

- Occupational Therapy (OT) helps you get back to doing the things you NEED to do, WANT to do, or are EXPECTED to do in your day-to-day life.
- At SHARE, Occupational Therapy works on:
  - Activities of daily living (ADL's): bathing, dressing, eating, grooming, safety
  - Instrumental activities of daily living (IADL's): household tasks, grocery shopping, finances, medication management, driving, education/work tasks, tool use, participation, and routines
  - Upper extremity function: strength, endurance, sensation, coordination, range of motion, and pain
  - Visual deficits: visual symptoms, both eyes working together, eye muscles, visual perceptual skills (how our brain understands what we see), visual motor speed/control, etc.
  - Sensory integration: re-training the body to understand and respond to information more appropriately to increase participation in daily activities and decrease discomfort.

### What background information is helpful to know?

#### Driving:

- Brain injury symptoms can impact driving performance: vision changes, attention, decreased frustration tolerance, memory and cognitive deficits, vertigo, seizures, and fatigue.
- Driving evaluations and simulator training may be indicated for returning Service members with traumatic brain injury.

#### IADLs and Roles:

- Family functioning is often a concern after a traumatic brain injury. Overwhelming noise/visual levels found in busy households and the demands for multi-tasking make it difficult for some Service members to continue parenting responsibilities. Once difficulties are identified, these can be worked on in occupational therapy.

#### Sensory Processing System:

- Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous system takes in information from the senses – and turns it into appropriate or inappropriate responses.
- Sensory information is gathered through our eyes, ears, muscles, joints, skin, and inner ears.
- Sensory processing disorder can affect one or many senses. Our assessments will help us find which sensory systems may be affected and how to help you improve your quality of life.

#### Vision:

- Common visual symptoms in individuals who have experienced blast injuries:
  - Sensitivity to light
  - Unable to move both eyes inward to focus on an object and see one clear image
  - Difficulty focusing on items close up and then quickly adjusting to seeing an object far away
  - Eyes unable to follow a moving target/ quick eye movement
  - Delayed pupil (center of eye) response to light
  - Headache



**What can OT do to improve these areas?**

- Clients learn pacing/fatigue management and strategies to support them when participating in activities with family or friends.
- Clients develop new household skills and strategies to increase their engagement in family roles.
- Driving interventions involve activities specifically designed to improve reaction time, visual scanning, attention, range of motion, or adaptive strategies.
  - Adaptive strategies could include changes to the vehicle for easy reaching, only driving during the day, driving with another person in the car, or limited highway driving.
  - Driving simulation may be used to decrease anxiety provoking elements of driving situations as well as to promote self-awareness of driving safety difficulties. We apply learned behavioral health strategies during transportation and community mobility tasks. Transportation alternatives are explored as needed.
- Sensory de-sensitization (decreasing over/under-responsiveness to input through controlled exposure) and coping strategies are practiced improving quality of life and increase daily participation.
- Eye muscle strengthening exercises, visual perceptual resources, visual accommodations/resources, and referrals to vision specialists as needed.

Helpful resource for more information on vision after a mild TBI:

<https://www.myshepherdconnection.org/abi/Mild-Brain-Injury>

**References:**

Weightman, M. M., Radomski, M. V., Mashima, P. A., & Roth, C. R. (2014). Mild traumatic brain injury rehabilitation toolkit. Fort Sam Houston, TX: Borden Institute. Retrieved May 28, 2020, from

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