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## Social Communication





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person is coming from. For example, if someone found out that his best friend had just lost a job, he would talk one way. If he learned that the same friend had won the lottery, he would talk in a different way. And, if he saw a friend at a party he might talk differently than if he saw the same friend in a library.

## Re-learning Social Communication

If you, or someone you know, has some of these symptoms after a TBI, there is good news: Social Communication skills can be improved in many people. Training and practice help - especially when the practice is in real-life situations. One good way to work on your Social Communication skills is to join a treatment group of people who are working on the same thing. Groups usually have several people with TBI, and they are usually led by a psychotherapist or speech therapist who is experienced in social communications. But, if there are not any groups near you, you can still practice on your own with a partner, friend, or family members.

Here is what you can do:

1. Go back and look at these sections of the brochure again:
  - Do you talk better than you communicate?**
  - Signs and Symptoms**
 Review the different problems and symptoms that are described. Make a list of the ones that you think are problems for you.
2. Work with a partner, friend, or a family member to get their ideas too. If they listed any different problems, add those to your list also.
3. Start with the things that are the biggest problems for you or that limit you the most.
4. Set a goal. Pick one problem that you want to work on. Think about things you can do, when talking, to help this problem.
5. Tell your partner or family member what your goal is. Ask them to give you feedback about how you are doing. If your goal is to not interrupt others, ask them to let you know when you have interrupted. This should be done in a way that does not embarrass you. For example, they could give you a "secret" signal if you are in public, or they could talk to you privately later on. You may want to have a time each week when you can get feedback on how you are doing with your goal.

6. Remember that getting feedback on how you are doing can be hard. You may not agree with what the other person is telling you. It may be frustrating. However, becoming aware of your strengths and weaknesses is the first step toward improving your social skills.
7. Keep practicing your communication skills and goals when you are out in public - when you are shopping, at school, or at a party. If your partner or family member is able to observe you while you are having a conversation with a stranger in the "real-world," check with them afterwards. Ask them for specific and honest feedback. Be sure to ask them about the particular problem area you were trying to focus on.

## **Some final tips to remember**

- Keep good eye contact
- Get to the point, and stay on the topic
- Take turns talking and listening
- Remember to ask questions
- Be friendly and relaxed
- Be aware of body language - yours and the other person's

Practice, practice, practice, and then practice some more. It will almost certainly get easier if you do. Good luck!

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