

# Social and recreational activities

**Having a social life and pursuing interests make life worthwhile and are important to consider following brain injury.**

## In this article:

- Staying socially connected
- Sport and recreation
- Learn new skills
- Volunteer
- Study
- Social support

### Staying socially connected

One of the most frustrating aspects of brain injury is that people often find themselves cut off from their previous life; unable to do the things they love or keep up with the social life they once had. As with other aspects of recovery, there are ways around these challenges. While it may not be possible to return to life as before, it is important to seek ways to stay socially connected and find activities that are rewarding and fun.

The first step is to speak with rehabilitation specialists and family to determine what your capabilities and limitations are at your current stage of recovery. It is very common for people with brain injury to feel that they are further along the road to recovery than they actually are.

### Sport and recreation

The work of organisations such as Disability Sports Australia ensures all Australians have access to sport at a recreational and professional level. Participating in sporting activities is good for your health while having the added benefit of social support networks.

### Learn new skills

Short courses are a great way to discover new skills and hobbies. Local councils across Australia run community programs with short courses and workshops, and usually keep lists of programs run by other organisations. TAFE colleges run adult education courses covering a range of activities such as art and crafts, boating, job skills, computers, cooking, languages, relaxation, interior decoration, photography, sports and creative writing. Online courses are an option when it is difficult to attend classes.

### Volunteer

For many, work is an integral part of self-esteem and being unable to work can be a contributing factor to the depression that is common after a brain injury. Volunteering can be rewarding and allows you to work at your own pace according to your current capabilities. Organisations such as GoVolunteer help people find volunteer work.



### **Study**

If returning to previous employment is not an option, studying can be the first step to a new career. Think carefully when choosing a course and speak to rehabilitation specialists for an assessment of your abilities. It might be better to start at a certificate level and commit to one subject at a time, then increase your study load gradually. Most educational institutions should have a Disabilities Officer who will help provide you with support through your course.

### **Social support**

Having the support of others is important following brain injury. However, it is not always easy to maintaining friendships, particularly if the injury has an impact on communication and social skills. This can be exacerbated by fatigue and sometimes a lack of physical mobility.

During the rehabilitation and recovery phase, staying in touch with friends can be worked into a schedule and might be as simple as making a phone call or sending an email. It is helpful when friends understand what kind of support is needed. For example, allowing time for you to answer or knowing that you will tire easily. Brain injury support groups are a great way to make new friends and share the experience of recovery. The rise of online support groups means you don't need to live nearby to share the benefits.