

TIPS FOR FAMILIES WHEN ANGER, AGGRESSION, OUTBURSTS OR TANTRUMS OCCUR IN YOUR LOVED ONE WHO HAS SUSTAINED A BRAIN INJURY

One of the biggest problems faced by persons with brain injury is controlling anger. This struggle can be caused by physical damage to your brain and/or stress, worry and depression. While anger can create many problems, it can be treated effectively.

Identify the source/cause and avoid or eliminate it, if possible. When an outburst does occur:

- Remain calm. Model calm behavior.
- Do not try to reason or argue with the person.
- Redirect the person's attention to something interesting.
- Remove the person from the situation and take the person to neutral ground.
- Remove other people from the situation if that seems to make things better.
- Remove yourself if you need to for your own safety. However, leaving the person alone or restraining them may make things worse. The individual may be feeling afraid or insecure. Remember that the way the person makes you feel may be the best indication of how they are feeling.

To help an individual get control over his or her own emotions:

- Have the person work with the people who care about him or her so that they can help the person remain in control. They can provide verbal reminders or other signals when the person is becoming angry and/or remind the person about what to do to avoid losing control. Let the individual decide if and how they want to receive these cues and reminders. Help the person to learn to recognize his or her own anger, to "see anger coming," and to remove her or himself from negative situations or to devise other personal strategies for remaining in control.
- Calming strategies might include counting, deep breathing, or talking to themselves with calming phrases. If possible, let the individual find what works for him or her and use it. For example, a familiar prayer, song, poem or saying can be repeated out loud or silently.
- The Individual might carry a reminder card or list of things to do to stay calm and in control.
- When the person is calm, provide concrete, non-judgmental feedback about the consequences of their behaviors (how it affects others and the individual).
- Teach the person how to take care of him or herself. For example, encourage the person to get enough rest, avoid alcohol/drugs, etc.