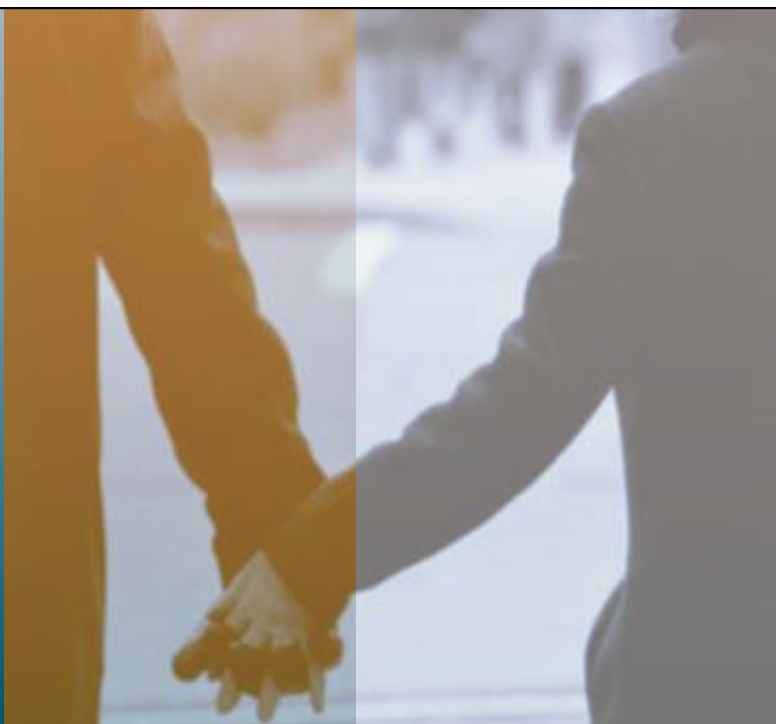


Partnering with a Spouse who has a Brain Injury

Lori Weisman MA, LMHC
Bellevue, Washington



Lori Weisman MA, LMHC



Welcome



Today's Goals

- Appreciate the Urgency and size of the TBI challenge
- Understand causes and effects of mTBI
- Recognize mTBI effects on relationships
- Gain Strategies for treatment





How **BIG** Is
This Problem?

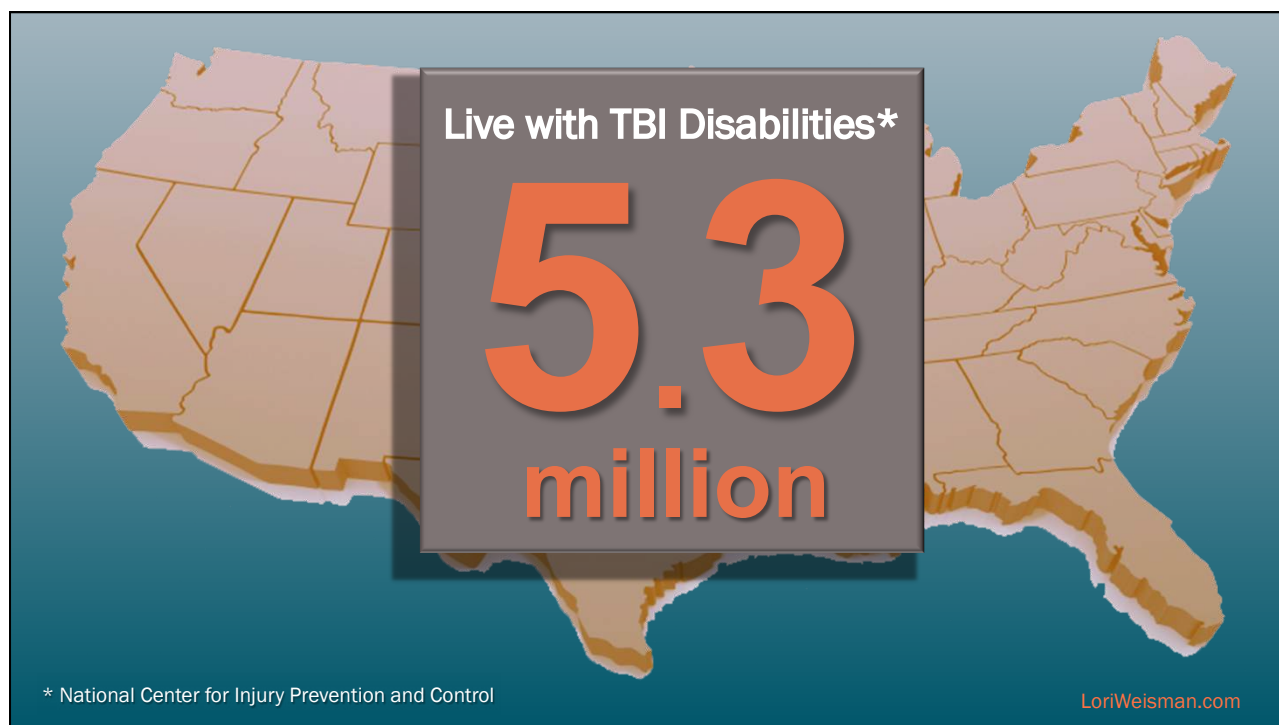
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Every **21** seconds

Someone in the U.S.
sustains a traumatic
brain injury*

* - www.cdc.gov/injury

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TBI is the **leading cause** of death and disability

for children, adolescents,
and young adults
in the U.S.*

* - www.cdc.gov/injury



Over the Years

1988

50%

Survival

Today

78%

Survival

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Who experiences TBI?

- Anyone
- Some are more at risk:
 - ✓ Highest risk **0-4** years, **15-24**, and **75** years and older
 - ✓ Males are 1.5 times more likely than females to experience TBI
 - ✓ Individuals who have already sustained one or more concussions

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**“Invisible
Disability”**



“Silent Epidemic”

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What is brain Injury?

- The CDC defines a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a disruption in the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or penetrating head injury.

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Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

- Stroke
- Aneurysm
- Anoxia
- Chemical exposure
- Drug abuse

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

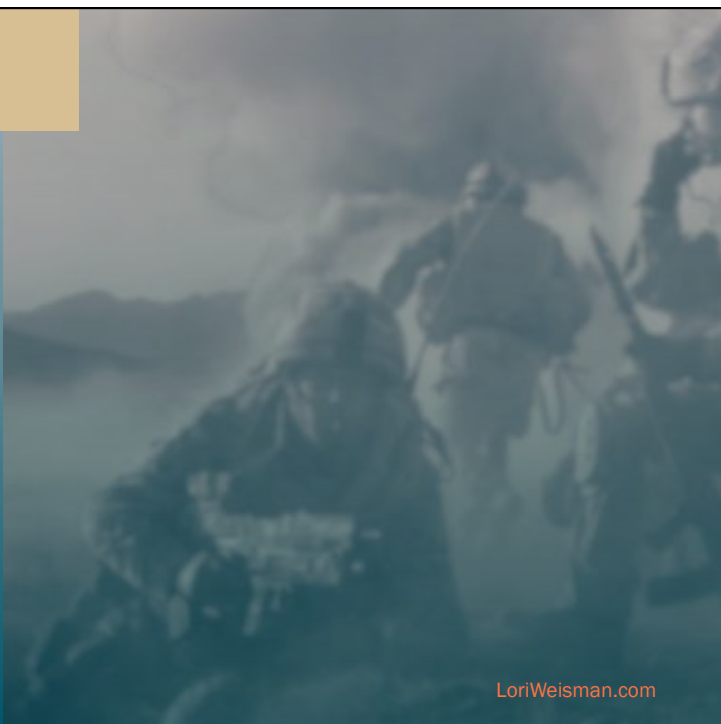
- Car accident
- Sports injury
- Falls
- Physical violence
- Blast injury

Two Types of Brain Injury

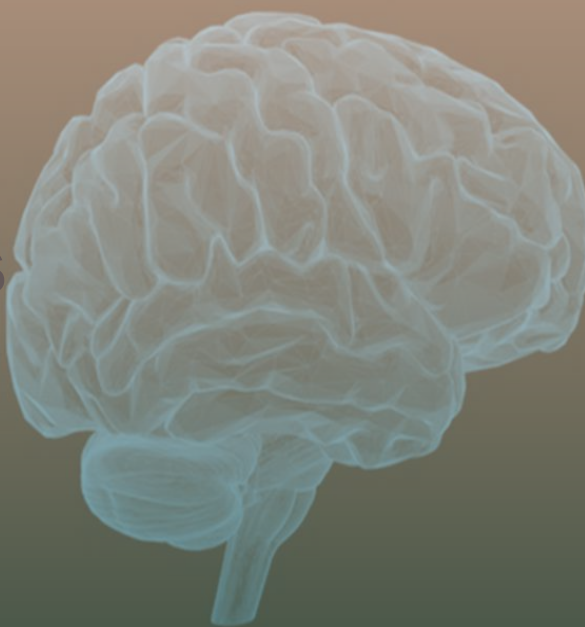
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Blast Injury

- Leading cause of TBI in war zones
- Primary injury results from the complex pressure wave generated by an explosion



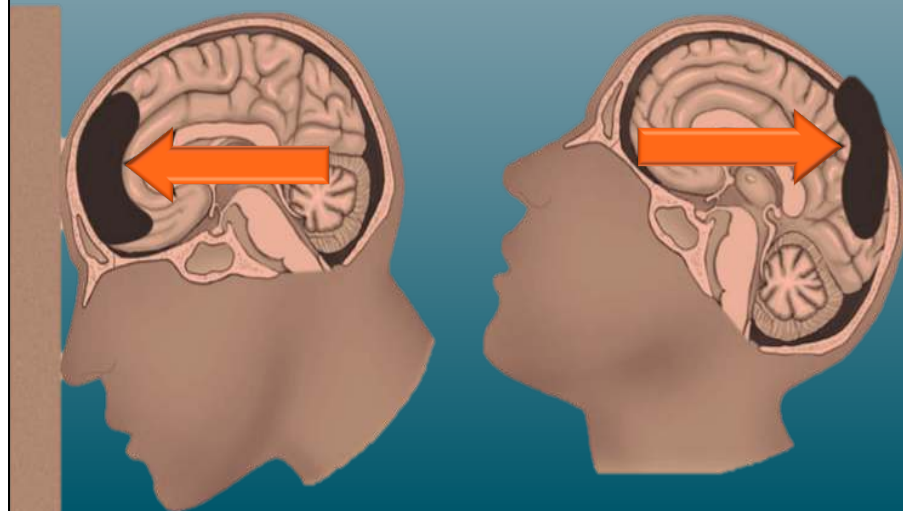
What Happens to the Brain?



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Focal Impact Injury

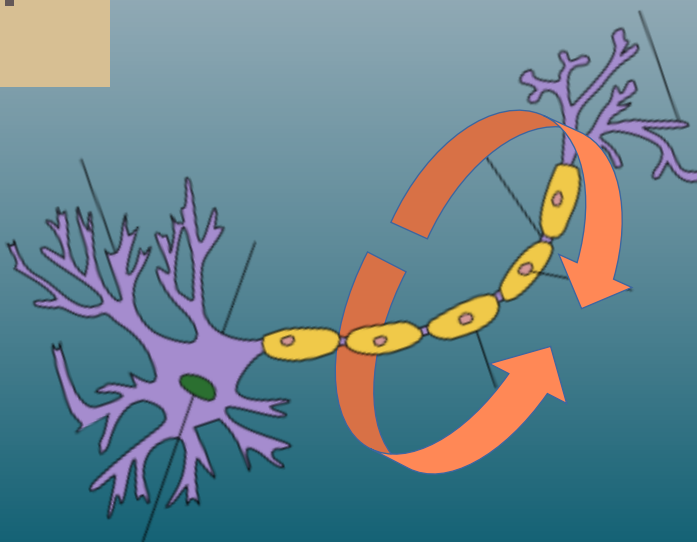
- Coup-contre coup: brain slams forward and back inside skull



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Diffuse Axonal Injuries (DAI)

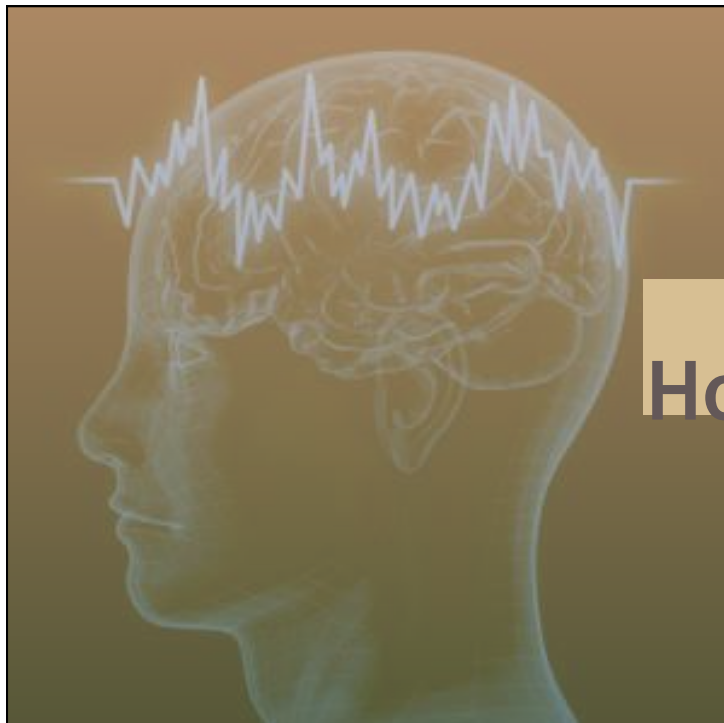
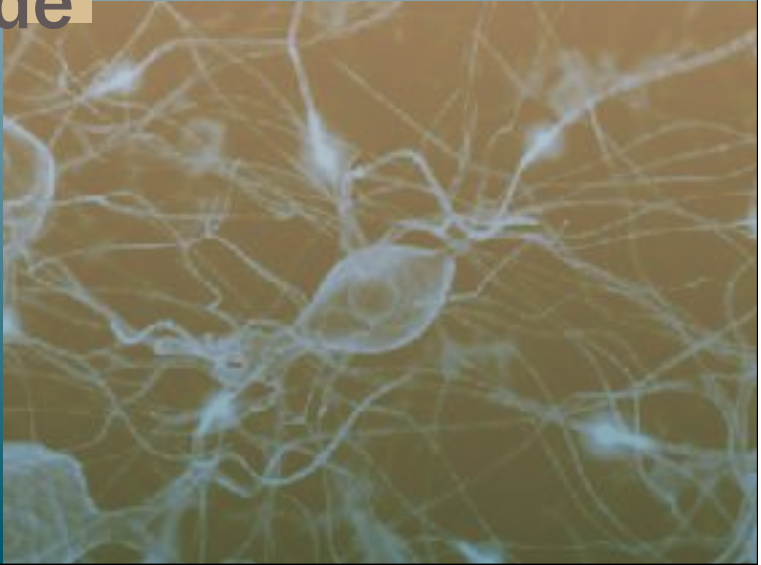
- Rotational forces on the brain cause the stretching, snapping and shearing of axons



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Neurometabolic Cascade

- Complex series of biochemical and neurochemical reactions



How bad is it?

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Severity Continuum

Mild
75-90%

Moderate
10-30%

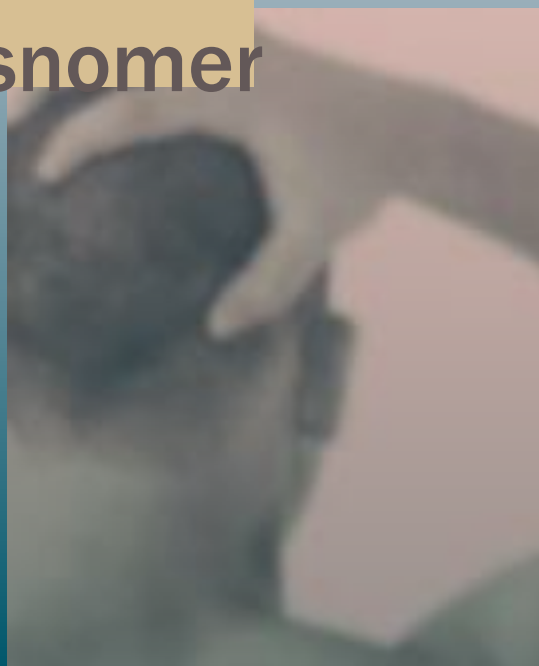
Severe
5-10%

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Mild Can Be a Misnomer

- 90% of mild TBIs will recover within 6-8 weeks
- Physical injury may not determine long-term functioning
- Post-concussion Syndrome

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How is mTBI Diagnosed?



- Neurological Exam
- Neuropsychology Testing
- Cat Scans
- MRI
- PET Scan
- Diffusion Tensor Imaging

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mTBI Profile

- Loss of consciousness is NOT required for this diagnosis
- Alteration in mental status or consciousness is considered standard
- Cognitive/emotional deficits vary widely
- MRI and CAT scans are often normal
- Post Injury Symptoms referred to as Post Concussive Syndrome

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Areas of Deficit Following a Mild Brain Injury

- Executive function/
Cognitive Deficits
- Physical
- Behavioral/
emotional

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Amplification of Pre-existing Mental or Physical Conditions

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No Two Brain Injuries are Alike

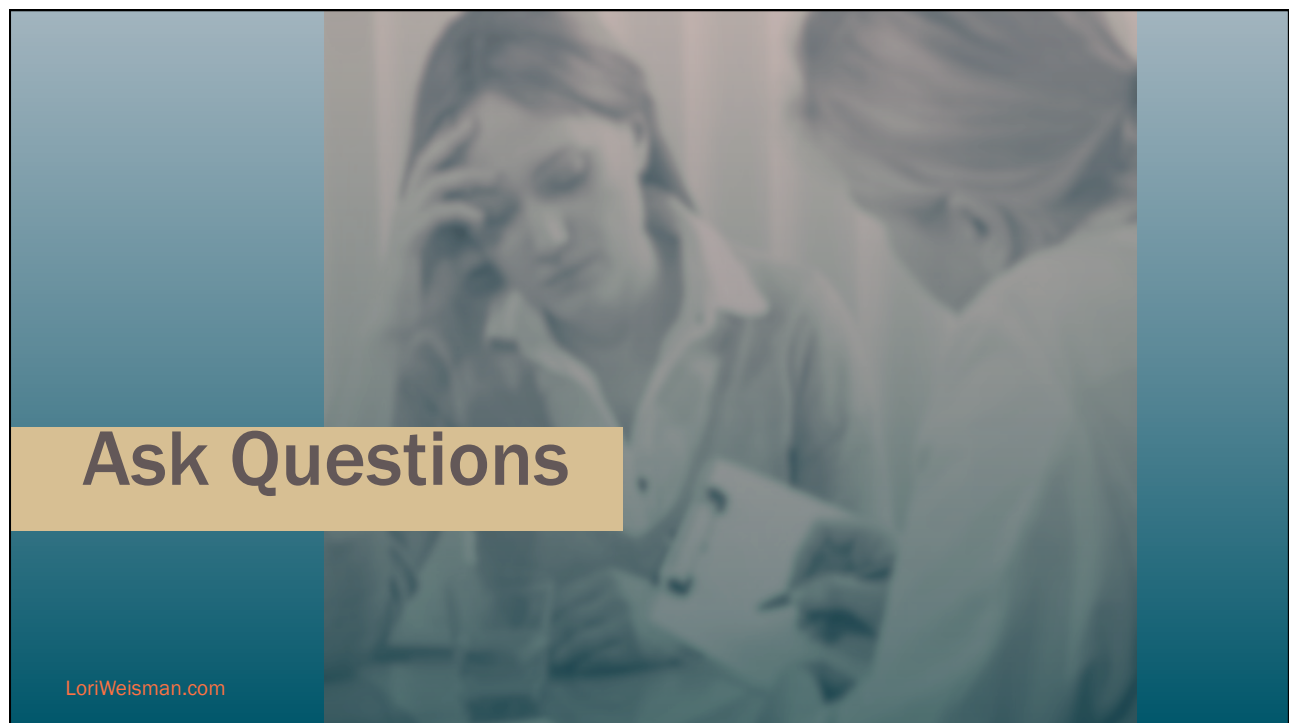
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How Can We Help?

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Ask Questions

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Treatment Team

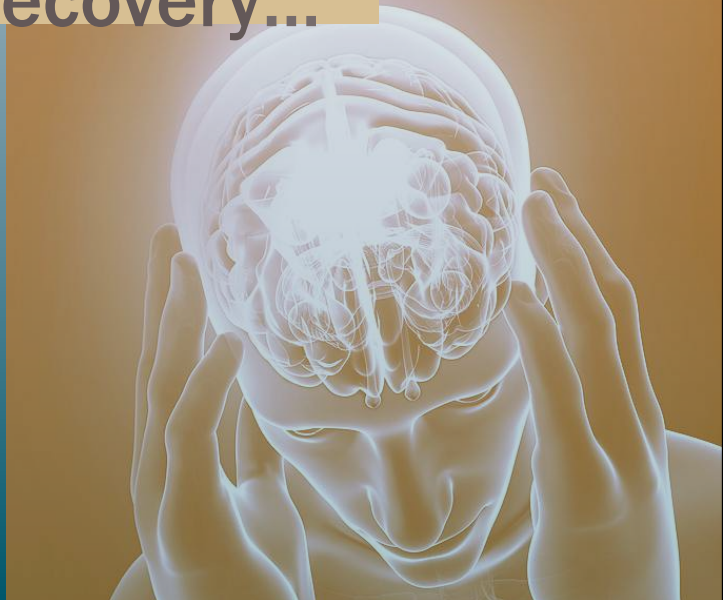
- Neurologist
- Neuropsychologist
- Psychotherapist
- Speech pathologist
- And others ...



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Slow Road to Recovery...

- Measured in weeks, months and years
- Most rapid in the first six months
- Slow and often incomplete



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What does Brain Injury Have to Do with Relationships?

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Injury to the Relationship

- Living with a stranger/I feel like a stranger
- Role and responsibilities change
- Sexual intimacy
- Loss of friends/social activities
- Communication challenges

A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a beach, holding hands and looking out at the ocean during sunset. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange and blue gradient.

The Good News

Hidden Blessings

- Defenses are down
- Couples who had problems before now can get help
- Opportunity for changing negative patterns, healing and deepening intimacy



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Live with TBI Disabilities

5.3
million

**Proven Strategies on How to
Treat this Population**

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Treatment

- Educate
- “New normal”
- Pacing
- Grieve loss of relationship as it was
- Create new vision and goals as it is



Factors that Influence Recovery

- Pre-existing depression and anxiety
- PTSD
- Lack of social support
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Pre-existing learning disability, ADHD
- Disengagement from vocation
- Victimization
- Malingering

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(Continued)

Factors that Influence Recovery

- Decreased activity (physical, cognitive, social)
- Medications
- Lack of, or too much education
- Drugs, alcohol (pre and post injury)
- Secondary gains (money, relationship dynamics)
- Litigation

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Thank You



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