

BRAIN FUNCTIONS

Attention

1. Switching attention

I find it hard to switch my attention between different things visually and with noises.

2. Selective attention

I find it hard to focus on one thing, when there are other things happening.

3. Divided attention

I find it hard to multitask.

4. Sustained attention

I have trouble completing tasks and activities for reasons I do not know; all I know is that I cannot sustain my attention for as long as I used to be able to.

5. Easily distracted

I become easily distracted. I use a to-do list for my to-do list so that I can stay on task.

Organising and Planning

6. Motivation

I wake up with a hole inside of me, that hole is where motivation used to live. Motivation to do anything and everything.

7. Lack of interest

I have a lack of interest in things that once excited me.

8. Difficulty in starting something

I have great difficulty starting something. It feels like procrastination, but I never used to procrastinate for the things that I have trouble starting now.

9. Longer time to process information

It takes me a longer time to process things that are said to me, things that I read, and concepts of things.

10. Completing tasks and activities

I have trouble completing tasks and activities and I do not know why.

11. Planning for the future

My mood is always fluctuating, I cannot deal with much sensory information, and I have trouble thinking and planning. I require a well-structured plan and routine in my life. Without it, I will spend all day starting different tasks, and then becoming distracted and start something else, and the cycle continues before becoming too overwhelmed with everything, resulting in panic, tears, and chaos.

12. Organisation

It is extremely hard to stay organised. With all of my symptoms I experience each day, I struggle to organise as it is exhausting.

13. Decision making

If someone gives me choice of more than one option, my brain cannot make that choice. I can feel it working so hard, and then spiralling into panic and becoming overwhelmed. I often tell people, "I cannot make a choice right now, please choose for me."

Thinking

14. Generating ideas or thoughts

There are times when I cannot generate ideas or have thoughts, it's just blank.

15. Misunderstanding

At times I do not understand directions, instructions, or even what someone says to me.

16. Getting stuck on an idea for a period of time

I can become stuck on an idea. It feels like my brain is a train and that train has stopped at a station, and it doesn't leave again. I can dwell on it for lengthy periods of time. I can become frustrated with it.

17. Confusion

My brain becomes muddled. I cannot think straight. I cannot handle any lights or noise, as it all enhances the confusion. This terrifies me.

Memory

18. Forgetting to do things

I can forget to do the simplest tasks, and I cry inside every time. My brain never used to work like this.

19. Misplacing objects

I easily misplace objects. It's common to find the jam in the microwave because I thought that's where it belongs, rather than the fridge, as an example of misplacing objects.

20. Forgetting conversations

People in my life bring up certain things that I have talked to them about and I have no memory of ever discussing that topic. There is an empty feeling inside of me every time this happens.

21. Forgetting to tell someone something and then remembering later

When I spend time with someone, I have a mental list of things that I'd like to talk to them about. If I don't write them down, I will not recall all of them. I always leave a conversation and then remember after something else that I wanted to say or ask. This is new and hard to adapt to.

22. Forgetting why you went to the fridge/ certain room

When I walk into a room, I close my eyes, and think about why I came here. I know that there was a reason I walked in here, but cannot retrieve it out of my memory bank. I close my eyes again, and mentally retrace my last moments. If I'm lucky, I can retrieve the why I came into this room.

23. Difficulty learning new tasks/ information

It takes a lot longer and there is no guarantee that I will remember a new task or information. If I remember, I consider myself lucky, even if I spent five times longer working to remember it than I used to with my old brain.

24. Difficulty learning new behaviour

Learning a new behaviour without a damaged brain is hard. Now it's much harder, and at times, feels impossible.

Senses

25. Spatial awareness

I find it difficult to judge distances between objects, and/or myself and objects.

26. Proprioception

My awareness of the position and movement of my body is different. I used to think it was easy to walk without bumping things, now it is a challenge.

27. Skin sensations

My skin burns and becomes irritable when my brain is overwhelmed. And sometimes, there is no reason.

28. Skin sensitivity

My skin is extra sensitive. A cool breeze leaves me with waves of goosebumps, and my skin is extra ticklish. Any heat applied to my skin burns intensely.

29. Complete loss of smell & taste

I cannot smell or taste anything. It is just blank.

30. Partial loss of smell & taste

I cannot smell and taste things like I used to. It has changed.

31. Complete loss of vision

I cannot see with my eyes.

32. Partial loss of vision

My vision does not work like it used to. When I look, I see blurred, distorted images.

33. Making sense of shapes, colours, and objects

I have trouble making sense of shapes, colours, and objects. Somethings I can see well, and other things make no sense to me. Moving things overwhelm me easily. I can feel my brain working extra hard.

34. Sensitivity to light

My eyes hurt when looking at bright lights. It brings on headaches/ migraines, and causes me great discomfort.

35. Sensitivity to noise

Noise is louder than it has ever been. Sounds that never used to annoy me, can make me extremely irritable. When I am around these noises, my pain and irritation increase.

36. Tinnitus (ringing in ears)

There is ringing in one/both ears. It is occasional/ permanent. I cannot remember what it is like to not hear ringing.

37. Complete loss of hearing

I cannot hear anymore.

38. Sensitivity to temperature

My sensitivity to temperature has increased/ decreased. This makes it extremely hard to go to various places, as I need to be well prepared for any temperature change.

39. Regulation of temperature

How my brain regulates temperature has changed. If it is 20 degrees, to me, it feels different than that. This makes it extremely hard to go to various places, as I need to be well prepared for any temperature change.

Emotions

40. Lack of empathy

I do not understand how other people feel, it feels like that part of me has malfunctioned.

41. Aggression & anger

I can become aggressive and quite angry very quickly. There are times when people around me need to 'walk on eggshells,' so that any sudden noise or movement doesn't overflow my cup of sensory & emotional stress.

42. Temper outbursts

I seem to lose my cool easily. I don't feel like I am in control.

43. Verbally aggressive

There are times when I can say things without thinking of the consequences that follow my behaviour. I always feel horrible afterwards.

44. Physically aggressive

There are times when it feels like a demon is inside of me. I can observe my behaviours, but I do not feel like I am in control. I feel horrible afterwards.

45. Irritation

Involves short temper with little provocation. If anything irritated me before my brain changed, now it irritates me even more. I always feel horrible after an irritation outburst.

46. Irritability due to fatigue

I become easily irritated by the smallest things; someone opening a door in another room of the house, a bird chirping, or someone talking. I feel like I can become irritated very easily, by things that never once used to irritate me.

47. Low tolerance for stress

Processing sensory information means that my brain has to work extra hard. This creates more stress for my brain, and lowers my tolerance for other stresses.

48. Self-centred

I balance more daily demands than I ever have before. This means that I need to regularly check in with my brain, and spend more time meeting these demands. I also talk so much about my life after my injury, as many insane, unimaginable, and at times; inexplicable experiences have and continue to occur - this may come across as self-centred behaviours.

49. Impatience towards others

My patience levels have taken a dramatic drop since my brain was altered. It takes lots of practice every day, to work on my patience.

50. Anxiety

I experience anxiety on a scale, from opening a window and letting the sound of traffic enter my brain, and me not being able to handle it; thus, leading to hypersensitivity erupting from my brain not being able to process is, to wondering if I will ever be able to raise my own family, work again, or having a fall and acquiring another injury to my precious brain. And everything in between that one can anticipate failure in some way.

51. Mood swings

I experience deep emotional lows throughout my days, and for no apparent reason. These are generally tied in with fatigue, but not always.

52. Depression

When I see anything that reminds me of how my life was before my injury, a wave of sadness washes over me. I am saddened by not being able to do things like I used to be able to.

53. Loss of identity

I no longer feel like the same person, yet I am still the same person. And everybody tells me that I am me, yet I don't feel like me. Trying to rebuild an identity again where your blueprint was who you were before, yet that blueprint cannot be used to build this new identity, as it has been damaged and cannot complete tasks like it once knew how to. Welcome to the world of lost identity.

54. Grief of who you used to be before your brain was altered

When neurons, who deliver messages in the brain, die, they are gone. That means that whatever those neurons did are gone as well. It's the type of grief where you are physically alive, but psychologically, cognitively, emotionally, and how you perceive the sensory world has all changed, and when this happens, it is a heavy, ambiguous type of grief.

55. Difficulty controlling emotions

It feels like my controls for my emotions have been tampered with, leaving it out of my control. This tends to tie in with my mood swings, as the simplest noise or busyness can implode my emotions.

56. Physical isolation

I am physically limited to many environments, due to my physical, and sensory demands. Meaning I miss out on things that I once would have been able to attend and enjoy.

57. Psychological/social isolation

Living with a brain injury is experiencing life's peak extremes, and downward lows on steroids. And this changes one in ways I don't really know or understand. It's hard to make small talk with people when you have experienced a flooding (too much emotional and sensory information for the brain to process), slept for 4 hours already, and it's only 10AM. That's not something most people experience on the daily.

58. Adjusting to new situations

I find it hard to adjust to new situations because my brain has to work harder, and it can become confused easily.

59. Expressing ideas & feelings

Sometimes, I find it hard to express my ideas and feelings. It's like the thing that allows me to express my ideas and feelings is broken, and just doesn't work like it used to.

Behaviour

60. Say or do inappropriate things

There are times when I say and do inappropriate things, I cannot help it, I know it is not how I should behave, but it just happens. It is like there is no filter where one used to be.

61. Regret reacting to someone in a certain way

There are times when I am filled with regret because I reacted to someone in a way that I never used to.

62. Express self in inappropriate ways

At times, I express myself in inappropriate ways. It feels so intuitive to act this way, as this is how my brain works, yet I am told by others that it is inappropriate.

63. Act on impulsive choices without thinking of the consequences

I easily act on impulse without thinking of the consequences that may arise afterwards. Sometimes, I am well aware of the consequences, yet I still do it anyway, as the urge to do it is so natural.

64. Misinterpretation of social cues and interactions

I do not understand social cues that other people do. For example, at times, I cannot understand why someone would want to stop talking to me, for whatever reason. I keep trying to make conversation with them, but they are not interested. Another example is not being able to read someone's body language. This makes interacting with others awfully hard, and at times results in isolation.

65. Lack of confidence in self

My brain works differently than it has my entire life, if I do not understand how my brain works, I have low confidence.

66. Self-awareness

My awareness of my thoughts, feelings, actions, or behaviours has changed.

67. Awareness of others

I am not always aware of other people in my life. It seems like my brain is so absorbed with trying to make it through each day – a hard struggle.

68. Frustration with effort & difficulty

Things that I always took for granted are harder and require me to use more effort. This is frustrating because I have been able to do these things my entire life before my brain changed.

69. Focused on self

I have so many changes in my brain and I work hard to regulate myself throughout the day, so that I can do what I want to do. This may look like I am only focused on myself.

70. Impatient

I am less patient since my brain changed. If patience was a 1 metre long string, I feel like that string has been cut in half, and then half again – that's how much tolerance I have for waiting. It is hard and I don't like it.

71. Demanding

I am more demanding than I used to be. When I really think about it, it links to my impatience. I don't mean to come across as demanding or rude.

72. Understanding others body language

I do not understand some/all of other people's body language when I interact with them. Example: picking up changes in tone of voice, understanding facial expressions, maintaining eye contact, not aware of personal space.

73. Sexual behaviour/ interest

I do not understand how to behave appropriately around other people, and at times it feels like my filter for saying and doing things has been removed.

74. Regulating voice tone & volume

I have trouble thinking about what volume I should speak at. Sometimes, I use a tone of voice that comes across differently to how I intended it to.

Language

75. Word retrieval

I cannot produce the word I want to say. It is lost somewhere within my memory.

76. Trouble finding the right words

I have difficulty retrieving the word that I want to say. I have always been able to retrieve the word, but now it is challenging.

77. Trouble speaking the right words

It is hard to produce and say the words that I know I want to say.

78. Knowing what to say, but not being able to say it.

My brain knows what I want to say, but something is stopping me from saying it.

79. Conversation

I find conversing with people challenging. Between comprehending what is being said, replying with the right words in my head, and then saying them out loud. Selecting to focus my attention on who I am talking to, blocking out the background distractions. Sustaining that attention to engage, and switching my attention between the environment and the conversation. And remembering parts of the conversation so that I can continue conversing.

80. Reading

Reading causes eye strain and headaches. If I look away from what I'm reading, when I bring my attention back to find my place, I cannot find it, as I do not remember what I just read. The words make little or no sense to me, it is like it is written in a different language.

81. Writing

I find it challenging to hold a pen with my hand, and use the pen to write letters. it's tricky to format, and then write sentences correctly. I often make mistakes that I never used to, and feel like a child who is learning to write.

82. Money

I find it hard to use and calculate money. If I am using cash to purchase an item, I require time to count out the money correctly.

83. Jokes

I don't understand jokes at certain times. I have trouble distinguishing the difference between hypothetical and literal jokes.

84. Communicating with phone

Phone calls cause me great anxiety, as I do not know how my brain will be able to comprehend and engage in conversation.

Physical

85. Seizures

I have seizures that last anywhere from ____ minutes to ____ minutes.

86. Fatigue

Everything that my brain does, is more fatiguing. I feel like there were 100 people working in my brain, after my injury, it feels like there is 1 person doing the job of 100 for my sensors, cognition, emotions, and everything else.

87. Pain

I experience painful sensations in my _____. I feel like my pain system doesn't work correctly, as noise and lights can make it worse.

88. Sleep problems

It feels like my brain has forgotten what sleep is, and how to sleep.

89. Balance

I feel like my vestibular system does not work anymore. I have a tricky time keeping my balance.

90. Vertigo

I become lightheaded and dizzy throughout my days. It feels like the world is spinning around me.

91. Loss of bodily movement (each body part is valued as independent)

My ability to _____ does not work anymore.

92. Impairment of bodily movement (each body part is valued as independent)

My ability to _____ does not work like it used to work.