

## *What happens to relationships after brain injury?*

Many survivors and family members describe changes in their relationships after the injury. They may not hear much from friends, co-workers, and extended family members. Others notice that their phone calls, emails, and letters are left unanswered. Some survivors find themselves feeling alone even when they spend much of their time with family members or friends. Here are some of the things people say about their relationships after brain injury. Do any of these statements sound like things you have said?

- ✧ “I can’t relate to other people. It’s easier to be by myself.”
- ✧ “What happened to all the friends who came to visit me in the hospital?”
- ✧ “Other people don’t want to be around me.”
- ✧ “People seem to avoid me.”
- ✧ “My wife threatens to leave me at least twice a week.”
- ✧ “I wonder why no one returns my calls.”
- ✧ “It seems like everyone at work has lost my phone number.”
- ✧ “I haven’t talked to anyone in weeks.”
- ✧ “Nobody cares about me.”
- ✧ “I don’t have any friends.”
- ✧ “Seems like nobody wants to talk to me.”
- ✧ “Nobody has any idea what I am going through. They don’t understand me.”



## *Why people feel lonely even when around family members or friends*

After injury, many survivors describe feeling lonely – even when they are surrounded by other people. This loneliness may come from many different things.

- ❑ Difficulty talking to other people or understanding what others are saying are common problems survivors face after injury. Communication problems can make relating to other people and explaining your thoughts and feelings very difficult. These problems can lead to feeling misunderstood and isolated.
- ❑ Many survivors feel self-conscious after their injuries. They may worry about being different or less capable than other people. Self-consciousness can make it harder to spend time with other people or seek out new relationships.
- ❑ After injury, many survivors worry about what others will think of them and may feel nervous about being around other people. They may be afraid of being hurt or rejected by other people.
- ❑ Many survivors notice they are more irritable after their injuries. When irritated, they may say or do things they regret later on. Some survivors try to stay away from those they care about for fear of behaving poorly. Family and friends may also avoid you if they are worried about what you might say or do.
- ❑ Fatigue and low energy are common problems after brain injury. Survivors may not have the energy to do things they used to enjoy or to spend time with friends and family. Family



and friends may also worry about tiring you out when they invite you to do something.

- ❑ Pain and other physical problems often make it harder for survivors to do things they used to enjoy. You may also have trouble leaving the house, traveling, or visiting other people. Injury-related limitations make it harder to nurture and build relationships.
- ❑ Many survivors are not able to drive or work after their injury. Lack of transportation and money may make it hard to visit others or do things you enjoy.
- ❑ People generally make friends through work or being involved in social or recreational activities. After injury, survivors often stop working and may not be involved in sports, church, and other activities. You may lose contact with friends and co-workers because you don't see them as much.
- ❑ Friends and family may feel uncomfortable because they don't know what to say, how to act, or how to help. Discomfort may make it harder for them to relate to you or spend time with you. Help them out by letting them know about your positive and negative feelings and what they can do to help you.