

Peer Discharge Guidance



Introduction

This document is by a former patient who experienced a severe brain injury, then went on to make a satisfying and purposeful recovery. He wants to share observations about what worked well for him, in the hope that it might provide insight or guidance to anyone facing similar challenges.

Recovery Progress

It's suggested not to consider recovery as a journey to who you once were. It can be beneficial to focus on contentment with progress in relation to your starting point.

- Take baby steps towards realistic and achievable goals. Give yourself the potential to exceed your expectations.
- Recovery is non-linear, i.e. not a straight line. You may have three good days, followed by a very bad day.
- It's important not to be disheartened by the inevitable dips on your journey. You mustn't feel like you're back at square one.

Diary Records

Make a good habit of keeping daily diary records, possibly comprising the following categories:

- 😞 Feelings of general wellbeing 😊
- 😴 Sleep patterns and durations 🏠
- 😞 Specific condition - headaches / limited dexterity / localised pain, etc. 🏥

Use a simple scoring system for each category; an example may be to record 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad). A diary enables evidencing of positive trends over a period of time, rather than focussing on inevitable occasional bad days. A diary can also prove helpful when attending clinical appointments to review your progress.

Commit to Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are integral to successful adaptation; they'll assist you in circumventing some of your limitations. When discussing coping strategies with medical professionals, be prepared to try them - even the ones you may be convinced won't help. It may be that out of five candidate coping strategies, only one will turn out to be useful - those are good odds. 😊 If you're close-

minded and dismissive of suggestions, you'll minimise the likelihood of finding the elusive coping strategy that works for you.

Adaptation to events is part of everyone's life journey; your event may be more significant than many, but the process is the same.

General Wellbeing

- 🧠 The importance of rest can't be overstated. Don't be embarrassed by taking sleep during the day, it's as essential as diet and exercise in contributing to your wellbeing.
- ⚖️ Accept that you may now be a little different, but you're still normal - maybe you have a new normal.
- 📺 Using apps and games on mobile devices may help validate your cognition, for example - crosswords / sudoku / chess / Tetris.

Returning to Work

If you cannot return to your previous job, volunteering can provide you with a fulfilling vocational purpose and evidences a can-do mentality. Volunteering can be a positive area to discuss during any job interviews and facilitates you talking about what you can do, rather than your having been unable to work. Volunteering helps to avoid potentially long gaps on your CV. Furthermore, volunteering is typically a satisfying and enjoyable experience. 🤝 🤝

Support Organisations

- **The Samaritans:** www.samaritans.org - Helping people during difficult times
- **Citizens Advice Bureau:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk – General assistance
- **Headway:** www.headwaynorthstaffs.org - Supporting people with head injuries
- **Royal Voluntary Service:** www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk - Supporting people in need
- **Volunteering Register:** www.doit.life - Database of volunteering opportunities
- **Brainline:** www.brainline.org - All about brain injury, and coping with it
- **After Trauma:** www.aftertrauma.org - Supporting survivors and their families
- **UK Brain Injury Forum:** ukabif.org.uk - ABI signposting