Part III: Managing Spasticity

Spasticity

A TBI can cause damage in the brain or to the nerves that makes muscles not respond how they should, this is called spasticity. Spasticity is not pain, but it can be painful. It may make muscles stay flexed when they should be relaxed or make them shake in a way that is hard to control. Over time spasticity can cause muscles to lengthen or shorten, which can cause pain. Not enough sleep, stress, infection, or pain in another part of the body can make spasticity worse.

Slow controlled stretching and low impact strength training can help control spasticity. Other techniques that are often used to manage pain can also work well for spasticity. Relaxation and mindfulness strategies can also help. Yoga uses slow movements, stretching, strengthening and mindful breathing to help you be more connected and in control of your body. Because of this yoga can be very helpful for people with spasticity. There are many different ways to practice yoga, you may need to try a few before you find the right one for you.

Lupe, I can identify with you. I had to learn how to work with my body and my abilities before I could get more control over them.

My muscles don’t exactly do what I want them to, so even basic things are challenging.

That would be upstairs...
I slipped into a cycle of depression, where the less I did, the less I was able to do, the less I wanted to do.

I was very active before my injury, but since then there have been a lot of obstacles.

On Demand Pain Management Strategy #2

DISTRACTION – Pain needs an audience. If you’re not paying attention to your pain, it will trouble you less. Some things you can try to take your mind off of pain:

- Read or watch TV.
- Listen to music or a podcast.
- Do some cleaning.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Play cards or a game.
- Do some gardening.

There are many different ways to manage spasticity: stretching, strength training, mobility exercises, heat packs, oral medication, botox injections, motor blocks, or baclofen pumps could be used. Talk with your health care provider to learn more about these options.

Sonia came to my house every Wednesday and we caught up and did yoga for an hour.

I also started doing yoga daily with online videos. Some poses were hard, but I could always find modifications that worked for me.

https://msktc.org/tbi
In the community my walking was faster and more stable.

As my balance improved, I got more comfortable with more activity.

I saw results almost right away, the daily stretching helped reduce my spasticity.

Read more about emotional changes after TBI in this comic:
https://msktec.org/tbi-topics/emotional-problems-after-tbi

In the community my walking was faster and more stable.

Being able to more easily do things expanded my life. When I stopped feeling isolated my depression became more manageable.

They have the best coffee here.

Both anti-depressant medications and counseling can also be very helpful at managing depression.

https://msktec.org/tbi
You can use this log to track activities or events that may be related to pain. This log can also be used to record your pain management practice.

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<th>Date/Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was happening? (Event or activity)</td>
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<td>For how long/ When?</td>
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<td>Did you have pain? (0-10) (Where?)</td>
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<td>Other emotions?</td>
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<td>What thoughts did you have?</td>
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<td>What did you do in response?</td>
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Authorship and Illustration

This infocomic was written by Silas James and Ayla Jacob and illustrated by David Lasky and Tom Dougherty, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center.

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