



Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky

**Helpful Hints
for
Going Back
to Work**

The Brain

You think you have a hard head, but only on the outside. The brain is very much like a soft boiled egg. The hard covering, the skull, protects the inside, the brain itself. It is soft and mushy, made up of membrane, fluid and bone. A brain injury is damage to the brain that is caused when the head strikes an object, something strikes the head or when the head is forcefully thrown about such as during a blast injury, a concussion, a fall or other accident. Other ways a brain may be injured are caused by illnesses such as stroke or tumors. After an injury there may be no effects at all or there may be local or widespread damage depending on the type of injury and where in the brain the injury has occurred.

Understanding your injury will be helpful as you think about the types of work you are interested in and are able to accomplish. Circle the items that effect you.

<u>PHYSICAL</u>	<u>COGNITIVE</u>	<u>EMOTIONAL</u>	<u>COMMUNICATION</u>
Fatigue	Confused	Frustrated	Difficulty Thinking Of The Right Word
Slow	Forgetful	Bored	Argumentative
Balance Problems	Lose Train of Thought	Restless	Egocentric
Headache	Think Slowly	Impatient	Uncomfortable Around Others
Drop Things	Indecisions	Sad	Slow
Weak	Poor Concentration	Lonely	Trouble Understanding Conversation
Trouble Falling Asleep	Can't Remember	Complainer	Make Spelling Errors
Dizziness	Easily Distracted	Difficulty Getting Started	Difficulty Making Conversation
Muscle Twinges Or Twitch	Forget Names	Misunderstood	Difficulty Writing

Discovering your employment goals

You have the opportunity to rethink what you were doing and perhaps choose a new career path. Finding employment is not easy and the more you know about yourself, what you are willing to do and what you need from a job, the easier it will be for you to find employment that really makes sense for you and your life. This will help you create a plan for looking for a job and give you better information about your skills and abilities.

Answer the following questions

1. What did you enjoy in the past?

2. What hobbies did you have or do you currently have?

3. List 3 conditions for a job that you feel must be there for the job to work out for you. These are conditions that are necessary and make the differences between a job where you would remain and one you would leave. For example: inside work, night hours, on the bus line, not too many people around, working with my hands.

4. List 3 preferences that you would like to have in a job. These are things that you would like to see in a job but are not absolutely necessary. For example: noisy atmosphere, close to where I am living, a variety of things to do, more outside than inside, relaxed atmosphere.

5. What do you need from a job?

6. What would change in your life if you had a job?

7. List three things you are proud of.

8. Write down all the job duties from your last four jobs. Circle the duties you like the best in each of those jobs. Be prepared to tell your case manager what you liked about each of those duties. For example: If you were a waiter, your job duties would include: greeting customers, filling water glasses, explaining menu, taking orders, respond to request, delivering food and drinks, typing the order into the computer. What you liked was using the computer so you circled that.

Your Employment Plan

Write answers to the following to create your employment plan.

1. What works and what doesn't. Use information from #3 and #4 on the preceding page to answer this question. Ex: what works: inside work, 1/2 time work, a mile from home; what doesn't work: being hot, confusion, full time work.

2. Define your ideal job in terms of your interests. Avoid using job titles. Instead use things such as working with tools, working in retail, etc.

3. List what you offer to an employer _____

A. List your skills _____

B. List your personality characteristics _____

C. List your past experience _____

D. List your credentials _____

4. Using your circled answers from question #8 on page 3, and other ideas that you have, develop a list of job tasks that you would like to do in a job. Avoid using job titles and instead identify just the task. EX: data entry, cook, sort files, repair electrical equipment.

5. Cross reference the list you created above with employers in the area.

EX:	TASK	EMPLOYER
A.	Data entry	Humana, UL, PNC Bank, Republic Bank, EON, GE, Charles Schwab, Stock Yards Bank
B.	Cook	UL, all restaurants, Ford, GE, Brown Forman, Catering services

6. Prioritize your task list and your list of employers. This then becomes your plan for looking for a job.

**You have now identified just what job tasks you are looking for
and what needs to be in place in an employment situation
for a job to be a good one for you.**

Telling your employer about your disability

Only you can decide to disclose your disability. Think about the pros and cons of disclosing. Write them down.

1. If you are able to find out, determine if the employer has hired others who experience disability. This will give you an idea of his/her attitude toward disability and accommodation.
2. Decide how to explain your disability and how it might affect you. An employer is more interested in how your disability affects your ability to do the job than they are with the diagnosis. EX: I have a brain injury from a blast injury. I am sure that I am able to do the tasks required in this job, however I have some memory difficulties and it helps when I write things down.
3. Emphasize the skills you have that make you able to perform the main duties of the job.
4. Be careful about how you explain how you sustained your head injury – you do not want to overwhelm the employer with the details of your injury and recovery.
5. Decide how specific you want to be in disclosing the affects of your injury.
6. If you are working with a therapist, talk to him/her about the best way to approach this with your employer.
7. Write out a script before having the conversation with your employer. Practice with people who are able to help you.
8. Decide on what accommodations you might need. It will help if you are able to offer suggestions on how accommodations may help you. Many of the accommodations you might need, you are already using. Explain how they help you.
9. You may choose to describe some of the symptoms the employer might observe and tell the employer what steps to take as a result.

Script: I have a brain injury that I received in 2008. I have the necessary skills to do this job. I am able to (describe some of the specific tasks required in the job) but sometimes I may forget a direction or might take a little longer to understand the directions. It helps when I write things down, so I may use a notebook to make sure I get all of the information correct. I may ask more questions as I get started. Sometimes I use my phone's alarm to remind me to do something. When I am particularly tired or stressed, I might keep to myself a little more than usual. It helps me when I am quiet within myself.

Talking with an employer

1. Put together a resume. There are many templates to use. Keep it to one page and make sure you check for spelling errors. Include:

- A. Your name, address and contact information
- B. Your latest employment, either paid or volunteer
- C. Your education
- D. A section on your employment goals and what you will contribute.
- E. Have a list of 3 references ready but do not put these on your resume.

2. If you feel you do not have a strong resume, consider a visual resume. Have a friend take some photos of you doing job tasks that you are particularly good at. Put these in a folder or notebook along with an explanation of what you are doing. Staff at BIAK can help you do this. Most jobs now days require you to apply on-line. If you need assistance in doing this ask for it or take a friend with you.

Tell everyone you are looking for a job. Get them all to help you. Use their contacts.

Before you visit a job site, practice what you are going to say so that you feel confident when you speak to someone. Have your resume with you when you go to a job site and try to talk to someone who makes hiring decisions. Always emphasize what you can do and what you are able to contribute.

There are many people who are able to help you. Agencies to contact include:

- The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in your city
- The Workforce Development Board — Unemployment Office
- Veteran's Employment Office at the VA Hospital
- VA Service Officers



This booklet is made available to you by the Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky with funding assistance from the Kentucky Department of Veteran's Affairs.

For additional information,
please call BIAK and speak to the
Military Outreach Coordinator at 1-800-592-1117.

**Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky
7321 New LaGrange Road
Suite 100
Louisville, KY 40222
800 592 1117**

www.biak.us