

Brainbridge

The Newsletter



**BC Centre
for Ability**

Beyond challenges—the sky's the limit

Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth in BC



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Managing the Change in Seasons: Looking at Sleep and Self Care

Registered Disability Savings Plans: What are they, where can you get more information and are you eligible?

What to watch, read and access this season!

A Conversation with Dane—An interview with previous client, Dane, who is now 20 years old and has a lot to share

Sleep and Sleep Hygiene



What is Sleep Hygiene and why is it Important?

Sleep hygiene refers to good sleep habits. Good sleeping habits that lead to enough sleep is key to both physical and mental health. Sleep is a major factor in reducing health risks and also impacts your daily functioning.



Sleeping Tips:

- Have regular sleeping patterns (even on weekends and days off), a regular rhythm will make you feel better
- Sleep when you're sleepy
- Have sleep rituals that remind your body that it's time to sleep, such as stretching or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed
- Exercise and eating a healthy and balanced diet both help sleep, but timing is important. Avoid strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime and eating a heavy meal soon before bed.
- Getting up and trying again—if you are having trouble getting to sleep for 20 or so minutes, it's helpful to get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy then return to bed and try again.
- Have the right sleeping space—it's important to have a quiet and comfortable area for your bed with enough blankets to stay warm and anything else that can ensure that you have a comfortable sleep (eye mask, ear plugs, blinds for windows)

Sleeping Habits to Avoid:

- Don't use your bed for things other than sleep—It's important that you associate bed with sleeping. Using bed as a place to watch TV, eating or working can interrupt your body's connection of bed as the place for sleeping.
- No naps—avoiding naps during the day will help you to feel more tired at bedtime. If you need a nap, try to make it less than an hour and before 3:00pm
- Avoid consuming caffeine (in coffee, tea, soda drinks, chocolate and some medications) and nicotine for at least 4 to 6 hours before going to bed. These substances are stimulants that interfere with falling asleep
- No Clock-watching—Checking the clock a lot throughout the night can be a factor keeping you awake and can wake you up during the night. This will also influence negative thoughts about not being able to sleep that cause you to stay awake
- Avoid alcohol—for the adult readers, it's important to avoid alcohol 4 to 6 hours before trying to sleep.

Seasonal Self Care

Taking care of yourself during weather and seasonal changes is important to your health, find some tips below:

Scheduling and implementing strategies

Set a routine for self care strategies that you enjoy (meditation, exercise, hobbies, relaxation).

Engage in deep breathing regularly in your day

Set aside quiet time in the day if you need, particularly during the holiday season.

Weather can have a major influence on us, particularly our moods. Not just the changes in temperature, but the activities and expectations that we put on ourselves with each different season.

Focusing inward

Tune into your emotions—being aware of what you are feeling and how those feelings are impacting your day is key in knowing how to best stay healthy, especially if you notice that your mood is impacted by the weather.

Monitor your level of stress—noticing when you are feeling stressed and finding a possible pattern can help you make changes or avoid certain activities or situations that cause you to feel more strained and stressed.

Taking care of your body

Sleep—ensuring that you are well rested is important for your coping abilities (See page 2)

Diet—though during the holidays and winter months it's tempting to let your focus on nutrition and balanced diet wane, but it's vital to make sure that you are incorporating necessary nutrients in your every day diet while balancing treats and take out.

Getting outside—though with winter weather can sometimes be a barrier to enjoying the outdoors, fresh air and getting out of the house is a healthy coping strategy

Exercise—While it's tempting to hibernate during the cold months, exercising has major impacts on mood and health in general.

Give yourself permission to let things go—during the winter there is often a lot of pressure to attend certain activities (particularly during the holidays) and engage in certain behaviour that might not be healthy for you and your family. It is okay to let some of these pressures go and put your well being first.

Set and recognize your limits—it's very easy to take on too much. It's helpful to know your abilities and what will make coping difficult. Recognizing the limits you may have will help you to make sure you aren't exceeding them.

Registered Disability Savings Plan

A Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) is a long-term savings plan for people with disabilities. These are a savings tool that help people with disabilities and their families plan financially for the future without affecting disability assistance. The federal government matches up to \$3 for every dollar deposited through the Canadian Disability Savings Grant program — up to \$3,500 annually to a lifetime maximum of \$70,000.

RDSP Eligibility Criteria: You are eligible to open an RDSP if you are qualified for the Disability Tax Credit, a Canadian resident and under the age of 60

For a tutorial about RDSPs to find out if this is the right resource for you, and to read about others' experiences visit: <https://www.rdsp.com/tutorial/is-the-rdsp-right-for-you/>

You can find information Sessions both in person and remotely here: <https://www.rdsp.com/supports-and-services/rdsp-information-sessions-2/>

For more places to find all the information you will need about RDSPs, what they can do for you, if you're eligible and how to start and manage them, see our "What to Access" section on page 5.



Networking Groups



On October 23, 2019, the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth held a networking night for local youth between the ages of 12 and 19. Six youths attended and had the opportunity to connect and share their stories in a safe space with others who have similar experiences.

The coordinators received positive feedback and are planning to continue providing this kind of opportunity for current and past clients in this age category.

We are hoping to hear from you with any suggestions or comments. Please contact the coordinators, Dana Seidel and Whitney MacRae at 604-451-5511, Ext. 1470 and 1279, or email at: Whitney.MacRae@bc-cfa.org and Dana.Seidel@bc-cfa.org

What to Watch

Attitude (attitudelive.com) is a web-based organization located in New Zealand that works with a variety of organizations and institutions to demonstrate an understanding of what it is to live with disability and chronic health. Attitude has a series of videos showing the experiences of different individuals' with disabilities and their families. 'Broken' is a series of videos showing journeys of acquired brain injury (ABI) and the challenges and experience of recovery and living with an ABI.

To see the series visit the website for Part 1: <https://attitudelive.com/watch/Broken-Part-1>

What to Read

Brainstreams.ca Resource List:

Brainstreams.ca has updated their resource list in 2019 and have added new services. We encourage individuals and families to consult the resource list specific to their area and ensure that they are aware of the local services and resources that are available to them.

For more information on how to navigate the list and for the list itself, visit [brainstreams.ca: https://www.brainstreams.ca/hot-topics/brain-injury-recovery-resource-list/](https://www.brainstreams.ca/hot-topics/brain-injury-recovery-resource-list/)

What to Access

Registered Disability Savings Plan Resources and Supports

Registered Disability Savings Program: www.rdsp.com

Registered Disability Savings Plan action group and guide: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/services-for-people-with-disabilities/supports-services/registered-disability-savings-plan-guide.pdf>

B.C. government accessibility initiatives: www.gov.bc.ca/accessibility

B.C. government services for people with disabilities: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/services-for-people-with-disabilities/supports-services>

Inspire Me—A conversation with Dane

The CBIPCY coordinators met with Dane, a previous client of the program who is now 20 years old and attending University. Dane is attending multiple classes and living in a shared house off campus with roommates.

The coordinators wanted to connect with Dane about his recovery journey since his brain injury and his University experience to share with other families. They asked some questions they thought might be helpful. See an overview of the insightful and inspiring conversation below:

What was your experience working with rehabilitation therapists?

Adapting specific interests into therapies, which was really helpful to keep the therapy engaging. For example, when I was initially in therapy, the therapists would make sure to include Lego and sports that he was interested in.

What has been helpful to you in your recovery?

The school and the school therapists adapting their approaches to specific needs.

Other people's willingness to adjust to what works for the individual with the injury.

Knowing that you aren't alone.

Others being understanding by having brain injury education and being supportive.

People around you checking-in with how you are doing and what is going on with you.

What has been unhelpful to you in your recovery?

Being told you 'can't' - nothing is set in stone and things can change

Being given false hope

When people say they "understand" (because they don't). Something more helpful would be to say "I don't know what that's like but I can imagine that it would be tough."

What are some university tips for other children and youth with ABIs that aspire to attend university one day?

Universities can be accommodating, so let them know about your injury and connect with the campus learning support.

Incorporating a break in the day and making sure your schedule includes breaks is helpful.

It's helpful to tell the school what you need and to work with the school to set you up for success

Universities have Individual Education Plans that can be helpful for completing coursework and exams.

It's helpful to have all tests and assignments spaced out.

It's really useful to write out all of the dates of assignments and exams and schedule enough time to complete them.

It's very difficult to procrastinate and leave work until the last minute.

What advice or information would you give to children and youth who are just starting their recovery and what they can do to move forward?

Sometimes people around you don't know how to react and you can feel like an outsider, it is beneficial to be open and tell people how you are feeling and what you need, what is helpful and what is not.

You need to accept what's happened at a point and decide to move forward.

Recovery is a process, always ongoing, and always changing.

Never give up. The brain is amazing. I am still learning and changing, even 10 years following my injury.

Find something that makes you happy daily or find a passion and pursue it.

Try not to get discouraged, you will have good days and bad days

At 10 years post-injury, I am still not back at 100% and am unsure if I ever will be but I'm always improving.

Having independence and learning to do things on your own is a major help.

Save the Date

BC Centre for Ability – Dining For Dreams Gala - the BC Centre for Ability is holding our Dining for Dreams gala on April 23, 2020 at 7:00pm at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. For more information please see the invitation included on the right or visit the Centre website at: <http://bc-cfa.org/news-events/events/>

Recommended Resources

Sleep Hygiene: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/cci/mental%20health%20professionals/sleep/sleep%20-%20information%20sheets/sleep%20information%20sheet%20-%20004%20-%20sleep%20hygiene.pdf>

Sleep Self Help resources: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Sleep>

Self care strategies during the winter season: <https://www.wdgpublichealth.ca/blog/10-self-care-strategies-beat-winter-blues>

Self care strategies over the holiday season: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/self-care-strategies-holiday-season-2017121812926>

How weather affects your health: <https://www.berkeleywellness.com/self-care/preventive-care/article/how-weather-affects-your-health>



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