

# What's Happening at MLRA... December 2010



**Seasons Greetings from all of us at Main Line!!!**

Although the holidays are a time of giving and cheer, it is also a time of great stress. Traffic is bad, weather is dismal, sunlight is scarce, people are everywhere, gifts are expensive, and overindulgence in eating, drinking, and spending take a toll.

So, what is stress? For most people, stress is that uncomfortable feeling you get when you know there is something you should be doing and you're not doing it. Stress is often a "vicious cycle". The more a person feels they have to do, and the more that people are telling them what to do - the more stress they feel.

## **Take Breaks Often**

- Realize that working harder doesn't necessarily mean accomplishing more; instead, recognize that taking breaks can help you accomplish more and feel better.
- Avoid the cycle of going beyond your limits, spinning your wheels, and becoming frustrated.
- Take several 20-30 minute breaks each day; take more time if needed.
- If you can't spare 20 minutes, take ten - a short break is better than no break.

## **Make a List**

- List what you need to do in the short- and long-term, and set priorities - number items by priority.
- Start with number one and work your way down the list, crossing off each accomplished item.
- Regularly review your accomplishments to help you keep a positive perspective.
- Realize that you can only do one thing at a time effectively.
- Don't forget activities related to helping yourself (e.g., getting rest, spending time with family and friends) can also be important priorities.

## **Set Reasonable Goals and Expectations**

- Learn to recognize what you do best.
- Recognize your limitations, most relate to being human.
- Recognize what others do best and ask for their help.

*Main Line Rehabilitation Associates is a  
CARF Accredited Home & Community Based Brain Injury Program*



## **Learn and Use Relaxation Techniques**

- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a relaxing situation.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Take a walk.
- Talk to someone you like.

## **Tell Yourself Things That Will Help**

- I'm doing the best that I can.
- I'm a good person, I'm trying.
- If I take my time I'll do things right.

## **Avoid Pushing Yourself Too Hard or Putting Yourself Down**

- I've got to do more.
- I've got to try harder.
- I'm letting everyone down.

## **Ask for Help**

- Seek help from people that have offered.
- Don't let your pride get in the way.
- Recognize that everyone needs help sometimes.

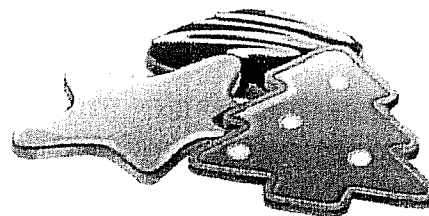
## **Common Sense Strategies Can Help You Be Strong**

- Focus on one thing at a time.
- Work on your hardest responsibilities at times when you feel most fresh and rested.
- Have "quiet times" for everyone, noise can increase stress and reduce productivity.

## **Recognize That Life Has Many Challenges**

- Many people struggle to enjoy successful lives.
- Recognize that many of the issues you face are faced by others.
- Be patient, everyone finds obstacles on the road to success.
- Recognize that persistence, faith, and your good character will help you to succeed in time.

Have a safe, stress-free holiday season!



## Common Problems After a Brain Injury

After a brain injury, many changes occur. Individuals with brain injuries and their families often notice that they think, act or move differently. Changes with Physical, Psychosocial or Cognitive skills are very common. Your personal history before the injury can also have an impact on how much the brain injury affects you. Things like having had trouble coping with problems before your injury could have an impact on coping with the new problems that the brain injury presents. If you never worked or had an erratic work history, it could be harder to find and keep a job if you now have memory problems or work slower since the injury.

Studies show that individuals with limited coping abilities, a limited/erratic work history or limited work preferences had more trouble with the rehabilitation process. Cultural barriers (language barriers, cultural behavioral differences, etc), active problems with substance abuse, family dysfunction, social immaturity or a limited educational history also had an impact on rehabilitation or recovery after a brain injury.

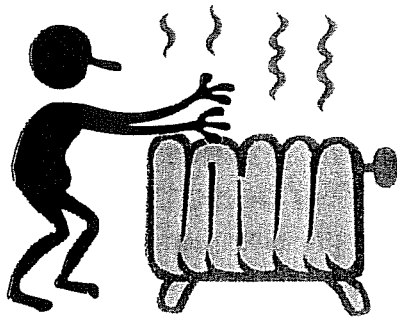
Over the next few articles, we will look at several of the common problems after a brain injury, but let's start with Psychosocial skills.

Psychosocial skills include many things, such as the ability to control your behavior, emotions or maintain appropriate interactions with others. These skills are all important for success, and strong skills in these areas are important for developing and keeping relationships with others. These skills are also needed for building and maintaining natural supports in your community. However, after an injury, these skills can often be impaired.

Some examples of how problems with psychosocial skills may be seen might include a person who has an unrealistic self-perception that does not conform to what others perceive. They may think that they are more capable of certain things than those around them feel they can do. Someone with a brain injury may have ineffective coping skills that can lead to anxiety, tension, frustration, depression and anger. Some people may feel a sense of isolation; loss of control; lack of sensitivity and understanding of brain injury-related impairments by others (including professionals, friends and employers). A lack of access to needed funding, a lack of social support, feeling that they are not valued by society or their families; or a loss of family support can all impact social functioning.

Therapy can help to improve functioning in these areas, but awareness is the key! Be sure to talk to your therapists and coordinator about getting help with any of the areas that you feel you need to address.

- *Bridget Lowery*



## LIHEAP

**What is it?** The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program aimed at making home heating and cooling affordable for low-income families. The funding for this program comes to the families in the form of cash grants. These grants are available through an application process that opened on November 1, 2010. The program also offers "crisis grants" that will assist homeowners/renters in the event of a system emergency or fuel shortage. During the 2009-2010 season, 547,000 households used LIHEAP funding to heat/cool their homes. In addition to this, more than 200,000 families received crisis assistance to take care of emergent heating/cooling situations.

**Who is eligible and how can I apply?** LIHEAP is obviously geared toward low-income families, but just how low? For the 2010-2011 season, the eligibility will vary according to the size of the household. The maximum eligible income for a household of one is \$17,328. For each additional person, add \$5984 for the maximum eligible income. The cash grants themselves are based on income, family size, type of heating fuel, and region. Applications for the cash grants are available at county assistance offices, local utility companies, and community service agencies. Applications, as well as additional information, are also available online at <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/foradults/heatingassistanceliheap>. Applications are accepted until March 31, 2011. Applicants can call 1-888-857-7095 for more information.

## Home and Neighborhood Safety

In today's world it is extremely important to be cautious and consider risk factors in your environment. What constitutes as a risk factor? Risk factors exist everywhere and you may not recognize them as potential risks right away. Safety risks exist not only in your home but in the neighborhood as well. A few factors to think about when considering home safety can include working door locks, working outside lights, working heating/air, changing batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, caution while using the stairs, removing obstacles that could cause falls, efficient management of bug/rodent problems, appliance management, having supplies for power outages, having a fire evacuation plan, and having a way of knowing who is at the door before you answer it. Safety risk factors can obviously vary based on the type of residence in which you live.

While home safety is important, safety concerning your neighborhood and the people in it may be even more important. This type of safety requires that you are observant of your environment and are selective about the people you trust. When considering your neighborhood, you must take into account the crime in the neighborhood, whether you feel safe outside after dark, and whether there are people in the neighborhood that you trust. Having people nearby that you can call in the event of an emergency is important. Also, when considering your personal safety regarding people in your life you have to ask yourself whether you think there are people in your life that are taking advantage of you or if there are people in your life that make you uncomfortable. Discuss potential risks with your Main Line staff to generate plans to make your home and environment as safe as possible.

