



braintumour
foundation
OF CANADA

Additional support, information and education offered by Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada:

Adult, Pediatric and Non-Malignant Brain Tumour Handbook available in English and French.

“A Friend in Hope” children’s storybook available in English and French.

20+ Adult Support Groups across Canada (in-person and virtual)

Toll-free information and support line

BrainWAVE Pediatric Support Program

Print BrainStorm Newsletter
Email Newsletters:
• E-BrainStorm
• Peace of Mind

“Grey Matters” Blog

All patient resources are available free-of-charge in Canada. Call 1-800-265-5106 or visit www.BrainTumour.ca for additional details and information.

Ask the Expert Information Sheet

Optimizing Communication and Cognition

By Michelle Haché MSc. SLP(C), The Moncton Hospital and Horizon Health Network

Communication is an essential part of who we are as human beings. It’s the ability to express oneself in verbal or written form, to understand verbal or written language, and to interact in appropriate ways. The ability to communicate greatly enhances independence in our daily, personal and professional lives. Cognitive skills such as memory, problem-solving, reasoning, judgment, attention, planning, organization and processing significantly influence our communication skills. If an individual has cognitive difficulties, it will impact their ability to speak, understand, read and write.

Not everyone with a brain tumour experiences communication and cognitive difficulties but when these issues occur, they can be frustrating, not only for the individuals themselves, but for their families and friends. While every case is somewhat unique, there are some cognitive and communication difficulties that tend to cause the most frustration: word finding problems, memory problems and comprehension (understanding) problems.

Here are some tips to assist communication and cognition skills when you are experiencing difficulty:

- **Find another way to say it:** When having trouble finding the words that you want to say, use a different word, use gestures, point, describe (size, shape, function, colour, etc.), try to write or draw.
- **Keep it simple:** Reduce the amount of words you use when talking. Try to aim for the important words to get your point across. The fewer words you use, the less likely you are to experience difficulty.
- **Eliminate the noise:** It is much easier to pay attention, understand information and process information effectively in a quiet environment. When having conversations, reading or writing, turn off the TV and the radio and try to carry out these activities in quieter areas.
- **One-on-one:** It is easier to understand and process information if one person is speaking at a time, at a slightly slower rate and providing only short pieces of information at a time.
- **Reduce the memory load:** Write important things down. Always store things in the same place so you don’t have to remember where they are. Think of funny things or rhymes to associate with people so you can remember their names. Write down questions you want to ask prior to important appointments (doctors, lawyers, bank) and bring someone along with you, if possible, to these appointments.
- **Get lots of rest:** Fatigue has a significant negative impact on all aspects of communication and cognition. Try to carry out activities which require a significant amount of communication and cognition earlier in the day when you are well rested. Stop activities before you get tired.

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada Information Sheets are provided as an informational and educational tool and are not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute for medical care. We urge you to seek specific medical advice on individual matters of concern.