



Helping Students with Brain Injury

A student with a brain injury can have psychosocial difficulties for many reasons. The student may have unresolved fears and resentment about the injury. The part of the brain that influences emotional functioning may have been damaged. The student may feel insecure, isolated and different from peers.

The following are sample strategies you can use. It is important to remember that all brain injuries are unique and that all students have different strengths and weaknesses, therefore different strategies may or may not work depending on the student, the class, and the time of day, among other factors. It is important to remain flexible in trying different strategies until you find one that works for that student, and to always keep in mind the ultimate goal of moving students towards independence. Once you have found a strategy that works use it consistently and share it with others who work with that student.

Difficulty with...	Strategy/Accommodation	Example
Internalizing emotions (anxiety, depression, social isolation, shaken sense of self, profound sense of loss)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide supportive counseling ➤ Use a buddy system ➤ Utilize social skills groups ➤ Balance positive and constructive feedback in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sally appears very jittery before an exam. ➤ Mary is withdrawn and does not socialize with other children and eats alone during lunch. ➤ Tommy looks at the floor during his entire presentation. ➤ Dave sees the school psychologist once a week to discuss how he is feelings. ➤ Mary is paired with another student from social skills for lunch, gym and recess. ➤ Mary attends social skills group twice a week focused on how to begin and maintain conversations. ➤ Tommy's talks with him about the importance of eye contact when presenting, cues him during the presentation, and praises him afterwards.
Externalizing emotions (Emotional lability, mood swings, impulsivity, disinhibition, decreased frustration tolerance, inappropriate behavior/language)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dave easily gets into arguments with teachers and fellow students. ➤ Bob yells out answers during class. ➤ Nancy gets easily irritated when having difficulty remembering her locker combination. ➤ Dave curses out the teacher when she corrects him, and is frequently in the principal's office.

- Provide supportive counseling
 - Balance positive and constructive feedback in the classroom
 - Track the behaviors and antecedent
- Relationship building challenges (egocentric behaviors, blunted affect, unable to pick up social cues, vulnerability to alcohol/drugs)
- Utilize speech therapy in the classroom to assist with communication challenges, such as picking up on social cues
 - Utilize social skills groups
 - Balance positive and constructive feedback in the classroom
- Dave sees the school psychologist once a week to discuss his feelings, and discuss techniques for calming himself when he becomes frustrated.
 - Dave's teacher praises him when he remains calm in class.
 - Nancy's child study team conducts a Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA) to track her behaviors and make accommodations as needed (for example, providing her with a laminated card for her backpack with her locker combination).
 - Dave cannot focus on his friends and only talks about himself.
 - Mary does not show emotion and always seems serious.
 - Sally stands too close when she talks.
 - Sally has difficulty saying "no" to peers when they want to cut class to smoke in the woods behind the school.
 - Sally role plays in speech therapy and her therapist observes her and provides cues in class.
 - Dave, Mary and Sally attend social skills group twice a week focused on paying attention to their own facial expressions and body language, as well as those of others.
 - Dave's social skills teacher role plays mutual conversations for him and cues with him with a tap on the shoulder when he begins talking about himself too much.

Adapting the strategies for the IEP

The IEP focuses on academic and/or functional areas affected in the school setting, with the goal of establishing measurable academic and/or functional goals. These goals include benchmark or short-term objectives, as well as criteria for measuring and evaluating the objective. It also includes modifications and supplementary aids, including assistive technology devices and services. As there have been numerous advancements in technology in recent years an assistive technology evaluation should be a consideration for all areas of impairment, including physical and

cognitive impairments. *It is important to keep in mind that the IEP should be a fluid document, re-assessed regularly and able to be modified if strategies being utilized are not having the desired effect.*

Example:

Academic and/or Functional Area: Psychosocial

Annual Measurable Academic and/or Functional Goal: By June 30 the student will be able to independently utilize a calming down strategy taught to her by the school psychologist before acting out on her agitation. Teacher cueing will be provided when needed.

Benchmark or Short-Term Objectives: By November 30 the student will be able to, with teacher cueing, identify when she is getting agitated and use a cue card to go through a calming down technique taught to her by the school psychologist. If the calming down technique does not work the student will be able to go to the school psychologists office. The student will also see the school psychologist weekly and be able to identify 3 positive things that happened during the week.

Criteria: School psychologist and teacher observations.

Evaluation: The baseline of leaving the classroom to see the school psychologist will reduce by 50%, and the baseline of behavioral outbursts will reduce.

Modification/Supplementary Aid: Functional behavioral assessment to determine triggers and a baseline.

Academic and/or Functional Area: _____

Annual Measurable Academic and/or Functional Goal: _____

Benchmark or Short-Term Objectives: _____

Criteria: _____

Evaluation: _____

Modification/Supplementary Aid: _____