

# Create Positive Differences for People Who Experience Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- **Use person-first language.** Never define or describe people by their disability. For example, say a “person with a TBI” rather than a “brain-injured person.” Person-first language emphasizes the person, not the injury itself, and is a simple but important way to be sensitive to others.
- **Be respectful.** Always interact with a survivor in an adult-like manner. A TBI may affect an individual’s perceptions and awareness, contributing to behaviors or emotional responses that may seem inappropriate at times. Speak in your natural tone of voice and never “talk down” to an individual.
- **Be patient and honest.** Allow extra time for a survivor to organize thoughts or find the right words to express what he or she is thinking. Never pretend to understand if you don’t. In turn, allow extra time for a survivor to understand what you are saying.
- **Create a positive communication environment.** Help by reducing distractions (turn off the TV or music) and choosing a quiet area instead of a noisy or congested space. It is difficult for anyone to pay attention and remember in a distracting or noisy room.
- **Provide extra cues or help when needed.** Always write down important information, such as dates and times for meetings or appointments. It may be more difficult to remember and organize information after a traumatic brain injury.
- **Ask when in doubt.** Learn about approaches that may be especially helpful for the individual. This may include reminders (send a text message about your lunch date) or help with physical impacts (park close to the entrance of a store).
- **Offer specific help and aid to a survivor or family member.** Simple offers of assistance (“Can I take you to the grocery store?”) may be important for survivors who struggle with transportation. Keep in mind that many challenges are “hidden” and are not obvious to others.
- **Model awareness and acceptance for others.** Model person-first language and use of supportive strategies for others in your community. Be willing to share what you have learned with those in your social circle and in your neighborhood.
- **Volunteer.** Assist your local support group or other community programs that support survivors and families. The Brain Injury Association of America and your state association welcome volunteers.
- **Tell others about the TBIoptions website and raise community awareness of TBI.** Use the “TBIoptions: Locating Resources” form to help locate and list resources for your community. ([https://tbioptions.k-state.edu/5\\_find\\_local\\_resources/](https://tbioptions.k-state.edu/5_find_local_resources/)).

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