

TEACHING STUDENTS WITH ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

AQUIRED BRAIN INJURY: The fastest growing disability of this decade is acquired brain injury (ABI), which is also called traumatic brain injury (TBI). In the past, people who died from car and motorcycle accidents, falls, blows to the head, gunshot wounds, strokes, and brain tumors, blast injuries in a war zone are now being saved by advanced medical technology.

The long-term, residual effects of traumatic brain injury may affect any combination of body systems. Some of these effects are short attention spans, difficulty with executive function activities such as organization of time, comprehension and memory difficulties, trouble with abstract reasoning, and inability to generalize concepts from one situation to the next. In academics, students with brain injuries may demonstrate significant delays in reading: math and language. Students may also acquire new information at a very slow pace. In the social domain, these individuals typically have less flexible socialization patterns and frequently exhibit inappropriate behavior.

Students with ABI have a tendency to flood when in a pressure situation such as a test or a speech. When this occurs, the student is unable to function. The best course of action for the instructor is to allow the student to test on another day in a reduced stress environment or find ways that the student can participate in speech class without being required to give the speech in front of the class possibly by dictating the speech.

Instructors should employ a number of strategies in order to help students maximize their potential. Some of these can include:

- Present information in a concrete and straightforward manner.
- Use direct statements.
- Be specific.
- Have the person repeat the information.
- Provide directions in a consistent manner.
- Have the students demonstrate their understanding of the directions.
- Print information instead of using cursive.
- Provide alternate means of testing in stress producing situations
- Have exams proctored through Disabled Student Services.

These students need to have immediate feedback when learning new concepts and whether or not they are doing the task correctly.

SOME COMMON LIMITATIONS:

1. Paralysis or weakness may be present on one or both sides of the body.
2. Fine and/or gross motor functioning may also be involved.
3. Perception, memory, thinking and reasoning may become confused.
4. Speech may be faltering, slow and deliberate.
5. Irritability, emotional liability (rapid mood shifts), or a decrease in inhibitory controls may be present.

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