

Session Descriptions & Objectives

The New Normal: Welcoming Gratitude, Transformation, and Post-Traumatic Growth Following Brain Injury

Abigail Maslin, M.A.

In this keynote presentation, caregiver and author Abby Maslin shares the story of her husband's remarkable recovery from a severe traumatic brain injury following a violent assault. She discusses the many ways TBI impacts survivors and caregivers, including loss of identity, challenges in communication, and shifting family dynamics. She also illuminates the potential for transformative growth following a brain injury, discussing the roles of creativity, vulnerability, and gratitude in envisioning a new path forward. From building new relationships to accepting new identities, Maslin shares the emotional work required to create a rich and joyous "new normal."

Objectives:

1. Examine the potential of post-traumatic growth for survivors and caregivers of traumatic brain injury
2. Discuss the impact of familial and caregiver support in TBI
3. Illuminate the lesser known consequences of brain injury, including loss of identity and changing relationships

Brain Injury 101

Paul Aravich, M.D.

This session is an introduction to brain injury. Topics such as basic brain function, what is a brain injury, how it happens, and consequences will be reviewed and discussed.

Objectives:

1. Knowledge of the basic anatomy and function of the brain.
2. Understanding of the different types of brain injury (e.g. traumatic, anoxic, stroke)
3. Knowledge of the common causes of brain injury
4. Understanding of brain injury's impact on an individual's functional ability

Who from What

Harvey E. Jacobs, PhD, CLCP

Changes in neurological, physical and cognitive capacities post-injury affect life quality, but social and contextual issues are also important. How one is regarded contributes to success or failure. Where people live and interact, roles of others, available supports, and personal daily direction are important. Understanding concepts of context and social capital are also vital. Combined, this often delineates “who” from “what.”

Objectives:

1. Understand relationships between functional capacity, social reciprocity and context
2. Describe integrative skills concepts and their importance in life quality
3. Explain how one’s community hierarchy directly affects opportunity and personal abilities
4. Provide historical perspective for present challenges
5. Understand what “holistic” means!

Financial Planning for Your Families

Jeff Hammer

This session will provide comprehensive financial planning resources for families with special needs and brain injuries such as risk management planning (insurance, savings, debt, taxes) that will protect your family members, asset accumulation (special needs trusts, retirement, college, major purchases), and asset distribution (ongoing special needs provision, retirement, college).

Objectives:

Provide resources for family to:

- Preserve assets in special needs trusts to enable long-term provision for brain injury victims.
- Provide for multiple retirements (caregiver’s and cared for).
- Protect the entire family and efficiently build for future personal, professional, and financial goals.

Using Social Security’s Work Incentives to Work

Liz Horn

People who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) can use the Social Security Administration’s work incentives to work without losing their benefits. It’s important to understand how these rules work so you don’t jeopardize your benefits. When used properly, these incentives can help you earn more and create more financial and employment opportunities. Learn how to increase your income and expand your work horizons.

Objectives:

1. Understand key SSI and SSDI work incentives and how they apply to you.
2. Understand how to report your earnings from work.
3. Understand how Ticket to Work and Section 301 can help you maintain benefits when your case comes up for review.
4. Understand key resources to help you plan for work while receiving a benefit.

Enhancing Parenting Skills & Wellbeing

Amy Armstrong

This session will highlight the Enhancing Parenting Skills (EPS) of Civilians and Veterans with Traumatic Injury and their Non-injured Partners project. The presenters will provide background from the literature and applicable suggestions for ways in which parents can enhance their family's functioning and wellbeing. An overview of the project will also be provided. The project is funded by the Virginia Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative and is being developed by faculty at VCU.

Objectives:

1. To increase awareness of the availability of the project to community members and TBI professionals.
2. To discuss several challenges and strategies for facilitating optimal wellbeing and family functioning.
3. To develop a network of professionals and community members interested in parenting and families.

Clinical Assessments for the Brain Injured Patient

Lauren Vesper, MS, OTR/L

This presentation is targeted for healthcare providers that provide care for the brain injured patient. It will review various clinical assessment tools that can be utilized to assess the status of a patient with a brain injury, to include the Ranchos Los Amigos Scale, the JFK Come Recovery Scale, agitated behavior scale, and others.

Objectives:

1. Identify the different types of TBI
2. Identify the various assessment tools that can be used in the clinical setting for TBI patients
3. How to utilize assessment results to effectively intervene with the TBI patient

Team Approach to Recovery

Alison Alford, M.D. & Marley C. Robertson, COTA

This session will focus on discussing areas that can be affected when an individual sustains a concussion that are not the signature symptoms. These symptoms impact functioning at home, work, or school but are often not accounted for in the treatment plan. This session will therefore also focus on these items that are not typically discussed but can greatly impact the recovery process. The session will strive to shed light on common symptoms that are often overlooked following a variety of brain injuries from both a physician and patient perspective. Dr. Alford and Miss Robertson will present information from both points of view providing for a unique insight into such complicated recovery. Dr. Alford and Miss Robertson will discuss tips and strategies to assist with symptoms brain injury survivors experience in order to increase the survivors quality of life and participation in meaningful activities.

Objectives:

1. Educate on physical signs and symptoms commonly missed following a BI
2. Educate on cognitive symptoms commonly misattributed following a BI
3. Educate on impact on ADLs and social functioning following a BI. Educate on importance of nutrition, cognitive rest, water intake, etc.
4. Support survivors to advocate for themselves by recognizing their symptoms

Sleep-Wake Disorders After Traumatic Brain Injury

Daniel Cohen, M.D.

The session will provide an overview of basic aspects of sleep-wake regulation and how these processes may be disturbed by Traumatic Brain Injury. We will then discuss the clinical approach to dealing with new sleep issues and treatment strategies for these issues, particularly excessive daytime sleepiness and insomnia.

Objectives:

1. Describe common sleep-wake disorders resulting from Traumatic Brain Injury
2. Discuss the clinical evaluation process for sleep complaints
3. Highlight practical treatment strategies for sleep-wake disorders after brain injury

Pathways to Employment after Brain Injury

Jessica Dupuy

The path to employment after brain injury is long and circuitous. It is a path marked by failed first attempts, self-discovery, shifting expectations, and an ongoing search for the right supports and the perfect setting. During this session, participants will hear from a panel comprised of a brain injury Clubhouse Director, a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and individuals with brain injury who are employed by a variety of means in varied employment settings. The panel will highlight the resilience, perseverance and openness it takes to successfully gain and maintain employment after brain injury as well as describe the unique services and supports offered through the partnership of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and a Clubhouse model program.

Objectives:

1. Understand the obstacles both internal and external that individuals with brain injury must overcome to obtain employment.
2. Be made aware of the different pathways to employment and the levels of support available in different employment settings.
3. Understand the services and supports available in Virginia.