

relaxation works wonders in de-stressing. ... And if you have a hobby, do it. If you don't, try one out. Specific regular relaxation times "lower the temperature" of stress generally, not only during the relaxing times themselves.

Music

It's available everywhere – it can be jangly and annoying or can be soothing and pleasant. Having your own control over music, (just playing what you want when you want), is a big help. Musical tastes seem to change over time post-injury. It can be interesting to see where your taste leads you – and to experiment.

Following that idea of "having your own control" (for playing music, above), the whole area of having and building control is super-important post-injury, and also for busy families and carers.

De-stressing by building control can be powerful from –

making a diary, writing down what's happened and how you feel, and maybe what plans you think of

making a good timetable or schedule of things to do

physical exercise, started moderately in whatever way you can do, and then kept and kept and kept ... works ultra-powerfully for many people!

What else do you do? What works, what doesn't, for you?

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Stress ...

cutting, coping, conquering

Brain injury is extremely stressing.

The level of stress varies and it usually comes down over a long period, but brain injury is certainly uniquely stressing both for people with brain injuries and for our families and carers.

What is stress?

Stress is a set of physical and mental responses to the situation we find ourselves in.

In acute stress, the adrenal gland sparks into action so that we breathe more quickly, have a faster pulse, feel more energetic and even feel pain less than usual. The chemical changes in our bodies are to help us meet danger with either of the "fight or flight" options. While stressed acutely, your memory can be sharper too!

For short periods, a moderate level of acute stress is helpful for humans to react well to new challenges. However, chronic stress brings out a very bad side of these responses.

Long-lasting or big stress can bring on headaches, upset stomachs, ulcers, back pain, and sleep problems. Mentally, there are harsh consequences. Chronic stress is tiring, adding to being angry, irritable, anxious, depressed, more taken up with our own problems. This can all become a vicious circle – leading to worse of the same.

Families get stressed enormously by brain injury. Stress manifests differently to people with brain injury, to partners and children, but all suffer badly if stress is chronically high.

Cut, cope, conquer ... ?

Be flexible –

One key to helping against stress is to become flexible about how things are done.

Being determined, even single-minded, seems a good way to respond to the challenge of many tasks after brain injury. Some things take a very great deal more effort. Using previously-learned ways of doing things, plus trying harder, seems like a way through.

However, alternatively, being open to new ways, being flexible, can release stress effectively.

Avoid being rigid because "this was always the way I did this".

Determination is good – but not with rigid thinking about how to use the power of determination.

... Being flexible is about attitude, and it's a difficult abstract – but it's good to focus on the final result of actions, rather than how you do everything. Also, taking a break from a task can be a very straightforward way to find you can see it differently at another time!

Communicate ... talk about it –

Being open and honest about what happens and about your ideas and emotions, both positive and negative, is a stress-buster.

Bottling yourself up too much is a stress-builder.

This is a familiar but difficult way to overcome or avoid stress. For some of us, there's a danger of saying too much, we feel, or being too habitual about what we say (maybe complainingly?) ... however, openness and honesty are reliable helps when used well.

Rather than just be brimming over with feelings about how things are, (while believing it's good to release your pent-up ideas!), it can be good to create a systematic way of talking through things with others, family, friends. Systematic could be like having a regular chat to exchange ideas, not only to give out or just to hear!

Talk well, logically plus emotionally, and communication is powerful against chronic stress.

Be positive –

Abstract but also powerful!

If you make a habit of looking for the bright side of situations, you'll probably find that it's an effective stress-fighter.

We can be in a habit of seeing setbacks and harshness. Even then, looking for better ways through can lift us. There's the psychological practical matter that "looking for better ways through" helps us get involved with real-life practicalities of finding those better ways. Plus also, self-persuasion towards being positive does often pay off.

The opposite of a vicious circle is maybe an upward spiral! A habit of being positive is one of those. Particularly, being positive towards one another as people in our relationships – that is, being warm and respectful, not burden-minded – is a stress conqueror.

What else helps?

Relaxation

... which can be quiet time, or busy time doing something different. For some of us there's ALWAYS a lot on our minds for things we want to get done, or things to change. That may never be different! The stressy backwash of that can be helped by having a regular fixed time for a relaxing interest. Everything is still there, maybe to worry about and be stressed for afterwards, but the respite time of