



**BRAIN INJURY
ASSOCIATION
OF LONDON
AND REGION**

Winter Issue December 2016

THE MONARCH

ABI and Winter Blues





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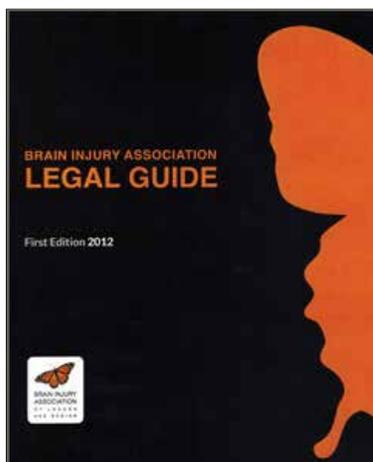
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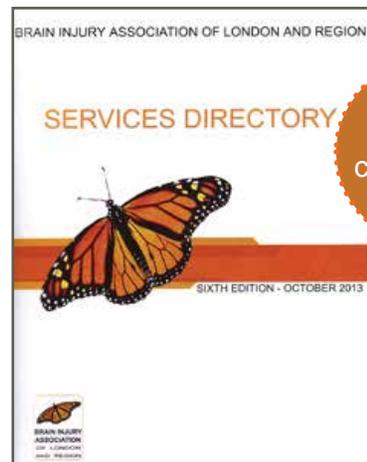
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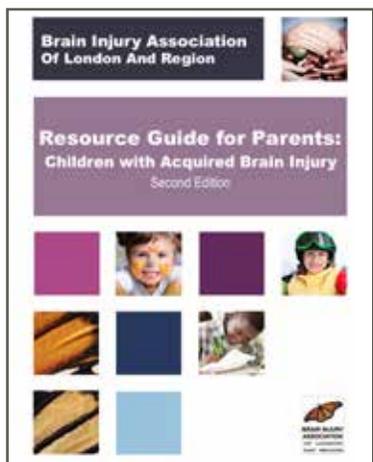


This legal guide is published by BIALR, in collaboration with Harrison Pensa, and is in its first edition. It is designed to provide straightforward accessible explanation of key legal issues and fundamental legal rights of those who have suffered brain injuries and their support teams. Print copies are available from the BIALR office and electronically on the website.

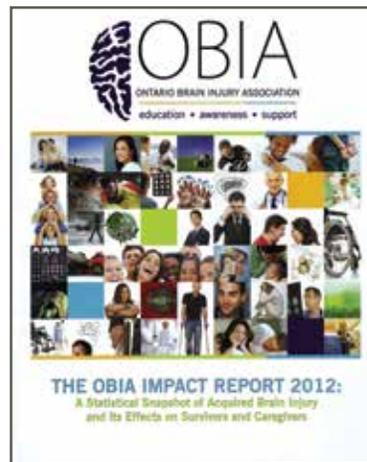


new edition coming soon!

This directory is published by BIA London and Region and is in its 6th edition. It is designed to help individuals suffering from the effects of a brain injury identify and locate the services in London and Region. (Print copies are available from the BIALR office and electronically on the website.)



This resource is published by BIALR and is in its first edition. This compilation of articles is designed as an informational resource for parents of children who are suffering from the effects of an acquired brain injury. Print copies are available from the BIALR office.



The OBIA Impact Report 2012 is published by the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA), with support and funding provided by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation. It is designed as an easy to read statistical snapshot of acquired brain injury and its effects on survivors and their caregivers. Electronic copies are available on the OBIA website.

Online Resources:

- Brain Injury Association of London and Region - braininjurylondon.on.ca
- Ontario Brain Injury Association - obia.ca
- Brainline.org, preventing, treating, and living with traumatic brain injury - brainline.org
- Brain Injury Association of Queensland - synapse.org.au
- National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury (Virginia Commonwealth University) - www.tbinc.com



Letter from The Executive Director

As we enter the winter season, we are reminded that each brain injury is as unique as a snowflake, with no two ever being identical. This issue of the Monarch focuses on a varied range of articles from sleep, diet & life-style; the pursuit of happiness to depression and loneliness.

The fundraising committee did a stellar job once again in their planning of the 2nd Annual Boots & Brains Barn Dance. I would like to offer a special thank you to Steve Plunkett & Janis Fields for their generosity in letting us have the use of their agility barn to host the event. Hot on the heels of this wonderful event, the committee has jumped right into putting the finishing touches on our 9th Annual Casino Night at West Haven Golf & Country Club. We are currently working on the revision of our Sponsorship Catalogue for 2017 and I will be in touch with past, present & future sponsors to discuss any changes to the sponsorship offerings.

“All GOOD things must come to an end..to make way for BETTER things to happen because the BEST is yet to come”. After 16 years of offering the annual gala in March, we have decided to place a greater focus of our fundraising efforts on expanding Mikes Walk for Brain Injury. It is our hope that the walkathon can be more inclusive and easier for folks in general to participate. Plan to secure pledges and join us in Springbank Park on Sunday May 28, 2017 for a fun filled morning of family activities, and walking. Please contact me if you are interested in helping out with the planning committee.

We are extremely excited to be offering two new initiatives beginning January 15, 2017. The community awareness committee is in the throes of planning a series of webinars of relevant topics specific to caregivers. In addition, we are offering a Concussion Information Group in Perth County. Depending on the outcome, we are hopeful this 5 week pilot project will eventually be offered in all 5 counties. Make sure to keep an eye out for the details in our e-newsletters.

As 2016 winds down, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your role in the continued success of our Association. Whether you are a survivor, family member, caregiver, volunteer, sponsor, event attendee, or donor, it is YOU who makes our Association rock!

Donna Thomson

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website: www.braininjurylondon.on.ca

Registered Charitable Number:
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We Need Your Help!

Volunteer Opportunities Available

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering, we are looking for energetic people to join our team!

We are currently seeking volunteers to assist us with various support groups, charitable events and committees.

Support Group Leaders and Speakers:

-For all 5 counties: London/Middlesex, Perth, Elgin, West Elgin, Oxford and Huron

Committee Members:

- Community Awareness
- Fundraising
- Support Services
- Conference
- Editorial

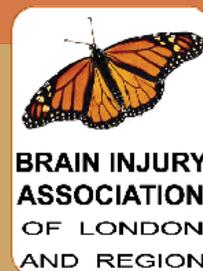
50/50 Ticket Sellers:

- Nationals Hockey Games



If you are interested in volunteering or have questions please email:

volunteer@braininjurylondon.on.ca



Brain Injury Support and Social Lesiure Groups

If you or someone you love has experienced a Brain Injury, you may benefit from participating in one of our many support groups. These groups meet on a monthly or weekly basis and offer people who live with the effects of a brain injury the chance to: meet and discuss common issues and problems, learn more about living with ABI and to have fun in a positive environment.



Huron County Support Group

This group meets the second Monday of each month at the OMAFRA Office
100 Don Street Clinton ON
6:00 to 8:00pm



Perth County Support Group

This group meets the last Tuesday of each month at the Zehrs Markets 2nd Floor Community Room
865 Ontario Street, Stratford ON
7:00pm - 9:00pm



Perth County Social Leisure Group

This group meets every Wednesday of each month at the Avondale Church
194 Avondale Ave, Stratford, ON
12:30 - 3:00pm



London / Middlesex Support Group

This group meets the last Thursday of each month at the First Baptist Church
586 Richmond Street, London ON
7:00pm - 9:00pm



Oxford County Support Group

This group meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Dundas United Church
285 Dundas Street, Woodstock ON
6:30pm - 8:30pm



Elgin County Support Group

This group meets the second Monday of each month at the Elgin Mall Community Room
417 Wellington Street St. Thomas ON
6:30pm - 8:30pm



West Elgin County Support Group

This group meets the second and fourth Monday of each month at the Heritage Homes Community Hub
146 Munroe Street, West Lorne ON
1:00pm - 2:30pm



Joint Membership Program

Brain Injury Association of London and Region & the Ontario Brain Injury Association

Invite you to belong to both organizations for one low fee! Further information and the application form can be found on the Brain Injury Associations website:

www.braininjurylondon.on.ca
under "how to help"



Disclaimer:

The Monarch is published by the Brain Injury Association of London and Region.

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors.

All articles remain in their submitted un-edited form to preserve the original views and intent of the author.

The publication of an advertisement does not imply support of the advertiser by the Association. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please contact us at:

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Peer Support Coordinator's Report

.....➔

The first brain injury conference I ever attended was the 9th annual conference of the Brain Injury Association of London & Region 10 years ago in 2006. While there, I was introduced to some lawyers who were interested in having a Christmas card adorned with either the artwork, or a poem by a brain injury survivor. Seeing as writing was my strength and talent before and after my injuries, I toyed around with the notion that brain injuries and snowflakes are alike in that they're unique: there is not one other like it. The method of injury can be the same, but the outcomes and side effects can be similar to another, but not identical. For example, Take Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which is typically seen in the transition between fall and winter with the longer days and cooler weather that we commonly associate with the latter part of the year. The results or outcomes of SAD are quite similar to the lasting affects of brain injury: major depression, tiredness, trouble sleeping, and feelings of anxiety, but they are not identical because not only are the therapies and treatments for both disorders are wide and varied for SAD and brain injury -you wouldn't see a sufferer of SAD seeking treatment in a physiotherapy gym! The cause of a brain injury is different whether it be a fall, car collision, assault or brain tumour, or aneurysm, the brain has still suffered some level of trauma, and thus one is affected by the plethora outcomes similar to Seasonal Affective Disorder and brain injury can share!



Jamie Fairles
Peer Support Coordinator
519-642-4539
editorial@braininjurylondon.on.ca



Looking To Get Involved?

We are looking for individuals to become mentors in our Peer Mentor Program. Mentors provide support and share information and resources with partners who are coping with a similar ABI-related situation. We are in particular need of mentors who are family members and caregivers. Visit our website or contact our Peer Support Coordinator for more information.

www.braininjurylondon.on.ca



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“ *We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give.*

– Winston Churchill



McKenzie Lake is proud to support the Brain Injury Association of London and Region for everything they do for our community.



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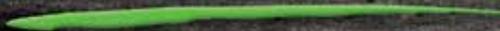
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Highlighting Our Volunteers

Just A Note To Say Thank You!

Matt Penny

Tell us a little about yourself?

My name is Matthew Penny. I am 25 years old and was born in London, Ontario. I am currently employed at CAMI Automotive. I am a recent graduate of the Law Clerk Program at Fanshawe College, and I am enrolled in the Insurance and Risk Management Program commencing in January, 2017.

How long have you been volunteering with the Brain Injury Association?

I have volunteered with the Brain Injury Association for the last few years with various fundraising events. In about the last year I have been more committed to assisting the Brain Injury Association and I am glad to contribute more of my time to this great and underappreciated cause.

Why did you choose to volunteer with the BIA?

I chose to volunteer with the BIA because of my awareness of brain injuries and the severity to which they impact people's lives. My step-mom is a rehabilitation therapist and I have seen first hand the assistance people with brain injuries need to be able to live their lives.

What makes you come back to BIA year after year?

I come back to the BIA to assist with events mostly because it supports the work that members of the BIA do. In many occasions, government assistance and other forms of coverage are simply not enough to provide people with brain injuries with the care they need. I am glad to assist a cause like the BIA that provides education, advocacy and public awareness on behalf of an underserved people who are often invisible when it comes to public discussion of helping those in need.

Do you have a favorite moment from your time here that you would like to share?

I don't have a specific moment that comes to mind, but I do have a reoccurring situation that brightens my day-when patrons of BIA fundraisers enthusiastically support our cause. Two people who, by my memory, have recently stood out are Nick Paparella and Nigel Gilby. Nick was an excellent and jubilant MC at the most recent BIA Casino Night and Nigel's enthusiasm at many BIA events is always appreciated and motivating as a volunteer. It reminds you that the patrons are as glad to help out as the volunteers.

What would you say to someone that is considering volunteering with BIA

I would say that while the Brain Injury Association would be glad to have volunteers of all skillsets, it's remembering why you are volunteering is the most important part. It's always important to assist in our community by helping out those most in need. The BIA fills a role in the community that is desperately needed. Helping them help others is a great way to become a contributing member of your community.



The Loneliest Season

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It's probably safe to say that the holidays aren't the most wonderful time of the year for every family. Sometimes it feels like the weighty emphasis on traditions, family, and joy can have the opposite effect, illuminating the missing pieces in our lives, the things we desire but do not possess, and our unfulfilled dreams.

As I think back to the first winter following my husband's injury, I have to admit I've never been lonelier than I was during those cold, long months. It's hard to explain to people, even people you love and trust, what despairing agony it is to sleep next to a person who has little to no awareness of your needs or feelings. This was my reality for nearly a year. For other caregivers, it can be a permanent reality. Yes, my husband TC was alive, but he was no longer my husband. And I was no longer a wife. I was a robotic hybrid of a mother, a chauffeur, and a therapist.

My gnawing loneliness was only amplified during the holidays that year. With a 2-year-old son in tow (one I was desperately trying to protect against the misery of our new circumstances), I was determined to make the holidays merry and bright. I powered through with an astonishing amount of energy, purchasing everyone's gifts, writing and addressing more than 800 Christmas cards, and even learning to cook a turkey (a true feat for a vegetarian like myself). I was on a mission, one that also involved hiding my real feelings behind a big, fake holiday grin.

The truth is I was so lonely I was worried I was going crazy. At night, I would close my eyes and silently speak to the husband who no longer existed. "TC, can you believe this?" I'd talk to him, believing that he was the only one who could possibly understand the insanity our lives had become. And yet, there was my husband, still alive, sleeping

right next to me, seemingly unaware of my existence, and most certainly unaware that I was busy talking to his ghost.

At my most lonely moments, I tried hard to force some logic into my consciousness. He's doing the best that he can, I'd remind myself. Every bit of mental energy is going into his recovery. When he can be there for you again, he will. But these words were only of moderate comfort during the hardest hours.

TC was in his own prison of sorts. Unable to articulate himself through speech or to understand much of what was being said to him, his placid facial expression was his only means of feigning interaction with others. I'll never be able to fully appreciate the depth of his solitude during that time period. I can only empathize with the shared pain of feeling wholly isolated from the ones you love most.

This was a dark period, one in which I claim many admitted failures. So desperate was I to break through TC's wall of inattention that I occasionally picked fights in the sad hope of eliciting some reaction. This never proved to be a successful coping strategy, as lingering in moments of despair rarely conclude with any sense of satisfaction.

Within time, however, I began to learn an important lesson. To fight loneliness, you must be one hell of a friend to yourself. You must learn to practice self-forgiveness on a daily basis. You must also learn to identify each of your happy little pick-me-ups and then indulge in them at just the right times. The diverting power of good books and bad television should never be underestimated. Neither should a good cry or a journal entry. The writing I did during this period was more powerful than anything since. And even though I'd happily trade that misery for a little less creative material, I'm glad I

“ Those of us in the brain injury world have been there, and we know that the sadness can be unspeakable at times ”

decided to put those complicated, heartbroken feelings into words because they will forever remind me that I, too, am a survivor.

Good friends have also been essential in learning to live with loneliness, but I buffer this claim with a caveat. As I've discovered, not every friend is built for the "real" conversations you will inevitably broach. Not everyone is willing or capable of going to that dark place with you, and some may even project judgment when you do. What seems to be true, however, is that you learn quickly which friends are willing to get their hands dirty and jump in the trenches with you. And those are the friends you need on speed dial for the moments in which the loneliness becomes supremely intolerable.

Lastly, there is one simple fact that is always of comfort: you are not alone. It is a horrible, cruel thing to lose a human connection with someone, particularly a spouse, child, or family member. Those of us in the brain injury world have been there, and we know that the sadness can be unspeakable at times. You are not selfish for craving companionship or for letting yourself feel the full weight of your sadness from time to time. Over the years I have found a lot of solace in reading the writing of other TBI caregivers. Honesty is healing, and other people's stories provide a powerful testament to the strength and resilience of both the brain and the spirit. Sometimes it seems that simply believing in happy endings can help us steer our lives in that direction.

As you prepare to face any personal challenges this season, I wish you abundant peace, patience, and self-love. It's lonely on both sides of this TBI coin, but never hesitate for a moment to lean on this network of supporters. You are always among friends here.

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SLEEP, DIET & LIFESTYLE

The Foundation of Healthy Living

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When faced with stressful life events our bodies tend to react in ways that often create chemical and behavioural changes which lead to problems with sleep. When under pressure and coping with difficult circumstances we also often neglect to maintain a healthy diet and balanced lifestyle.

It is amazing how often people who are in the midst of coping with stressful situations and experiencing some anxiety or depression forget to manage their sleep, diet and lifestyle appropriately. Sleep, diet and lifestyle are critical areas which can either help or hinder a person's ability to cope.

Sleep

Sleep is one of the most vital and critical behaviours necessary for human survival. Much research has shown that when humans are denied sleep for long periods of time they can suffer major psychological and physical problems which, if prolonged, can cause irreversible damage. I'm sure most of us can remember a time where not enough sleep made us irritable and difficult and made concentrating on things at work or with family quite hard at times.

Many people with psychological difficulties find their condition improved significantly after their sleep pattern was restored. Research has shown that an improved sleep pattern can assist in the recovery from depression.

Tips for a good night's sleep

Go to bed when you are sleepy and get up at the same time every morning. Try to avoid sleeping in longer trying to make up for "lost sleep" as this will alter your sleep/wake cycle. Avoid taking naps during the day.

Do not lie in bed worrying about issues. Write things down and make time during the day for problem-solving. If you can't sleep then, after about 10 minutes, get up and engage in a healthy relaxing activity such as listening to your favourite music, and practicing breathing and relaxation techniques. Return to bed when you feel sleepy again.

Avoid the use of alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine products such as tea, coffee, and cola soft drinks after about 4pm. Avoid having more than two to three caffeine drinks during the day. Regular exercise during the day can improve sleeping patterns.

Diet

Diet is another important aspect of coping with life successfully. Eating a balanced diet, getting appropriate nutrition and limiting bad foods and substances can help prevent burnout and assist in recovering from difficult life problems, as well as improve our ability to maintain our physical health and fight off disease and infection. Research has well established the link between nutrition, diet and physical illness. More recently research has shown the effect of a poor diet (e.g. excessive consumption of caffeine [tea/coffee], alcohol, simple sugars and other food products) on stress problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, and problems with mood, attention and concentration.

Tips for a balanced healthy diet

Make sure you eat regular meals at planned times during each day. Avoid skipping meals or neglecting to eat during busy periods.

Even if you have lost your appetite try not to disrupt your normal eating pattern. Still sit down to eat your breakfast, for example, at your regular time even if you just have a nibble as your body will still be experiencing its normal routine which is important to maintain.

Avoid snacking excessively between meals and avoid unhealthy snacks. Plan ahead to make sure you have plenty of healthy foods available to eat when you feel like having morning or afternoon tea (you may need to try a few healthy foods to find some you really like).

Avoid consuming more than two to three caffeine drinks (e.g. tea and coffee) each day and never after 4pm. Learn more about healthy diets from experts. Remember, generally speaking in a healthy diet you should eat:

- lots of fruits, vegetables, breads, cereals, grains and seafood
- moderate amounts of chicken, lean meat, nuts, eggs and dairy products
- very little sugar, fat, alcohol and salt.

When shopping for food, buy foods consistent with your dietary goals. Limit the amount of “junk” food - if you don't buy it you won't eat it. Avoid grocery shopping when you are hungry.

If you do choose to lose or gain weight - ALWAYS seek professional advice and support to ensure your plan will work and you will not adversely affect your health. Enjoy eating - make it a fun and pleasurable activity each day.

Lifestyle

Not only do we need to eat well and get enough sleep. We also need to exercise regularly and do activities that keep our bodies fit and healthy. Research has shown that exercise can assist in helping people cope with depression and also has been shown to be important in regulating sleep/wake cycles, and helping anxious or stressed people with sleeping problems improve their sleep.

Lifestyle is also about activities we engage in. Do we organise routine in our lives to assist in regular meals and times for rest or are things less predictable placing strain on our body's ability to cope?

Are we too busy or not busy enough? Being too busy creates vulnerability to burnout. Not being busy enough can make us worry about problems excessively and become less focused and potentially leaves us with less meaningful activity and a lack of meaning and purpose to life.

Tips on balancing your lifestyle

Plan regular times each day for exercise. Use lunch breaks to go for walks and get some time outdoors. Generally speaking healthy adults need at least one hour's energetic exercise each week. Ideally plan for at least three sessions of 20 minutes energetic physical activity per week.

Develop interests and hobbies consistent with improving fitness and lifestyle. Take an interest in active sports and hobbies which allow active time in the outdoors.

Learn more about nutrition and cooking. Enhance your culinary skills - hold dinner parties with friends.

Develop friends whom you can share interests with. Remember you may need to develop a range of friends who may appreciate different aspects of who you are. Diverse friendships allow for a variety of experiences and a broad social base for you to grow and develop across all areas of your life.



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Brain Health Network

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The Giving Season

This holiday season please consider donating
 to the Brain Injury Association of London and
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Visit our website to donate today.

Preventing Brain Injuries During Winter Activities

Submitted By: Janko Stukic

Source: www.bisociety.org/preventing-brain-injuries-during-winter-activities/

It does not matter whether you like to snowshoe after a big snowstorm, hit the slopes on the weekends or play a casual game of hockey, there are plenty of winter activities and they are a great way to ward off “cabin fever” during the seemingly long winter months. However, as with any and all physical activities there is a risk of receiving a brain injury, particularly with snow and ice creating hazardous conditions. Even though the danger of a head injury is real and can happen to anyone at any time, there is no reason not to go out and enjoy the snowy season; just make sure you exercise caution!

Brain Injuries Aren't Just Sports-Related Injuries

From youth to the NFL, the media is filled with news of athletes of all ages and abilities who fall victim to a serious and even life threatening brain injury. Yes there may be a substantial amount of brain injuries that occur from a sports activity, but a large amount of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) occur from a fall. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) over 30% of TBI causes result from falls and the winter can definitely be a dangerous season for falls, including a slip and fall on an icy sidewalk, stumbling down a hill while skiing or falling during a hockey game. In all of these events, a TBI may occur along with other kinds of injuries such as sprains or breaks.

Enjoy the Outdoors & Preventing Injury

It is not always easy to put life on hold when the weather conditions become treacherous. As nice as it would be to stay home with a fire in the fireplace and sit on the couch with a good book, our lives are too busy. Even running a few simple errands during the winter months can become a challenge when parking lots become more like ice rinks or your own sidewalk becomes a threatening path. Consider the tips below to avoid injury during play and everyday activities:

Preventing slips and falls

Seeing as falls are one of the leading causes of TBIs, it is important for you to stay upright during the winter. Whether it is taking the dog out for a short walk around the block or heading to the grocery store, the pace you take is key. It is usually the people that hurry or get distracted who are more likely to fall. Walk slowly and pay attention to the surface you are on will help to prevent falling on icy surfaces. Always wear boots or shoes with good tread but try to avoid ice if possible. The more aware you are, the less likely you will be to fall and hit your head.

Winter Fun for All Ages

Whatever you do, skate, ski or sled, pay attention to the conditions before committing to an activity. For example, when you take the family sledding, inspect the area for large bumps that may result in an accident. Remember, a hidden hill and a fast hill can send a sledder sailing through the air and hitting his or her head on compacted snow. And if you or your child would rather try out skiing or snowboarding, always wear a helmet, because even professional winter athletes know the importance of wearing a helmet. During winter activities, many people receive their head injuries due to inexperience or carelessness. It is vital that you always have a good understanding of what you are doing and if you don't, take some lessons!

Whatever activity it is you do, during any season of the year (not just winter!), proceed with caution. But do not forget to have fun, but do not forget to use your head to save your brain.

ASK A LAWYER

It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year – and the Most Dangerous

Submitted by: Dan MacDonald, Legate & Associates LLP



As the holiday song says, this certainly can be the most wonderful time of the year. However, it can also be one of the most dangerous. Many injuries are a direct result of winter conditions, and a failure to prepare for those conditions. The following are three common sources of “winter” injuries, some tips to avoid them, and what to do if these happen to you.

The Winter Car Crash

Snow and ice can affect road conditions and visibility making driving treacherous and increasing the risk of collisions and injury. Unfortunately, we have many clients who have been hurt because another driver lost control in winter conditions. No one wants to be in a crash or to cause a crash. Driving appropriately for the conditions is essential. Slow down, leave extra space, and if conditions are bad enough stay off the roads entirely.

If you drive in our climate winter tires are a must, but don't wait for it to snow before you get them on. When the temperature drops below 7 degrees Celsius winter tires have better handling and traction than all-weather tires. As an added incentive to get winter tires, since January 1, 2016, Ontario auto insurers are required to offer a discount on car insurance if you have winter tires. This discount is typically a savings of about 5%.

If you are in a crash where winter conditions played a role, and if it is safe to do so, take a picture of the conditions and collision location. Winter conditions can change rapidly and photographs will accurately capture what the conditions were that may have contributed to the collision.

The Slip and Fall

We live in Canada. It snows. It ends up on the ground. It should come as no surprise that this can result in conditions underfoot that could cause you to slip and fall. This is often a problem in late winter when it starts to warm and there is melting and refreezing. Parking lots seem to be a particular hazard as it can be difficult for snow clearing equipment to clear snow, or apply salt, to spaces between parked cars. However, not all winter slip and falls happen outside. The entrances to restaurants, stores, offices, and other buildings can be hazardous due to snow being tracked inside and melting.

Summary

Winter is a great time of year. Although the weather can add some risk, with proper precautions you can protect yourself. If you are seriously injured because of someone else being careless or you should speak to a lawyer to know your rights.

A person who owns a property, or who has control over a property, must take reasonable care in the circumstances to see that people coming onto the property are reasonably safe. That may mean clearing snow, treating ice with salt or sand, and putting down anti-slip mats. However, individuals also have to protect themselves. Appropriate footwear, just like winter tires, can help you keep traction when the ground is slippery.

If you do slip and fall, and if you are able to do so, take pictures of what caused you to fall. With rapidly changing weather conditions the patch of ice you slipped on could soon be a puddle. If you slip and fall tell the property owner. This allows them to address the problem, hopefully avoiding injury to others, and also gives them notice of your fall, and potential injuries.

Winter Sports

Tobogganing or sledding is one of my favourite winter activities. Others love skating or skiing. All of these are a blast but can be a source of injury. This shouldn't dissuade you from participating in winter sports. However, you should participate in a way that reduces your risk of injury. Wear appropriate safety equipment, such as helmets. Be aware of your surroundings and other people. You might be a confident ice skater, but if others around are acting recklessly they could cause you to fall.

Some activities, such as skiing, snowboarding and tubing, require that you sign a waiver to acknowledge the risk of the sport, and giving up your right to sue should you be injured. If there is a waiver, read it. Make sure you understand what you are agreeing to.

Surviving Holiday Stress

Leave the past in the past:

The reason many brain injury survivors and their families may dread this time of year is because of not-so-pleasant experiences of years past. Others may feel disappointed because they tend to compare current holiday seasons with the “good old days”. Keep your expectations for the holiday season reasonable.

Predict:

In the vein of keeping holiday season expectations reasonable, it is important to predict what sort of challenges and excitement you may face during this time of year. For example, you can predict that family gatherings or holiday parties may tire you more easily. You can also predict that when shopping for presents, shopping areas are going to be busier on the weekends than during the weekdays. Predict that preparing for so many seasonal activities will require some extra-special planning and organization.

Plan:

Make a list and prioritize the important activities. You may even have to plan which activities you can attend, and which ones you cannot attend. Put these activities such as shopping, cooking, having house guests, attending parties, etc. on your calendar. Don't forget, you need to plan out your regular life as well. Make sure you are continuing to do things that are vital to your daily routine like taking your medications, exercising, and maintaining organization.

Pace:

Save time for yourself! Not all the planning has to fall on your shoulders. Make sure you take special care to prepare for upcoming events by maintaining a good diet, sticking with your daily exercise routine, and setting aside time (whether or not you are tired) to rest. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Don't put the entire focus on just one day (i.e., Thanksgiving Day). Activities can be spread out to lessen stress and increase enjoyment. When you don't pace yourself, you may become easily overwhelmed, depressed, or simply exhausted, which does not make any part of the holidays enjoyable for you or for those around you.

Other tips that may help you survive the holidays include:

Try something new:

This could be as simple as sampling a new recipe or as exciting as starting a new holiday tradition.

Spend time with supportive and caring people:

Stick with those you know can help lift you up during holiday season. Talk to those you trust and ask for help if you need it. Despite the idea of “holiday cheer” some people are especially unpleasant to be around during the holidays. Try your best (if possible) to limit contact with unsupportive people.

Do something for someone else:

Try volunteering. It is a free way to give during the holidays. You could also make cards or write letters to friends, family and neighbors. It is an inexpensive and personal way to show others you care.

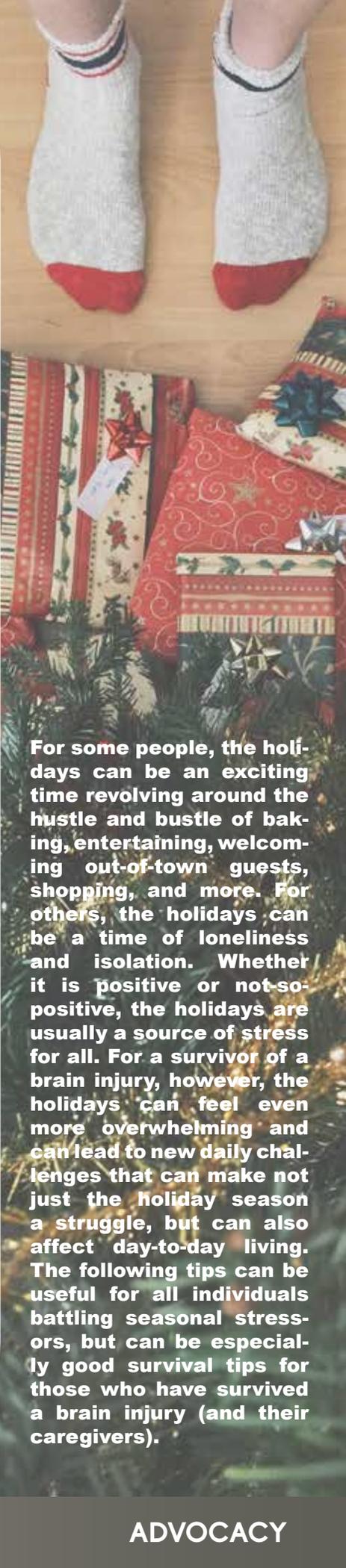
Avoid excessive drinking:

Drinking alcohol is not only known to increase feelings of depression, it can also be dangerous for individuals with brain injuries. If you must drink, please do so in moderation. It is also important to avoid excessive eating and maintain and exercise schedule if possible.

Save money by enjoying free activities:

The holiday season is a great time to seek out free activities. Checking your local newspaper or listening to the radio may help you find free music to enjoy, places to try a free treat, or more. It also is free to view holiday displays, whether these displays are in neighbor's yards or in store-front windows.

As the holiday season quickly approaches, a very important thing to keep in mind is the holidays go just as quickly as they come. If you are feeling overwhelmed, hang in there, the holidays do not last forever. Use some of the tips mentioned above, and you may not just survive the holidays, you may actually find more enjoyment in the season!



For some people, the holidays can be an exciting time revolving around the hustle and bustle of baking, entertaining, welcoming out-of-town guests, shopping, and more. For others, the holidays can be a time of loneliness and isolation. Whether it is positive or not-so-positive, the holidays are usually a source of stress for all. For a survivor of a brain injury, however, the holidays can feel even more overwhelming and can lead to new daily challenges that can make not just the holiday season a struggle, but can also affect day-to-day living. The following tips can be useful for all individuals battling seasonal stressors, but can be especially good survival tips for those who have survived a brain injury (and their caregivers).



A SERIOUS CASE OF THE BLUES

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DEPRESSION IS EXTREMELY COMMON AFTER A BRAIN INJURY
– HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO KEEP THE BLACK DOG AT BAY

Depression is a mood state in which you may feel low, down, negative and generally unhappy about yourself, the world and your future. Two reliable symptoms of depression are feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. physical, cognitive, social and lifestyle aspects of life. Depression can occur at any stage, from the acute hospital stage to many years later.

These symptoms of depression may range from mild, in which a person may still be able to function in day-to-day life but generally feel low, to severe and debilitating depression.

Common symptoms

- Sadness, despair, flat emotional reactions and increased irritability
- Sense of hopelessness and pessimistic beliefs
- Behaviour patterns such as reduced attention to physical appearance, social withdrawal and loss of motivation
- Poor sleep, appetite changes, and tiredness.

For a person with a Brain Injury, other signs of depression may include:

- A gradual decline in ability to perform everyday tasks
- Less ability to cope with everyday stressors
- Increased irritability and behavioural issues such as anger, frustration, and agitation.

Depression can exaggerate the effects of a Brain Injury and interfere with rehabilitation, so it is important that the family is aware of these symptoms. The good news is that once it is detected, depression is manageable and treatable with the support of family, carers and professionals. It is normal to experience periods of despair after a Brain Injury, but treatment is needed when it becomes severe or long lasting.

Depression after a Brain Injury

There can be multiple triggers or causes of depression after a Brain Injury. One obvious cause is the significant loss and changes to physical, cognitive, social and lifestyle aspects of life. Depression can occur at any stage, from the acute hospital stage to many years later.

Depression in the early stages can be a sign that the patient is becoming aware of deficits caused by the Brain Injury. This is actually a promising sign in the rehabilitation process, as it means some level of self-awareness is returning, which is needed to identify and work on these deficits.

Depression can occur after discharge when life is resumed back in the community. The rate of recovery often starts to slow after the first six months, and there can be a growing realization of how much daily life has changed.

In fact, depression is almost always going to occur at some point in the recovery process.

THOUGHT CHALLENGING

This involves modifying your inaccurate and upsetting thoughts, which are common in depression. Upsetting thoughts are replaced with constructive explanations and more rational thoughts. You can keep a diary to monitor and assess your negative thoughts. These entries can include the time, situation, triggers, the thoughts that arose, and the feelings and actions that resulted. This may help you to become aware of patterns in your thinking, which may be destructive and negative. Here are some examples of negative thought process:

Positive events attributed to external factors, such as an accident or luck (e.g. "I'm hopeless at work, I'm just lucky the boss doesn't pay attention and see all my mistakes")

Negative events attributed to personal characteristics/faults (e.g. "I didn't get that job because the interviewer could see I'm not a nice person").

Next time something positive happens that you were involved in, make sure you give yourself a pat on the back and let yourself know what a good job you did!

Assessing depression

Clinical psychologists and neuropsychologists are experts in the assessment and treatment of mental disorders. Diagnosing depression can be complicated and easily misdiagnosed following a Brain Injury due to the overlap in symptoms. For example, fatigue, irritability, poor motivation, slow information processing and changes in appetite are all symptoms of depression and a Brain Injury. A professional well acquainted with Brain Disorders is needed to assess post-injury depression.

Professional treatments

Professional treatment is advisable when depression becomes a problem. A person assessed as having a mental health problem can be referred by a GP to a registered psychologist under a Mental Health Care Plan. This means a person can receive a rebate on the cost of psychological treatment by a psychologist.

To be considered for this scheme you need to be referred by your GP, a psychiatrist or a paediatrician. You may need to book a longer session with a GP, as they will need to complete a detailed mental health assessment before considering a referral.

Types of treatment include cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressant medication.

Personal strategies for coping

Here are some simple but highly effective strategies:

- Get adequate sleep
- Listen to your favourite music
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Work on a personal project or hobby
- Mental stimulation (which is also great for cognitive rehabilitation)
- Schedule activities and make short-term plans
- Eat a nutrient-rich diet (e.g. Omega-3 can help with depression)
- At the end of each day write in a diary five things you are grateful for
- Use positive self-talk (e.g. "I can cope", "I can manage this")
- Other useful approaches include thought challenging, peer support and exercise.

Peer support

Don't underestimate the importance of social contact for your mental health, especially fighting off depression. Social contact, and in particular peer support, can have a dramatic effect. Your local Brain Injury Association or mental health association can put you in touch with peer support groups for Brain Injury or depression.

Exercise

Research indicates that exercise can assist with all but the most severe cases of depression. Even 10 minutes of walking per day is good for your mood. If you are currently recovering from physical injury or physical deficits as a result of a Brain Injury, discuss any exercise program with your GP or rehabilitation team.

Suicide Risk

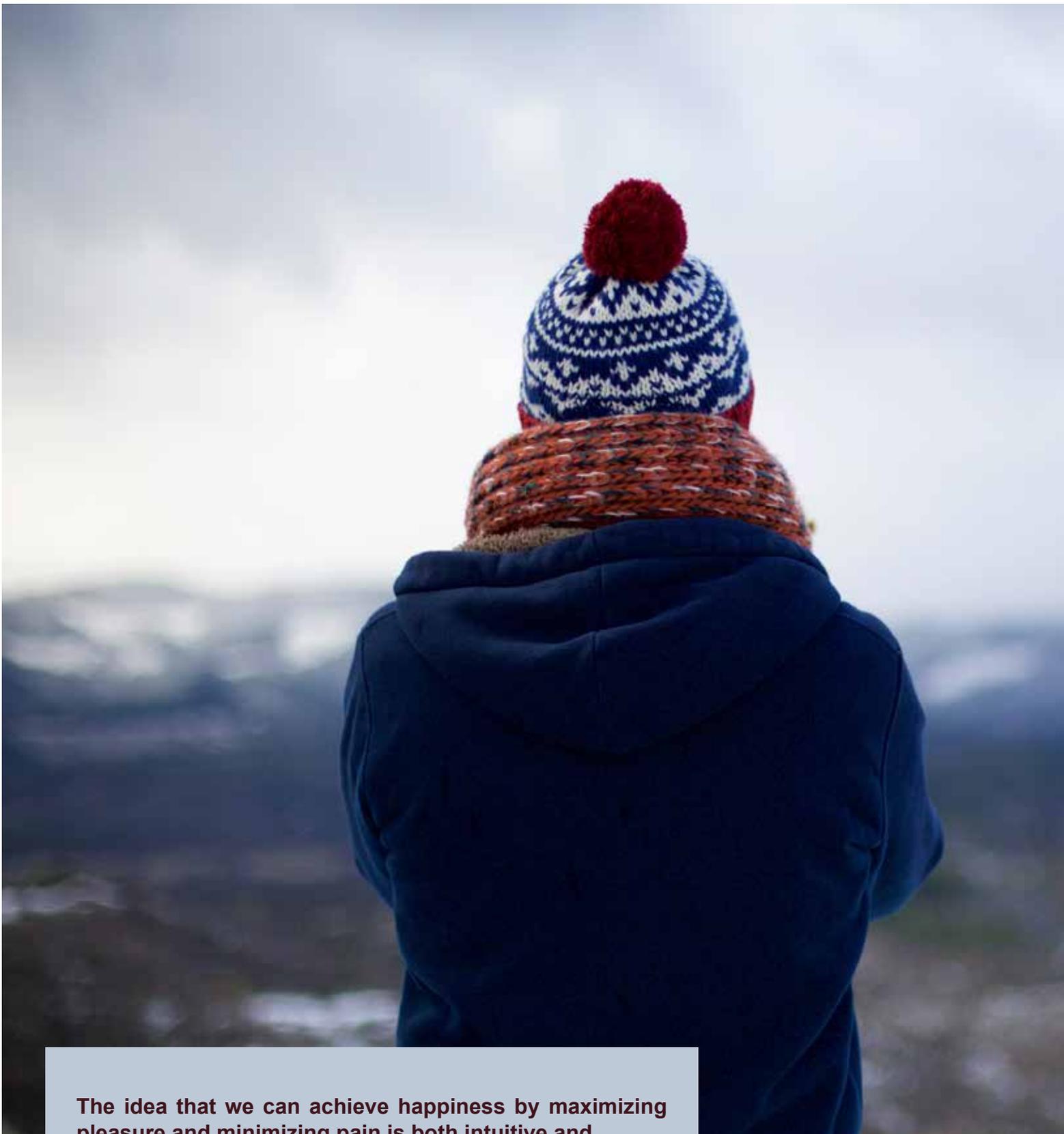
In cases of severe depression, it is important that family and friends look for any signs of a possible suicide attempt. If any suicidal thoughts are present it is important to encourage the person to seek help from a GP or psychologist.

If there has been a previous suicide attempt, look for the warning signs that occurred before, and immediately suggest professional treatment if they reappear.

Warning signs to look for include:

- Statements like "It would have been better if I had died" or making threats of suicide
- Suddenly and unexpectedly becoming cheerful after a long period of depression (which may indicate a decision to use suicide as a solution)
- Having a plan for suicide, and the means to achieve it.

The existence of an achievable suicide plan must be taken seriously. All suicidal comments need to be heeded, but having a plan and the means to achieve it is a sign that professional support is urgently needed



The idea that we can achieve happiness by maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain is both intuitive and popular. The truth is, however, very different. Pleasure alone cannot make us happy.



In pursuit of happiness – why some pain helps us feel pleasure

Re-printed with permission from Synapse.au

Take Christina Onassis, the daughter of shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis. She inherited wealth beyond imagination and spent it on extravagant pleasures in an attempt to alleviate her unhappiness. She died at 37 and her biography, tellingly subtitled *All the Pain Money Can Buy*, recounts a life full of mind-boggling extravagance that contributed to her suffering.

Aldous Huxley recognized the possibility that endless pleasure may actually lead to dystopian societies in his 1932 novel *Brave New World*. Although the idea of endless pleasure seems idyllic, the reality is often very different.

We need pain to provide a contrast for pleasure; without pain life becomes dull, boring and downright undesirable. Like a chocoholic in a chocolate shop, we soon forget what it was that made our desires so desirable in the first place.

Emerging evidence suggests that pain may actually enhance the pleasure and happiness we derive from life. As my colleagues and I recently outlined in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, pain promotes pleasure and keeps us connected to the world around us.

Pain builds pleasure

An excellent example of how pain may enhance pleasure is the experience commonly referred to as “the runners high”. After intense physical exertion, runners experience a sense of euphoria that has been linked to the production of opioids, a neurochemical that is also released in response to pain.

Other work has shown that experiencing relief from pain not only increases our feelings of happiness but also reduces our feelings of sadness. Pain may not be a pleasurable experience itself, but it builds our pleasure in ways that pleasure alone simply cannot achieve.

Pain may also make us feel more justified in rewarding ourselves with pleasant experiences. Just think how many people indulge themselves a little after a trip to the gym.

My colleagues and I tested this possibility by asking people to hold their hand in a bucket of ice-water and then offered them the choice of either a Caramello Koala or a florescent highlighter to take with them as a gift.

Participants who did not experience any pain chose the highlighter 74% of the time. But those who had pain only chose it 40% of the time – they were more likely to take the chocolate. Pain, it seems, can make chocolate guilt-free!

Pain connects us to our world

People are constantly seeking new ways to clear their minds and connect with their immediate experiences. Just think of the popularity of mindfulness and mediation exercises, both of which aim to bring us in touch with our direct experience of the world.

There is good reason to believe pain may be effective in achieving this same goal. Why? Because pain captures our attention.

Imagine dropping a large book on your toe mid conversation. Would you finish the conversation or attend to your toe? Pain drags us into the moment and after pain we are more alert and attuned to our sensory environment – less caught up in our thoughts about yesterday or tomorrow.

My colleagues and I recently tested whether this effect of pain may also have some benefits. We asked people to eat a Tim Tam chocolate biscuit after holding their hand in a bucket of ice-cold water for as long as they could. We found that people who experienced pain before eating the Tim Tam enjoyed it more than those who did not have pain.

In two follow-up studies, we showed that pain increases the intensity of a range of different tastes and reduces people's threshold for detecting different flavours. One reason people enjoyed the Tim Tam more after pain was because it actually tasted better – the flavour they experienced was more intense and they were more sensitive to it.

Our findings shed light on why a Gatorade tastes so much better after a long hard run, why a cold beer is more pleasant after a day of hard labour, and why a hot chocolate is more enjoyable after coming in from the cold.

Pain literally brings us in touch with our immediate sensory experience of the world, allowing for the possibility that pleasures can become more pleasant and more intense.

Pain bond us with others

Anyone who has experienced a significant disaster will know that these events bring people together. Consider the 55,000 volunteers who helped clean up after the 2011 Brisbane floods or the sense of community spirit that developed in New York in response to 911.

Painful ceremonies have been used throughout history to create cooperation and cohesion within groups of people. A recent study examining one such ritual – the kavadi in Mauritius – found that participants who experienced pain were more likely to donate money to a community cause, as were those who had simply observed the ceremony. The experience of pain, or simply observing others in pain, made people more generous.

Building on this work, my colleagues and I had people experience pain in groups. Across three studies, again, participants either immersed their hand in ice-water and held a squat position for as long as they could, or ate very hot raw chilies.

We compared these experiences to a no-pain control condition and found pain increased cooperation within the group. After sharing pain, people felt more bonded together and were also more cooperative in an economic game: they were more likely to take personal risks to benefit the group as a whole.

A different side of pain

Pain is commonly associated with illness, injury or harm. Often we don't see pain until it is associated with a problem and in these cases pain may have few benefits at all. Yet, we also experience pain in a range of common and healthy activities. Consider the recent ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) ice-bucket challenge. By dousing ourselves in ice water we were able to raise unprecedented support for a good cause.

Understanding that pain can have a range of positive consequences is not only important for better understanding pain, but may also help us manage pain when it does become a problem. Framing pain as a positive, rather than negative, increases neurochemical responses that help us better manage pain.

Brock Bastian (ARC Future Fellow, School of Psychology at UNSW Australia) published this article under the Creative Commons Licence at www.theconversation.com

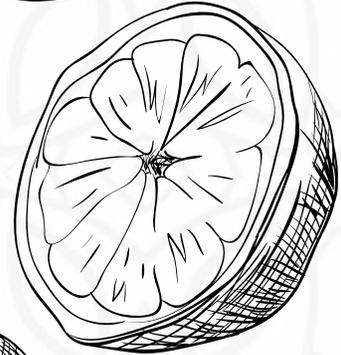
Holiday Crudites Dips



Pesto-Yogurt Dip

- 1 cup (1 1/2 oz./42 g) fresh basil leaves
- 1 garlic clove (crushed)
- 1 tbsp. pine nuts
- 1 cup (9 oz./250 g) plus 2 tbsp. plain low-fat yogurt

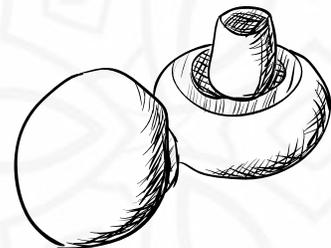
Crush the basil, garlic, and pine nuts into a paste with a mortar and pestle. Work in the yogurt a little at a time, until mixed. Season to taste. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and chill.



Fresh Herb Dip

- 3/4 cup (6 fl oz./170 ml) sour cream
- 1 scallion, minced
- 2 tbsp. chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp. fresh chives, finely snipped
- 1 tsp. tarragon vinegar

Stir all ingredients together in a bowl until blended. Cover tightly and chill.



Italian-Style Tomato Dip

- 3/4 cup (2 oz./56 g) sun-dried tomatoes (dry-packed)
- 1/3 cup (2 1/2 oz./75 g) cottage cheese
- 1/3 cup (2 1/2 oz./75 g) plain low-fat yogurt
- 1/2 cup (3/4 oz./21 g) fresh basil leaves

Place the sun-dried tomatoes in a heatproof bowl and pour over boiling water to cover. Leave to soak until the tomatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. Drain the tomatoes, pat dry, then finely chop. Purée the cottage cheese with the yogurt in food processor. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the tomatoes. Cover and chill.

Serve with:

1 lb. (450 g) mixed vegetable crudités, such as baby carrots, zucchini sticks, baby sweetcorn, green beans (blanched in boiling water for 1 minute), bell pepper strips, Belgian endive, and broccoli florets.

A Big Thank you

to everyone who made this years 2016 fundraising events such a success! We could not do it without the support of our volunteers, sponsors and donors.

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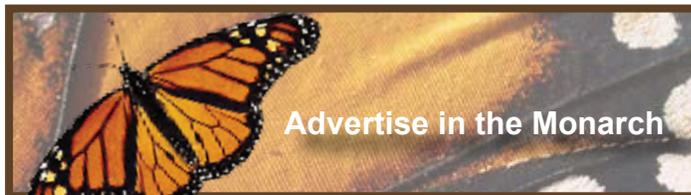
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