

How do YOU want to talk about brain injury?

- Think of how to explain a little to somebody new, to somebody you don't know. It's a challenge for all of us – to explain about brain injury non-clinically, in an everyday sort of way.

"Keep it brief because people can't cope with what they don't understand."

"Say things in instalments! Because people don't get the message all in one go. So just make a start with what you say first."

"I tell people what I can, pretty cheerfully not tragically, and I think maybe some of them make sense of it."

"Say something that relates to what people already know about, anything they've already experienced."  
For example? –

*"I had a brain injury from a [head injuring accident OR stroke OR tumour OR other cause]. It's like I have a huge headache. It's painfully difficult to do some things like I used to. You know what a huge headache's like? Multiply that. The pain's not always there, but it seems like it is."*

## Brí

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## Brí

### Talking about brain injury ...

#### *Explaining ourselves?*

Most of us would like to explain about brain injury to other people who don't know anything much about it.

Brain injury is invisible inside our heads. Some of us show visibly that we may have an internal injury of some kind – because we move differently, for example – or we might sound indistinct when we talk. Others of us have no outside signs of our internal injury although brain injury can affect thinking, memory, energy, getting on with other people and lots more.

People tend to go on quick appearances. That's to say, all of us form some first ideas of one another by looking and hearing. Then you can get to know a person a bit better, with more detail, beyond first impressions.

As people with brain injury, we may know well that first impressions are not a good guide to other people.

Before our own brain injuries, we probably didn't know anything much about brain injury – and it's difficult to explain ourselves to other people now.

*So how do we say things clearly and correctly about brain injury...?*

- o we are all different people anyway
- o first appearances are obviously superficial
- o talking about brain injury can potentially be helpful
- o it's always difficult to explain things which are outside other people's own past experiences
- o there can be no single "correct" comprehensive way

### ***We are all different people anyway***

Each of our brains is unique and always has been – before and after brain injuries.

All sorts of challenges can come after brain injury, such as cognitive, physical, sensory, emotional, social ones. These challenges vary over time and they vary between one and another of us. They are also challenges which can be lessened or even be overcome, particularly if we can get access to good rehabilitation and if we support each other with good coping insights.

*Variety between people is key to talking about brain injury.*

### ***First appearances are obviously superficial***

That's a commonplace among all humans!

But the invisibility of a brain injury is important because first appearances can be even less of a guide!

Just for example, if you get very tired, other people can miss recognising or understanding a different energy span.

*Invisibility of brain injury factors is key to talking about it.*

### ***Talking about brain injury can potentially be helpful***

Many people do respond constructively to clear information about us. Families, friends, and people we just meet, do all have opportunities to understand a bit better if the subject of brain injury is aired. Maybe their understanding is slow to grow, but it usually really does develop with some level of talk.

For ourselves too, talking about brain injury can be part of avoiding social isolation.

### ***It's always difficult to explain things which are outside other people's own past experiences***

Many of us get frustrated in not being understood, in other people not realising what we're having to do or how we feel.

The combination of all the consequences of brain injury can be overwhelming for us at some stages.

Until we ourselves experienced our own situations, we probably wouldn't have understood somebody else's account!

*Try using words and ideas which other people are familiar with, because "brain injury" on its own seems remote.*

### ***There can be no single "correct" comprehensive way***

Brain injury is an event which happened, but the consequences vary

according to a host of factors – each individual brain as well as the injury itself, the type of injury, what medical care we got, what Rehab

we ever got, and what's been happening since in shaping our lives. Brain injury is different for each of us – and how we cope does change over time, and how we feel about everything changes over time too.

*Talking about brain injury would ideally indicate that it's not a fixed and finite diagnosis.*

**+ What other considerations do you have? –**

**"I don't want to be felt sorry for"**

**"I don't want to be thought crazy or looked down on"**

**"Live and let live – and some respectful understanding is what I want"**