

Adynamia and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Advice for Carers and Family Members

Adynamia is a condition whereby a person has significant difficulty initiating activity or action. As a result, a person with adynamia may present as lacking drive or initiative. Adynamia can be the result of the damage resulting from an ABI. People who experience adynamia have difficulty getting tasks done. They may also have difficulty initiating conversation, participating in domestic tasks, getting out of the house and initiating social activity. Without intervention, a person with adynamia may do very little during a day. This condition can be extremely frustrating for family members. An individual with adynamia may be mistakenly labelled as lazy or selfish.

If you or a person you know is experiencing adynamia following an ABI, the following points may be helpful:

- Remember that adynamia is caused by a person's ABI, and these behaviours are not the result of laziness or selfishness.
- If you have a close and positive relationship with the person, and they have adequate cognitive capacity and insight to do so, discuss the problem with them in a non judgemental way. If you are able to do this you will then be able to work together to find practical and useful strategies to overcome this difficulty.
- It can be really helpful to develop a structured timetable which outlines a daily schedule of tasks and activities. If the activities are motivating and interesting to the person, and they have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and when, then this strategy is more likely to be effective. It is helpful if the timetable is located somewhere that is easily and frequently accessed by the person with adynamia. For some, this will mean programming the activities into a mobile phone calendar with reminders. Others may prefer writing on the calendar or whiteboard and displaying it in a prominent location where it will be easily seen throughout the day.

- It may also be helpful to discuss exactly what is expected of the person in different situations, rather than assuming that they will be able to generate these ideas independently. For example, if a person is not initiating interactions with their children it may be helpful to suggest that they play with their children on the floor for ten minutes, three times a day after they have had breakfast, lunch and dinner. To help establish this routine, alarmed reminders may be used on the mobile phone to prompt them to get started.
- On those occasions when the person successfully uses a strategy in order to initiate activity, it is important for those supporting them to provide praise and encouragement in a manner that is rewarding and motivating.

This information sheet has been prepared by Melbourne ABI Counselling. Melbourne ABI Counselling provides specialist counselling for people affected by Acquired Brain Injury. If you would like to discuss your situation with a counsellor, please feel free to contact our office on 1300 29 76 09.

For more information sheets on topics related to acquired brain injury please see <http://melbourneabiccounselling.com.au/abi-information-sheets.htm>