TRANSITIONING TO A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

PRESENTED BY: DOREEN BRIDGMAN MS, CCC, SLP
Goals of the presentation:

- Discuss the transition process and factors to consider
- Identify strategies to address cognitive and interpersonal challenges
- Discuss the need for and how to keep a balanced schedule
- Apps and technology
Student’s first day of kindergarten:
Student’s first day of college
A big transition takes place

- Students go from riding the bus to driving the bus

- The structure and guidance they received in high school likely won’t exist in college; they need to create their own

- How do we help them do this? What do they need?
Obstacles to overcome

- Decreased awareness

- Emotional changes
  1. Frustration
  2. Anger
  3. Irritability

- Cognitive changes
  1. Attention
  2. Memory
  3. Problem-solving
  4. Organization
  5. Decision-making
Awareness

- Awareness is a key component to setting up the plan and structure for success

**Questions to be answered:**

1. Can the student identify their strengths and weaknesses?
2. Can the student identify strategies that are helpful and state when and how to use them?
3. Can the student anticipate challenges and create a plan to manage those challenges?
Self-Awareness

- Term used to describe a person’s acknowledgement of his/her strengths and limitations (Fleming, J. 2010)
- To understand the nature of the impairment and appreciate the implications of that impairment
- A cognitive process that requires integration of information from both external reality and inner experience
- An interaction between thoughts and feelings
Crosson and colleagues (1989) identified three levels of awareness:

- Intellectual
- Emergent
- Anticipatory
Intellectual Awareness

- Basic acknowledgement that difficulties exist which resulted from the injury
- Ex. “I have difficulty focusing”
  - “I don’t remember things as well”
  - “I get frustrated more”

There is an understanding at some level that a particular function is impaired
Emergent Awareness

- The ability to recognize a problem as it is occurring during a task

  Ex. "recognizing in class that I can’t pay attention so I need to re-focus"
  “recognizing while I’m studying I can’t remember the info, so I need to make associations for better recall"
  “recognizing I’m getting frustrated as I can’t find enough sources for my research paper so I need to take a break”

**Recognition in a situation that a problem exists**
Anticipatory Awareness

- Ability to anticipate that a specific problem may be experienced in a specific task or situation

Ex. “I know my attention problem may affect me during class so I’m going to sit in the front, tape record, and use my attention strategies”

“I know my memory problem will affect how much information I will retain so I will review the information each night, instead of waiting for the night before the test”

“I know this project is going to frustrate me so I’m going to break it down into specific pieces to complete and take frequent breaks”

*The ability to anticipate the cognitive change on the level of functioning and be prepared to manage it*
Continued

- Each student can develop a **STRATEGY SHEET** to track their strategies.
- Before the first day of college the student should be able to complete the sentence
  “I know I have difficulties when **this happens**, but I can do **this strategy** to help myself”

This level of awareness will guide the student in everything from choosing a major, to picking their classes, to advocating for themselves with professors and other students. It is not always the level of difficulty, but the ability to be aware of and manage the difficulty, that can impact their level of success.
PLAN activities to be completed. Ask yourself, “How realistic is this plan?”

ANTICIPATE how the cognitive/physical/emotional difficulties you are aware of may effect your performance in the scheduled activities.

PLAN how you will manage these challenges. What strategies will you be prepared to use?
## Strategy Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficulty staying focused</td>
<td>1. Focus cue; work in a quiet environment; take breaks every 20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decreased memory</td>
<td>2. Cell phone reminders; review notes daily; association; visualization</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Decreased frustration tolerance</td>
<td>3. Take a break; walk away; STOP sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decreased reading comprehension</td>
<td>4. Re-read information; identify the main idea of each paragraph and then supporting details; highlight and outline information; PQRST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Difficulty with thought organization</td>
<td>5. STP (STOP-THINK-PLAN); write out script; rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Difficulty prioritizing tasks</td>
<td>6. WIN (What’s Important Now); NBA (Next Best Action)</td>
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</table>
Developing Awareness

- Double edge sword - necessary but it can hurt
- Prediction/Evaluation
- Concrete tasks - follow directions to construct something
- Computer based activities with scoring
- Avoid feedback situations which can be viewed as “subjective”
Choosing A College

- There are some colleges specific for students with learning difficulties

  **Beacon College** - Leesburg, Fl. Entire college for students with LD
  **Dean College** - Franklin, Mass. Provide a learning center
  **Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.** - Teaneck, N.J. Regional Center for College students with LD

- All colleges have departments for special services that can be contacted prior to making a college visit (Provision of ADA)
Coaching Model for Supporting Students with TBI

- Kennedy and Krause (2011) looked at the effectiveness of using a program that integrated a self-regulated learning theory using a dynamic coaching model.

- Study included two severely injured students with cognitive impairments who participated in weekly coaching sessions during the semester.

- Each session included direct instruction on strategies and as the semester progressed, students were asked to review use of, effectiveness of and the amount of time and effort the strategies were taking.

- Making metacognitive experiences was an important part of each session.
Results:

Both students:

- Reported increased use of more strategies at the end of the year when the study concluded
- Were in good academic standing
- Made positive academic and lifestyle changes
- Improved in some cognitive areas measured on standardized tests
Visiting the Campus

- Schedule a visit to the campus so the student can get a feel for the school
- Some questions to be thinking about…
  - Do the other students seem friendly?
  - What is the size of the campus?
  - Is there transportation?
  - How far is the walk between buildings?
  - Is the campus easy to navigate?
  - Are the buildings clearly marked?
Recommend taking notes and videos during the visits so that the information can be reviewed, and keep in mind when you are making multiple visits information can get mixed up between schools.

Once a decision has been made and their schedule is created, go back and do a walk thru:

- Write down landmarks to look for from going from one class to the next.
- Track how long it takes to get from one class to the next.
- Identify when can breaks be scheduled (lunch).
- Where can the student go if there is a break between classes? Library? Student center?
Choosing Classes

- Questions to consider
  - How many credits will be taken? Generally recommend part-time
  - What are the cognitive demands of the class? (memory, organization, reading)
  - How do these demands fall in line with the identified strengths and weaknesses? What is the experience with similar classes?
  - What time of day should classes be scheduled? Morning, mid-day, or evening?
  - How long are the classes?
  - What is the average number of students in each class? Lecture hall versus classroom size.
Disability Services

- The initial contact should be made when researching schools to which the student expects to apply.
- Ask about what programs they offer.
- If the student meets the criteria, academic accommodations can be put in place.
Perceptions of College Students following TBI

- Electronic survey completed by Kennedy, Krause, et al. (2008) distributed in Minnesota
- Results were based on 35 respondents
- Identified 3 broad categories related to the perception of the effects of their injuries
  - Physical/medical: fatigue, headaches, difficulty w/ their legs
  - Cognitive: memory, organization, decision making, attention
  - Psychosocial: anger, depression, difficulty w/ relationships
Study found that more than 80% of the students reported problems with schoolwork.

Less than half of the students who identified problems had used campus disability services.

20% of those students stated they were unaware of the services available.

Important for the student to learn about the services available and how to use them.
Examples of Accommodations

- Additional time for test completion
- Testing in a quiet environment
- Note-taker
- Preferential scheduling
- Spaced out mid-term and final schedule
- Dormitory accommodations may also be available:
  - Closer to the buildings where classes are held and/or cafeteria
  - Private room
  - Quiet floor or Quiet dorm
Unlike in high school, where the guidance counselor was responsible for alerting the teachers of the accommodations; in college it is often the responsibility of the student to share the accommodations with each professor. This can be challenging for some students.

Role plays may be necessary to increase the comfort level of the student with initiating this discussion.
Routines and structure are important for anyone with a TBI

When a student goes from high school to college, it appears they have a lot of “FREE TIME” - what they actually have is a lot of “UNSTRUCTURED TIME” that needs to be managed.

There are not a lot of opportunities throughout the semester for the student to assess how they are doing; if they fall behind in their reading they may not recognize it until midterms. By then it’s usually too late to make any significant change.
Time-management (Cass, 2011)

- 70% In class learning
- 30% learning outside classroom
- High School
Time-management (Cass, 2011)

- 70% learning outside the classroom
- 30% learning in the classroom
- College
Creating a Daily/Weekly Schedule

- Class schedule including travel time
- Homework time
- Meal times
- Rest periods
- Exercise/leisure
- Club/organization meetings
Developing A Weekly Schedule

- Identify what assignments are due that week in each class

- Identify specific homework times during which those assignments will be completed

- If additional time is needed; work that into the schedule

- Track task completion (It’s a good idea to track how long the assignments take so that the information can be used when a similar assignment is given)
Managing Semester Projects

- Time to complete semester or long term assignments needs to be identified in the weekly schedule
- Break down the assignment into pieces and assign a deadline for each piece; that deadline gets entered into the semester calendar or planner
- Track the progress toward each deadline; if a deadline is missed, the other deadlines will need to be modified
- Leave WIGGLE room for the unexpected; have the project completed a couple of days before it is due
- Create the plan for each assignment; review the syllabus for each course during the first week of the semester
Structuring A Semester Project

- Work backwards from the final date and set interim deadlines

**Psychology research paper**-Due May 15th
  - Goal is to have final paper completed May 12th
  - Final rough draft completed by May 9th to bring to the writing lab
  - Initial rough draft completed May 5th to bring to the writing lab
  - Outline completed by April 30th
  - Research completed by April 20th
  - Identify last three sources by April 4th
  - Identify first three sources by March 20th
  - Submit paper proposal to professor March 1st
Try to keep the daily activity level consistent throughout the week; this will help with endurance.

The goal is to maintain consistency and avoid the roller coaster effect of varied schedules.

Over doing it one day may lead to missed classes the next or reduced attention levels which will negatively impact performance.

Down time is as important as class and study time in the schedule. Missed meals and lack of sleep can lead to increased stress, illness, and burnout.
Sample Schedule

- **Sun 5/10**: Mothers' Day
- **Mon 5/11**: 8-9 Breakfast
- **Tue 5/12**: 8-9 Breakfast
- **Wed 5/13**: 8-9 Breakfast
- **Thu 5/14**: 8-9 Breakfast
- **Fri 5/15**: 8-9 Breakfast
- **Sat 5/16**: 8-9 Breakfast

**9am**
- 9am: 10-11 Yoga
- 10-11 History

**10am**
- 10-11 Sociology
- 10-11 History

**11am**
- 11am: 12-1 Lunch

**12pm**
- 12-1p: Lunch
- 12-1p: Art History
- 12-1p: Study for Art History

**1pm**
- 1-2pm: English
- 1-2pm: 1-2pm: Art History
- 1-2pm: Rest

**2pm**
- 2-3pm: Read for English
- 2-3pm: Rest
- 2-3pm: 2-3pm: Art History

**3pm**
- 3-4pm: Review Art History notes
- 3-4pm: Art History
- 3-4pm: Study for Art History

**4pm**
- 4-5pm: Finish reading Chap 7
- 4-5pm: Review index cards for Sociology
- 4-5pm: Finish online chap 7 - Sociology

**5pm**
- 5-6pm: Finalize rough draft
- 5-6pm: Review for Friday's exam
- 5-6pm: Review for Friday's exam

**6pm**
- 6-7pm: Dinner
- 6-7pm: Sue's b-day party

**7pm**
- 7pm: Dinner
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sun 5/10</th>
<th>Mon 5/11</th>
<th>Tue 5/12</th>
<th>Wed 5/13</th>
<th>Thu 5/14</th>
<th>Fri 5/15</th>
<th>Sat 5/16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12pm</td>
<td>Mothers' Day</td>
<td>12p - 1p Lunch</td>
<td>12p - 1p Lunch</td>
<td>12p - 1p Lunch</td>
<td>12p - 1p Lunch</td>
<td>12p - 1p Lunch</td>
<td>12p - 3p Errands</td>
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<td>1pm</td>
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<td>2pm</td>
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<td>1:30p - 2:30p English</td>
<td>1:30p - 2:30p Art History</td>
<td>1:30p - 2:30p English</td>
<td>1:30p - 2:30p Study, grn-Art Hx</td>
<td>1:30p - 2:30p Art History</td>
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<td>3pm</td>
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<td>3p - 4p Rest</td>
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<td>3p - 4p Rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>4pm</td>
<td>4:30p - 5:30p Finalize notes</td>
<td>4:30p - 5:30p Finish reading Chap 7, Eng</td>
<td>4:30p - 5:30p Review index cards, Hist</td>
<td>4:30p - 5:30p Finish outline Chap 7, Eng</td>
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<td>6pm</td>
<td>6p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>6p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>6p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>6p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>6p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>8p - 7p Dinner</td>
<td>6p - 11p Sue's b-day party</td>
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<tr>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>7:30p - 8:30p Make-up study cards, Sociology Ch 9</td>
<td>7:30p - 8:30p Review paintings Art Hx</td>
<td>7:30p - 8:30p Begin Chap 7 outline, Eng</td>
<td>7:30p - 8:30p Laundry</td>
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<td>8pm</td>
<td>8p - 9p Movies</td>
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How to manage the TIME CRUNCH

Lou Holtz and Mark Pfaff said focus on

- What's Important Now
- Next Best Action
Strategies To Stay On Schedule

- Timers
- Alarms on cell phones
- Schedule apps
- Reminder apps
Sleep

- Sleep is extremely important for cognitive functioning and is often impacted by a TBI (Ponford, Ziino, et al. 2012)

- Every student should know the minimum amount of sleep they need per night

- Sleep hygiene programs are available

- Colleges will often have “Quiet Halls” or “Quiet Dorms” for those students living on campus
Factors That Impact Cognition

- Stress
- Emotions
- Fatigue
- Pain

As these factors increase, cognition decreases and the threshold for Information Overload is reduced.
The term I use to describe when your brain needs a break; it has reached its max at that moment and cannot comprehend any additional information.

At that point, Quiet Time is needed.

Everyone has an Overload threshold; for people with TBI they reach that threshold faster than they did before the injury.

Symptoms of Information Overload may include:

- Increased frustration
- Decreased attention
- Increased difficulty although task complexity has not changed
What to do?
Strategies to Manage Information Overload

- STOP BREATHE RE-START
- Pacing
- Avoid the warning track by using the schedule developed
- Set realistic expectations
Stress Management

- Each student should have identified strategies to use when increased stress occurs; because *stress will happen*
  - Yoga/Pilates
  - Cardio-vascular exercise—proven to reduce depression and anxiety and increase cognition
  - Journaling
  - Visualization
  - Biofeedback

  **Stress reduction time needs to be included into the weekly schedule to ensure the strategies are implemented consistently**
Sources of Stress

- Academic demands
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Problem-solving difficulties
When you think about where a majority of your daily stress comes from; you will likely identify it is related to people. Either people you wish you had in your life or the DRAMA related to the people who are in your life.

Factors that can impact communication include:

- Information processing/memory
- Word-finding
- Thought organization
- Cognitive inflexibility
- Problem-solving
Continued:

- These factors can interfere with the ability to establish and maintain relationships.
- If a student experiences processing difficulties, he/she may need to ask for repetition or may misunderstand the message being sent.
- Word finding and thought organization difficulties can interfere with the ability to accurately send the desired message.
- Cognitive inflexibility can be interpreted as “It’s my way or the highway.”
Many young adults have not developed **assertiveness skills**; it’s not easier to develop them after a TBI but it’s probably more necessary.

Students need to advocate for themselves with professors and other students.

Students will need to make requests and state their needs effectively.
# Styles of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not express needs</td>
<td>Expresses needs w/out ignoring needs of others</td>
<td>Expresses needs w/out regard for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft tone of voice</td>
<td>Audible level of voice</td>
<td>Loud voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited to no eye-contact; stays in the background</td>
<td>Sustained eye-contact; respects personal space of others</td>
<td>Glaring, staring; invades personal space of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t know”</td>
<td>“I think we should…” Attempts to compromise</td>
<td>“You have to …” Demand ing tone and statements; no attempt to compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t care”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Whatever you want”</td>
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Role-plays

- Provide practice with developing assertive statements; this will also address the word-finding and thought organization difficulties that may exist.
- Practice using the assertive statements. Example: “One of the accommodations I have been approved for is testing in a quiet environment. How do I arrange for that?”
- Gradually increase the level of stress in the role-play to identify the impact on performance.
- Video-tape when possible for review.
- Incorporate peer situations as well (i.e.; need to get sleep and roommates TV is too loud).
Interpersonal Problem-Solving Strategy

- Developed at the Center for Head Injuries in Communication Group
- Structure which includes
  1. Identification of the problem
  2. Identification of the needs of everyone involved
  3. Brainstorm potential solutions
  4. Identify the pros/cons of each solution by comparing them to the needs identified
  5. Choose the alternative that meets the most needs
  6. Develop an assertive statement
  7. Implement the solution using the statement and evaluate
Problem-Solving Strategy

- Needs of self
- Needs of person #1
- Needs of person #2
- Needs of person #3

Problem Statement
Problem-Solving Strategy

1. State the problem
2. State the needs of each person involved
3. Brainstorm potential solutions
4. Identify the pros/cons of each solution
5. Choose the alternative that meets the most needs
6. Develop an assertive statement
7. Implement the solution using the assertive statement
Technology and Apps

- When looking at options identify:
  - Ease of learning
  - Cost
  - Generalization between classes
deJoode; Proot; et al. 2012 looked at the use of standard calendar software by individuals with and without a brain injury. Two groups participated; 15 people with ABI and a control group of 15 people. Both groups were able to learn to use the software. The ABI population experienced more cognitive problems and showed stronger emotions during the task performance. The control group experienced more success and required less time to learn the software.
Training people with ABI needs to focus on the influence of each individual's needs with regard to:
- Cognitive processing
- Emotional reactions
- Fatigue level
- Environmental factors

Provide sufficient time for training prior to expecting independent use of the software. This timeframe will vary from student to student.
Apps

- Calendar apps
  - Week calendar
  - Awesome Calendar Life
  - Calendars by Readdle (sync w/ Google calendar)

- To Do
  - Reminder
  - Check It
  - Remind Me
Reading/Note-taking

- Read and Write for Google

- Natural Reader-screen reader; access the online textbook through the Disability Services Office at the school

- NVDA (Nonvisual Desktop Access)-free screen reader; reads the text in a computerized voice; students can direct what is read by moving the cursor to the area of interest

- Sonocent-audio note-taker software
Study Aid Websites

- Studystack: Access to free flashcards in a variety of subjects or students can create their own and review; cards get sorted into categories-Correct vs. Incorrect for further review.

- Funnel Brain: Access to their pre-made index cards, students can also create their own; students can create online study groups and/or take or create practice quizzes.

- Koofers and Exam Heroes-two sites that post previous lectures, study guides and previous examinations that can be used as study tools; ensure agreement with current professor.

- Youtube
Finding a Balance with Technology

- Important to keep in mind:
  - Information Overload
  - Time-management
  - New learning skills for technology based strategies

- Introduce:
  - One new app at a time and monitor effectiveness
  - Provide practice before semester begins: enough new information will be introduced during the first few weeks of school
Potential Keys to Success

- Awareness of strengths and weaknesses which leads to:
  - Ability to set realistic expectations
  - Ability to manage challenges
- Assertive communication skills
  - Ability to get needs met in the classroom
  - Ability to develop new relationships and demonstrate respect for personal differences
- Understanding the benefit of accessing Disability Services
Potential Keys to Success (con’t)

- Stress Management
  - Ability to recognize personal stressors
  - Ability to implement effective strategies

- Time management skills
  - Meet deadlines
  - Develop a balance which is a life skill

- Effective use of apps and technology
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