
A MESSAGE FROM YOUR BRAIN

Fact Sheet

If our brains could talk, what would they want to tell us after acquiring a brain injury?

Hello, I'm glad to see that you are awake! This is your brain talking. I had to find some way to communicate with you. I feel like I barely survived World War Three and am still not quite all in one piece. That's why I need you. I need you to take care of me.

Don't Be Impatient

I feel better and better: people, even doctors, will tell you that we are fine, "It's time to get on with life." That sounds good to me and probably even better to you. But before you go rushing back into that big wide world, I need you to listen to me, really listen. Don't shut me up. Don't tune me out. When I'm getting into trouble I'll need your help more than I ever have before. I know that you want to believe that we are going to be the same. I'll do my best to make that happen. The problem is that too many people in our situation get impatient and try to rush the healing process; or when their brains can't fully recover they deny it and, instead of adapting, they force their brains to function in ways they are no longer able to. Some people even push their brains until they seize, and worse ... I'm scared. I'm afraid you will do that to me. If you don't accept me I am lost. We will both be lost.

Don't Overdo Things

What I need to do is this: because neither of us knows how badly I've been hurt (things are still a little foggy for me), or how much I will recover, or how quickly, please go

s-l-o-w-l-y when you start back trying to resume your life. If I give you a headache, or make you sick to your stomach, or make you unusually irritable, or confused, or disoriented, or afraid, or make you feel that you are over-doing it, I'm trying to get your attention in the only way I can. Stop and listen to me.

I get exhausted easily since being hurt, and cannot succeed when overworked. I want to succeed as much as you do. I want to be as well as I can be, but I need to do it at a different pace than I could before I got hurt. Help me to help us by paying attention and heeding the messages I send to you.

Don't Give Up

I will do my part to do my very best to get us back on our feet. I am a little worried, though, that if I am not exactly the same you will reject me and may even want to kill us. Other people have wanted to kill their brains, and some people have succeeded. I don't want to die, and I don't want you to die. I want us to live and breathe and be, even if being is not the same as it was. Different may be better. It may be harder too, but don't give up on me. Don't give up on yourself. Our time here isn't through yet. There are things that I want to do and I want to try, even if trying has to be done in a different way. It isn't easy. I have to work very hard, much harder, and I know that you do too. I see people scoff, and misunderstand. I don't

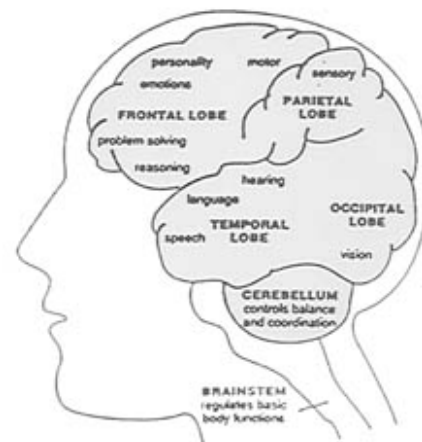
A message from your brain ...

care. What I do care about is that you understand how hard I am working and how much I want to be as good as I can be, but I need you to take good care of us, as well as you can. Don't be ashamed of me. We are alive. We are still here. I want the chance to be better, to learn what is really important.

When it is finally time for our final exit I would like to look back and feel good about what we've made of us and out of everything that made up our life, including this injury. I cannot do it without you. I cannot do it if you hate me for the way being injured has affected me and our life together. Please try not to be bitter in grief. That would crush me. Please don't reject me. There is little I can do without you, without your determination not to give up. Take good care of us and of yourself. I need you very much, especially now.

The long-term effects of a brain injury may not be evident for some time. At best, those with a mild brain injury may be able to return to work but will spend the rest of their lives battling a range of cognitive problems. Others will find themselves dependent on others for the rest of their lives, while the most unfortunate may never emerge from a state of coma.

Be good to your brain ...



... it's with you for life.

"Here I am nearly three years later and I still haven't resolved many of the issues resulting from it all. I still experience disorientation and confusion, with an impairment of memory, and I have troubles with concentration and fatigue. I've searched for some way of describing how I feel. The closest I've come to is to say that it is like having malaria without the fever."

- Brain Injury Survivor