

Do you sometimes act without thinking...?

What is impulsivity?

Impulsivity is appearing to act without thinking in advance. It can include a lack of control in the way a person speaks or acts.

How do I know if I am impulsive?

- Finding it hard to wait your turn.
- Speaking over the top of people or breaking into other people's conversations.
- Acting on an impulse without thinking the idea through.
- Not appearing to think about the consequences of what you do or say.
- May seem to be abrupt or rude to others.
- Act inappropriately toward other people.
- Get involved in dangerous activities without thinking about the possible risks.
- May spend unwisely large amounts of money on things you don't need or you already have.
- Come up with an idea and act on it without thinking it through.

'Jill's' Story

'Jill' is in her early thirties and was diagnosed with a large meningioma in her frontal lobe. Before her diagnosis, she was a fun-loving person, who liked to do things on the spur of the moment. She had a lot of friends and a busy social life. After surgery, she became extremely impulsive, rushing off on the first idea that came to head. She would travel to one side of town to buy a gelato. After starting to eat her ice cream, she would suddenly want to get back into the car and drive off to the beach on the other side of town

to buy fish and chips. 'Jill' would spend all her money on the day she was paid, buying unnecessary gifts for all her family and friends. She also went out and bought a puppy. A few days later the puppy became lost and was picked up by the pound. Just as quickly, 'Jill' then decided that she no longer wanted the dog.

Strategies

For the person with a brain tumour

- Use self-calming techniques to lower any feelings of agitation. For example, try relaxation or controlled breathing.
- Use positive self talk, telling yourself 'just wait your turn' or 'slow down'.
- Try to set goals and stick to them to stop acting on the spur of the moment.
- Plan things to do with family or friends to help make sure you are being realistic.
- Get someone else to manage your money and give you a set amount each day.

For the carer/family member

- Let the person know straight away if they have acted inappropriately, don't wait for a 'better time'.
- Give positive instructions for the right behaviour. For example, when the person is agitated and keeps interrupting, say 'when I have stopped speaking, then you can tell us your news', rather than 'shut up' or 'stop interrupting'.
- Aim to keep the person's behaviour at a set level and try to limit the number of lapses that occur. Otherwise the person's behaviour may start to get worse over time.

KEY FACTS

Carers of people with a brain tumour who were surveyed said that 19% of their relatives frequently or almost always acted impulsively.

- If the person has problems with spending too much money, give them a weekly amount and limit access to bank accounts or credit cards. You may need to think about seeking a financial management order (speak to the social worker or your solicitor about this matter).

Questions to ask your health professional

- What is the cause of the impulsivity?
- Is it related to the tumour itself?
- Is it related to the treatments given for the tumour or other medications?
- Could the impulsivity be an unrelated medical condition and does this need treatment in itself?
- Do I/we expect the impulsivity to get better or worse over time?
- Are there any medications that can help the problem?
- Will a psychologist be able to help treat this problem?
- Are there any diet or lifestyle factors that can help with the impulsivity?



Links to other information:

- <http://braininjury.org.au/portal/fact-sheets/impulsivity---fact-sheet.html>
- Resource sheet - Controlled Breathing
- Resource sheet - Relaxation