MENTORING INDIVIDUALS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
WHAT IS TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)?
“A traumatically induced structural injury and/or physiological disruption of brain function as a result of an external force that is indicated by new onset or worsening of at least one of the following clinical signs, immediately following the event...”
DEFINITION CONTINUED

- Physical
  - Intracranial abnormalities, contusions, balance problems

- Cognitive
  - Confusion, disorientation, slowed thinking, poor concentration

- Affective
  - Anxiety, depression, mood swings

- Neurological
  - Weakness, balance disturbance, sensory loss, aphasia

- Alteration/Loss of Consciousness
- Posttraumatic Amnesia
  - Loss of memory for events before/after injury

1.7 million people in the US sustain a TBI yearly
- 1.365 million ER Visits; 275k Hospitalization; 52k deaths

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) estimates 5.3 million people living in US with TBI

US Army Surgeon General estimates 10-20% prevalence rate for deployed service members

The DoD reports diagnosing 253,330 service members with mild to severe TBI from 2000-2012.
- (Dod numbers for TBI—Archives; Military Health Systems. health.mil.)
**Increased demographic:**

- Males 15-24 (more specifically African American)
- Military personnel > risk (even during peacetime)
  - Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones

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COMMON CAUSES

Leading TBI Causes

- Falls: 40.50%
- Other/Unknown: 19.00%
- Struck by/against: 15.50%
- Motor Vehicle: 14.30%
- Assults: 10.70%

http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/get_the_facts.html
CHANGES AFTER TBI

- Posttraumatic Amnesia
  - LOM before/after injury
- Concentration/processing
  - Confusion, distractibility, slowed thinking
- Executive functioning
  - Planning, organizing, problem solving, abstract thinking
- Memory/learning
  - Prospective memory
- Awareness/perception
- Affective changes
  - Irritability, anxiety, depression, anger
- Communication issues
  - Physical impediments, disrupted non-verbal understanding
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- Mental processes connecting past experience with present action
- Self-awareness, goal setting, planning, organizing, impulse control, initiation, self-monitoring

Impairments can include:
- Lost/diminished cognitive regulation
- Decreased ability in self-directed behaviors
- Impaired sequencing and time management
- Cognitive inflexibility and diminished abstract thinking

Individuals with impairments of executive functioning may seem less impaired in clinical settings compared to real world
- Less demand, more structure
COMMUNICATION ISSUES

- Have trouble finding the words
- Paraphasic speech
- Naming
- Repetition
- Naming
- Physical impediments
  - Dysphagia
  - Dysarthria
- Using appropriate tone, talking out-of-turn, keeping up, interpreting non-verbal cues, affect recognition
- Difficulties in writing, spelling, written arithmetic
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)
“PTSD is an anxiety disorder that some people get after seeing or living through a dangerous event. When in danger, it’s natural to feel afraid. This fear triggers many split-second changes in the body to prepare to defend against the danger or to avoid it. This “fight-or-flight” response is a healthy reaction meant to protect a person from harm. But in PTSD, this reaction is changed or damaged. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened even when they’re no longer in danger.”
DIAGNOSIS-DSM 5

- **Criterion A:** stressor (direct exposure, witnessed in person, indirect exposure)
- **Criterion B:** intrusion symptoms (memories, nightmares, flashbacks, prolonged distress, physiologic reactivity to stimuli)
- **Criterion C:** avoidance
- **Criterion D:** negative alterations in cognitions and mood (began or worsened after event)
  - Feeling alienated, inability to experience positive emotions, persistent blame of self or others, rumination
- **Criterion E:** alterations in arousal and reactivity (sleep disturbances, poor concentration, reckless behavior)
- **Criterion F:** duration (> 1 month)
- **Criterion G:** functional significance (social, occupational, ect.)
- **Criterion H:** exclusion (substance abuse, other dx)

- Dissociative Symptoms
  - Depersonalization
  - Derealization
Most common symptom categories:
- avoidance, re-experiencing, avoidance, numbing
  - Muscle tension
  - Agitated or fearful
  - Sleep issues
  - Avoidance of people or situations, isolative
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Trouble concentrating

- Duration: chronic or acute
US Dept. of Veteran Affairs

- 5.2M adults have PTSD annually
- 6 of every 10 (or 60%) of men and 5 of every 10 (or 50%) of women experience at least one trauma in their lives
- 11-20% of Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom)
  - 11-20 Veterans out of 100 who served in OEF/OIF
- War-related factors
  - Politics
  - War location
  - Enemy
  - Military sexual trauma


- **Counseling**
  - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), prolonged exposure therapy (PE), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

- **How you can help**
  - Education
  - Avoid stigma
  - Encouragement
    - Support systems, seeking help, ect.
  - Communication
    - Positivity, clear/concise, put feelings into words

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/public/family/helping-family-member.asp
VETERAN VS CIVILIAN LIFE
CHALLENGES TO READJUSTMENT

- Relating to those w/o military knowledge
- Reconnecting relationships
- Creating structure
  - Motivation, time-management
- Establishing services
  - Medical services, paperwork, insurance, ect.
- Vocational adjustment
  - Transferrable skills, resume building, looking for jobs, ect.
“Above my/your pay grade” – expression denying responsibility or authority (indicating that the issue should be brought to higher-ranking officials)

“Civvies” – civilian clothing

“Down Range” – physically in a combat zone

“In-Country” – physically in a war zone

“Quarters” – (a) military family housing, or (b) doctor's direction to stay home from work (e.g., I'm confined to quarters.)

“Stay in your lane” – stay within your boundaries; do your job as commanded and trust that you will know what you need to know when you need to know it

“Wilco” – Will comply
MILITARY PHRASES

- **Battle assembly** – new term used for Army Reserve weekend drills, unit training assemblies, or multiple unit training assemblies.

- **Boots on the ground** – to physically be in a location (some may use this to say that they want "boots on the ground" for a particular project, which means they want everyone physically in the office).

- **Drill** – preparation of military personnel for performance of their duties through the practice and rehearsal of prescribed movements.

- **Extended drill** – extended time for drill in preparation for a deployment.

- **Liberty** – authorized free time ashore or off station, not counted as leave, also known as a "pass".

- **Tour of duty** – time period during which a particular job or assignment is done (e.g., my tour of duty is 8am-5pm).
TELLING MILITARY TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military = Civilian</th>
<th>Military = Civilian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0001 = 12:01 am</td>
<td>1300 = 1:00 pm</td>
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<td>0100 = 1:00 am</td>
<td>1400 = 2:00 pm</td>
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<td>0200 = 2:00 am</td>
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<td>0600 = 6:00 am</td>
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<td>0800 = 8:00 am</td>
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<td>0900 = 9:00 am</td>
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<td>1000 = 10:00 am</td>
<td>2300 = 11:00 pm</td>
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<td>1100 = 11:00 am</td>
<td>2400 = 12 Midnight</td>
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<td>1200 = Noon</td>
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BEING A MENTOR & PROBLEM SOLVING
Your intern struggles with maintaining attention. He will not sit at his desk and do work for more than 20 minutes at a time. You often search for him because he is not around his work station.

Your intern does not seem to understand common non-verbal cues. He stands very close to you during conversation and doesn’t understand when you are trying to end a conversation.

Your intern loses track of time. He is coming into work late. He has missed several important meetings. And you’ve already had a conversation about how important it is to be on time.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
What Would You Do?

- Your intern struggles with initiation. Despite being told what he needs to accomplish, he sits at his desk and does not begin his work. You are frustrated because he appears as if he is not motivated and he doesn’t want to work.

- Your intern seems to be struggling with issues outside of his work. He seems withdrawn from his peers and is easily agitated when you’ve tried to address it. You think something think he may need some help, but you are unsure of what to do.
## POSITIVE LANGUAGE

### Use of “person first” language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative phrases</th>
<th>Negative phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person w/ a disability</td>
<td>The disabled, handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person who has a TBI</td>
<td>A victim of a TBI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person who has PTSD</td>
<td>Afflicted by PTSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person w/ a psychiatric disability</td>
<td>Crazy, nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person who uses a wheelchair</td>
<td>Confined/restricted to a wheelchair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person who is successful, productive</td>
<td>Has “overcome” his/her disability, courageous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Treat adults as adults
- Be simple and consistent
  - Avoid hidden agendas, avoid multi-tasking
- Write things down
  - Include details, use check lists, summary of notes after meeting, scheduling, pictures or tables
- Give feedback
  - Clear expectations
- Decrease distractions
  - Talk SLOWLY, encourage breaks when needed, don’t be afraid to ask questions
Many students have trouble with the following:

- Paying attention
- Staying organized
- Making decisions
- Managing their time
- Learning and remembering new information
- Staying focused
# TIPS FOR SUCCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have trouble with...</th>
<th>Attention &amp; Concentration</th>
<th>Organizing and Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Starting and finishing tasks?</td>
<td>• Planning, organizing and finishing tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Multi-tasking?</td>
<td>• Setting goals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Switching from one thing to another?</td>
<td>• Deciding what is most important to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Paying attention in class or doing homework?</td>
<td>• Making decisions?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Getting started?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Staying on schedule?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Keeping track of time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Tips for Success | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Work in a quiet space. Turn off the TV and your cell phone. | Use a daily planner to write down your class schedule, homework, goals and other tasks. |
| Break assignments down into smaller parts. | Use apps to stay organized. |
| Do one thing at a time. | Ask your teacher for help deciding what’s important. |
| Take breaks. | Get a study buddy. |
| | Double-check your work! |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Try this:</th>
<th>Color-code tasks or assignments when entering them in your notebook or phone. (For example, tasks in red should be done first.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set an alarm every 30 minutes during schoolwork to check in with yourself and make sure you’re on track.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have trouble with...</td>
<td>Memory</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering recent conversations or events?</td>
<td>Doing things as quickly as you need to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering names or phone numbers?</td>
<td>Missing information because people were talking too fast (in class or at home)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding your keys, wallet, phone, etc.?</td>
<td>“Keeping up” information overload)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering directions, due dates, things you need to do?</td>
<td>Recalling new information?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips for Success</th>
<th>Keep a daily routine (eating, sleeping, studying).</th>
<th>Give yourself enough time to finish things and check your work.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hang a large calendar in plain view to keep track of deadlines.</td>
<td>Ask others to speak slowly and to repeat information.</td>
<td>Join study groups or get a tutor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan ahead by putting important items where you can see them.</td>
<td>Take a break when you need to regroup.</td>
<td>Meet with teachers or friends regularly for feedback on how you’re doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write down highlights from conversations and lectures.</td>
<td>Do more important tasks when you have more energy.</td>
<td>Find a mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record lectures and play them back.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Try this:</th>
<th>People learn in different ways. Try reading your work out loud. Make flashcards to test yourself on new information.</th>
<th>Recap information at the end of a conversation to make sure you didn’t miss anything (“So what I understand is ...”).</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before you start a task, think about what may be challenging for you. Then, decide on a strategy to overcome it.</td>
<td></td>
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- Decrease distractions
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PROBLEM: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- **Signs**
  - *Does not seem to understand common non-verbal cues*
  - *Stands too close or too far*
  - *Poor eye contact*
  - *Incongruent body language*

- **What to do**
  - Ask the person to maintain comfortable distance
  - Politely ask the person to modify his or her physical contacts because you feel uncomfortable; offer an explanation if necessary
  - Tell the person you are confused by the incongruent body language
  - Ask what the person is feeling
  - Politely ask the person to stop the distracting movements
PROBLEM: CONFUSION

- **Signs**
  - Confuses times/tasks in schedule of activities
  - Confuses past and present events
  - Confabulates *(makes up convincing stories to fill memory gaps; this is not intentional lying)*

- **What to do**
  - Encourage use and reference to a notebook to log events and details
  - Arrange for consistency in routine tasks
  - Limit changes in daily routine
  - Provide clear, concise explanations of even the most basic changes in daily routines
  - Confirm accurate information with other people
PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY REMEMBERING

- **Signs**
  - Unable to remember tasks from day to day
  - Unable to remember new information

- **What to do**
  - Establish a structured routine of daily tasks
  - Encourage consistent use of memory aids like calendars and notebooks to plan, record and check off tasks completed
    - Encourage them to write down new info in memory notebook
    - Encourage friends to also write down any info they need to communicate to the person
    - Encourage review and rehearsal of this info frequently throughout the day
  - Provide opportunities of repeated practice of new info
  - Try to pair new info with facts the person can recall
  - Provide spoken cues as needed for recall and, if necessary, help fill in memory gaps
**PROBLEM: ATTENTION/CONCENTRATION**

- **Signs**
  - *Limited ability to focus*
  - *Distractible*
  - *Difficulty in attending to one or more things at a time*

- **What to do**
  - Focus on one task at a time
  - Be sure you have the person’s attention before beginning a discussion or task
  - Decrease distractions when working or talking with the person
  - Praise any improvement in length of activity to activity
  - Gently refocus attention to specific details of the activity as needed
  - Keep abrupt changes to a minimum
  - Ask the person to repeat info that was communicated to be sure the person understood conversation
  - Schedule brief rest periods between short periods of work or activity (20-30 minutes of work; 5 minute break)
**PROBLEM: DECISION MAKING**

- **Signs**
  - Hesitation with decisions
  - Inappropriate or potentially harmful decisions
  - Difficulty reasoning
  - Ineffective problem-solving

- **What to do**
  - Encourage the person to “stop and think”
  - Help the person to explore various options to solving problems
  - Have the person write possible options in the notebook
  - Discuss advantages and disadvantages to options
  - Role-play to prepare for various situations
PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY WITH INITIATION

- **Signs**
  - Has trouble getting started
  - Appears disinterested or unmotivated (this is typically not intentional)

- **What to do**
  - Help the person develop and follow a structured routine
  - Provide specific choices for daily tasks (“would you like to do A or B?”)
  - Simplify tasks; break down tasks into simple steps and complete one step at a time
  - Establish a time frame for accomplishing tasks
PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY CARRYING OUT PLAN OF ACTION

- **Signs**
  - Lack of follow-through to completion with a task
  - Difficulty planning a sequence of tasks
  - Appears disorganized

- **What to do**
  - Begin with small, realistic projects
  - Include the person in planning the activity
  - Provide clear explanation of an activity before starting
  - Have the person write a step-by-step list as a plan
  - Ask the person to tell you these steps to ensure understanding
  - Encourage the person to refer to the plan, and check off each task that is completed
PROBLEM: IMPAIRED LACK OF AWARENESS

- **Signs**
  - Lack of awareness of deficits and limitations
  - Overestimates abilities
  - Underestimates problems
  - Inaccurate self-image/perception

- **What to do**
  - Anticipate lack of insight
  - Prompt accurate self-statements
  - Use feedback generously and supportively
  - Give realistic feedback as you observe behavior
PROBLEM: INITIATING CONVERSATION

- **Signs**
  - *Does not respond to another person’s conversation, questions or comments*
  - *Does not start or is slow to start conversations, ask questions, or make comments*
  - *Leaves long pauses*
  - *Has difficulty with explanations*

- **What to do**
  - Encourage the person to participate – “what do you think about that?”
  - Ask open-ended questions – “tell me about…”
  - Give the person time to organize thoughts
  - Give the person your full attention until thought is completed
PROBLEM: DIFFICULTY FOLLOWING CONVERSATION

■ Signs
  - Difficulty paying attention to what is said
  - Misinterprets what is said

■ What to do
  - Get the person’s attentions before speaking
  - Be clear and concise
  - Reduce distractions
  - Emphasize important information
  - Offer to repeat what was said
  - Ask the person to look at you when speaking
  - Invite questions and clarification
PROBLEM: INTELLIGIBLE SPEECH

- **Signs**
  - Slurred speech
  - Speaks too loudly or too softly, making the message hard to understand
  - Speaks too rapidly

- **What to do**
  - Tell the person you did not understand and ask to hear it again
  - Establish and use consistent gestures or cues (cup your hand to your ear as a reminder to speak louder)