

# Provide social and emotional support

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Traumatic brain injury (TBI): Support a return  
to learning and activity' from the Guide:

[Acquired brain injury and learning](#)

- 
- Includes:**
- Notice where support is needed
  - Demonstrate empathy
  - Gently support participation
  - Useful teaching strategies
  - Reflection questions
  - Useful resources

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From

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

Strategy: [Traumatic brain injury \(TBI\): Support a return to learning and activity](#)

Suggestion: [Provide social and emotional support](#)

Date

14 September 2025

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/brain-injury/provide-social-and-emotional-support-2](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/brain-injury/provide-social-and-emotional-support-2)

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## Notice where support is needed

Many symptoms can often be misinterpreted.

Instead, these symptoms are signals that a brain is still healing and needs a supportive environment to aid recovery.

- ✓ Behaviour changes triggered by minor events
- ✓ Reduced impulse control
- ✓ Frustration over not being able to do things they could do before
- ✓ Easily overwhelmed
- ✓ Reduced problem-solving skills
- ✓ Unaware of changes in ability
- ✓ Less able to read social cues
- ✓ Inflexible thinking.

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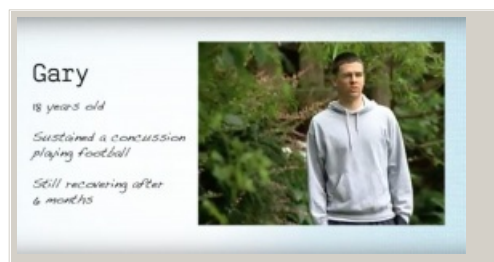
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## Demonstrate empathy

A student talks about the value of adults having empathy for his invisible injury.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/pirBeouSHco>

No captions or transcript

Source:

[CDCFoundationTBI \(USA\)](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf8JU8VzTkVOZffh1ixHTdw>

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## Gently support participation



Source:

Ministry of Education

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## Useful teaching strategies

Select teaching strategies to support the recovery of a child or young person with a traumatic brain injury.

Seek feedback on what's helpful.

Adjust as needed.

- ✓ Maintain a daily routine as much as possible.
- ✓ Practise dry runs for unfamiliar situations.
- ✓ Provide more structure and fewer choices.
- ✓ Provide activities for unstructured times.
- ✓ Give directions slowly and support them with visual cues.
- ✓ Teach self advocacy skills and prompts, such as "Can you help me get started?"
- ✓ Focus on success – what the child or young person can do.
- ✓ Offer lunchtime buddy groups.
- ✓ Provide direct feedback on social skill development.
- ✓ Suggest and model alternative words and actions in situations that escalate. Avoid descriptions or explanations.
- ✓ Avoid time outs (the child or young person is not likely to independently regroup or calm down).
- ✓ Use social stories to help teach solutions or coping strategies for different situations.

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## Reflection questions

Adapt for your own context.

**How could you reduce situations that may trigger anxiety?** (Consider minimising changes in routine, cramped working spaces, noise, clutter, unstructured activity, frequent transitions).

**Where can you teach and include relaxation and coping strategies?**

**What processes will you use to regularly check-in with the child or young person?**

**How will you strengthen self-advocacy skills?**

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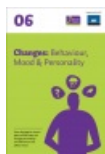
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## Useful resources



### 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



### BrainSTARS: Regulation of emotion

This is a list of practical strategies for teachers and parents supporting students with a brain injury.

Publisher: BrainLine

[Visit website](#)

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