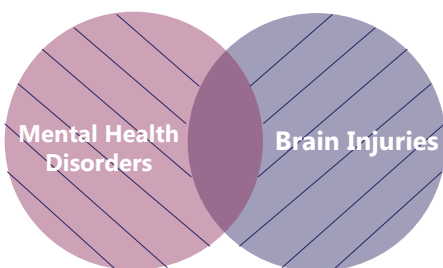


QUICK GUIDE

Mental Health & Brain Injury

The relationship between brain injury and mental health is strong, but still under-researched. What we do know is while sometimes brain injury is an entirely separate issue to mental health, brain injury can lead to new mental health issues developing, and mental health issues can make brain injury symptoms worse. The effects of brain injury and mental illness can look very similar, which is why understanding the relationship between the two is important for individuals to advocate for themselves and for medical professionals to make accurate diagnoses.

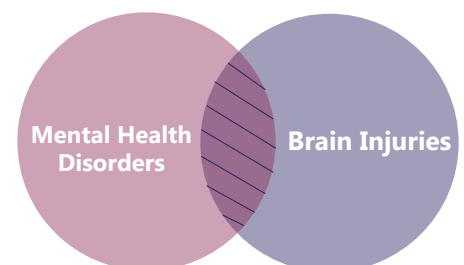
What are the differences between mental health disorders and brain injuries?



Many symptoms of a brain injury overlap with those of a mental health disorder (like depression and anxiety); but, not all mental health issues that develop after a brain injury are severe enough to be considered "disordered" by mental health standards. However, this does not mean the mental health issues an individual experiences are not real, important, or cause challenges; it is the contrary. Talking about your mental and emotional struggles with medical professionals can help determine whether they are related to a brain injury or not.

What are the similarities?

Common symptoms after brain injury include (but are not limited to) anxiety, depression, increased anger, and mood swings, which are all typical for different types of mental health disorders as well. Not only do these symptoms overlap, but if a mental health issue or disorder are already present for an individual, a brain injury can make those symptoms worse. If you suspect your mental health issues may be caused by a brain injury, track your symptoms (like emotions and mental state) in a journal and try to identify when they first started and compare to when the brain injury occurred. This information can then be shared with medical professionals who can determine the cause and treatment for what you're experiencing.



What does treatment and recovery look like?

There is no “cure” for brain injury or mental health disorders. However, there are many effective treatment options to help decrease symptoms and help you manage challenges like cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication. When seeking treatment, it’s important to notify your doctor of a brain injury and/or any mental health issues you have.

Not all doctors who treat brain injury are mental health experts and vice versa, which is why being as honest as possible about your difficulties is key. If you live in Virginia, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help direct you to medical professionals who specialize in both brain injury and mental health.

Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help you better understand brain injury and consult with you about your personal situation. We can then direct you to services you might need in your area. Our services are confidential and free.

To get in touch:

Call **1-800-444-6443**

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