

# Can't seem to say or do the right thing at the right time...?

## What is inappropriate behaviour?

Inappropriate social behaviour is acting or talking in an awkward, embarrassing or socially unacceptable way. This is sometimes called 'stepping over the line'. When someone acts in this way, it is very embarrassing for families or partners. Generally this behaviour was not present before the brain tumour or if it was, it has worsened.

Inappropriate sexual behaviour is acting in a way that does not meet with community standards of behaviour. This can include talking about sex too much or touching people when they don't want you to.

## How do I know if my behaviour is inappropriate?

- Changes in the way you behave, for example acting before thinking, swearing, telling off-colour jokes, or acting recklessly.
- Telling strangers too much private information, for example walking up to a stranger and telling them about personal matters such as your brain tumour.
- Being too friendly with people that you do not know well, such as hospital staff or people that you meet for the first time in a shop or on the train.
- Withdrawn, not being as social with other people.
- Flirting and making unwanted sexual suggestions.
- Embarrassing or difficult behaviour.
- Not showing the right feeling for the situation, for example laughing when something sad has happened.
- Saying lewd or sexual remarks.
- Standing too close to other people, making them feel uncomfortable.

- Touching someone that you do not know well.
- Touching yourself in public or in the company of others.
- Exposing yourself in public, for example flashing genital area.

## 'Lewis' Story

'Lewis' is a 56-year-old father with adult children who was diagnosed with a frontal glioma. His close friends report he is normally shy, quiet and polite. However, since his brain tumour he has changed. 'Lewis' has been asking personal questions of newcomers to the church. He sometimes makes crude or sexually inappropriate comments to these total strangers. Normally a private person he is now over-familiar with strangers and shares personal details upon meeting new people.

## Strategies

### For the person with a brain tumour

- Try to keep a check on the way you act. Look for clues or reactions from others so you know if you have stepped over the line.
- If you are told to stop acting in a way that is not enjoyed by other people, try not to get upset. Look at how you can act better next time.
- Think about how you would like to be treated by others and use this as a guide for the way you act. This is like the saying 'do unto others what you would have others do unto you'.
- Look around for people that you want to be like and try to act the same way.
- Use controlled breathing (see Resource sheet) to keep yourself in check.

## KEY FACTS

- A survey of people with a brain tumour found that 37% showed inappropriate sexual and social behaviour such as laughing too easily or talking too much about sex.
- Carers of people with a brain tumour said that 12% of their relatives showed inappropriate social behaviour that was different to the way they acted before the brain tumour.

## For the carer/family member

- Be consistent with the way you act and the rules you set.
- Make clear rules for behaviour that is 'out'.
- Be clear when someone is acting in ways that are not okay. Make sure your relative knows what rules of behaviour are okay at the family home and when going out.
- If your relative asks rude or embarrassing questions, provide a guide for more appropriate way to act.
- Do not laugh or show disgust when your relative acts in ways that step over the line. Rather, tell the person in a firm tone that such comments, questions or behaviours are 'not on'.
- In a calm manner, let the person know how to act correctly.
- Encourage the person to change the way they act.
- Do not ignore behaviour that breaks the rules as this may encourage the person to keep on going.
- Make sure you praise the person when they act well and stick to the rules you have set.

## Questions to ask your health professional

- What is the cause of the inappropriate behaviour?
- Is it related to the tumour itself?
- Is it related to the treatments given for the tumour or other medications?
- Could the inappropriate behaviour be due to 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?
- Can a psychologist help to treat this problem?
- Are there any diet or lifestyle factors that can help with the inappropriate behaviour?

## Links to other information

- [http://www.birt.co.uk/images/BIRT06\\_Sexualproblems.pdf](http://www.birt.co.uk/images/BIRT06_Sexualproblems.pdf)
- Resource sheet – Stress Management & Relaxation Techniques