

## Phases of Family Grief /Recovery After a Child Experiences a Brain Injury

After a child has sustained a brain injury, families tend to progress through general phases of grief and adaptation. When working with families, it is important to remember that they are typically in some phase of grief and adaptation. Every family has a different and unique experience. Each family does not necessarily experience all the phases. The general phases are described below.

**Shock** is how many have characterized the initial period after they receive the news of their child's brain injury. During this time the family is focused on the survival of their child (student).

**Disbelief** regarding the effects of the injury is a time when families and schools tend to believe that with enough effort the student can overcome what has happened. This time can be mixed with euphoria as a student makes rapid physical recovery. For students with a mild or closed brain injury, a refusal of support services may occur.

**Sorrow** is how many families describe what they feel next. This can be combined with feelings of anger as families begin to realize that their student is changed permanently.

**Adaptation** occurs gradually overtime and often after the family has re-organized around the new needs of the student.

## WORKING WITH FAMILIES AFTER TBI CAN BE CHALLENGING BUT IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE STUDENTS SUCCESS.

### Remember....

The family is grieving the child's injury. Be kind and compassionate.

Stress is higher for families who have an adolescent with moderate to severe brain injury.

Collaboration means sharing control with parents in educational planning.

Acknowledge the value of parents as the primary decision makers in determining quality of life and intervention decisions on behalf of their child.

Maintain regular contact with parents and work to devote half of our communication time to their concerns and input.

Express interest in parental input on a regular basis.

### Questions? Get in touch!

Melissa Nowatzke, TBI Teams Project Coordinator  
nowatzke@uoregon.edu  
541-346-0597

Center On Brain Injury  
Research & Training  
99 West 10th Avenue, Suite 370  
Eugene, OR 97401

cbirt



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON



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