

Changes to emotions, social skills, behaviour, and wairua

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Understand impacts on learning and wellbeing' from the Guide: [Acquired brain injury and learning](#)

Includes:

- Injury to wairua
- Reduced insight and self awareness
- Influence on self-control
- Changes to expression
- Summary
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Supporting learners with acquired brain injury](#)

Strategy: [Understand impacts on learning and wellbeing](#)

Suggestion: [Changes to emotions, social skills, behaviour, and wairua](#)

Date

30 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/brain-injury/changes-to-emotions-social-skills-behaviour-and-wairua

Injury to wairua

An ABI can impact every aspect of a person.

For Māori, the head is the most sacred part of the body.

Brain injuries affect not only their anatomy and physiology, but also their spirituality.

Dr Hinemoa Elder

Source:

[Te Karere TVNZ](#)

<https://youtu.be/wAWno-Qe81E?t=101>

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Reduced insight and self awareness

Changes in the brain influence emotions, behaviour, and social skills.

Injury to the brain may substantially alter a child or young person's ability to assess a problem and find a solution.

The inability to think in a flexible manner often makes a child or young person argumentative or unmotivated.

Often the child or young person is unaware of changes in their ability, or does not pick up cues from others.

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Influence on self-control



Source:

[Pixabay](#)

<https://pixabay.com/photos/boy-child-sad-alone-sit-1666611/>

[View full image \(860 KB\)](#)

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Changes to expression

After children and young people have sustained a brain injury, they may express themselves differently.

- ✓ Speaking without thinking first.
- ✓ Jumping from topic to topic when talking.
- ✓ Talking less and appearing withdrawn.
- ✓ Dominating conversations – talking more and not listening to others.
- ✓ Missing things that are said or “getting the wrong end of the stick”.

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Summary

Brain injury can cause changes to the way children and young people feel, act, and connect to others.

- ✓ Brain injury can affect every aspect of being human, including personality, spirit, and sense of self.
- ✓ Pre-existing personality traits can be accentuated.
- ✓ Varying control of emotions and behaviour may be exhibited.
- ✓ Impulse control is frequently reduced.
- ✓ Reduced awareness of self and others may be evident.
- ✓ Reduced confidence to do things by themselves may be evident.
- ✓ Overconfidence may be evident and some children and young people may need to learn to rely on others more for support.

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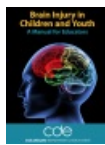
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Useful resources



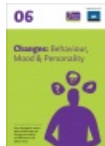
Brain injury in children and youth: A manual for educators

Read time: 212 min

How a brain injury can be recognised and managed, including sections on disruptions to development at any point, social and emotional competencies and response-to-intervention (RTI) plans.

Publisher: Colorado Department of Education

[Visit website](#)



Changes: Behaviour, mood & personality

Read time: 3 min

This leaflet explains how damage to certain parts of the brain can change personality and behaviour and affect mood.

[Download PDF](#)



Te Whare o Oro

A mātauranga Māori framework for understanding the roro (brain). Includes a chapter on adapting Te Whare o Oro for specific neurodivergence and trauma.

Publisher: Te Atawhai o Te Ao Charitable Trust

[Visit website](#)

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