotia
 - › Phone: 211
 - › <https://ns.211.ca/>