

It Takes Two to Tango: Strategies for Developing Romantic Relationships and Sexuality

By: Libby Herriot and Lauren Rollins

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: What Can I Expect Now That I Have a TBI?.....	5
Chapter 2: Matching Your Actions to Certain Situations.....	8
Chapter 3: People Can Be Confusing: How to Tell What Other People are Feeling.....	13
Chapter 4: Taking Charge of Your Emotions.....	18
Chapter 5: Engaging in Healthy Relationships.....	22
Glossary.....	29

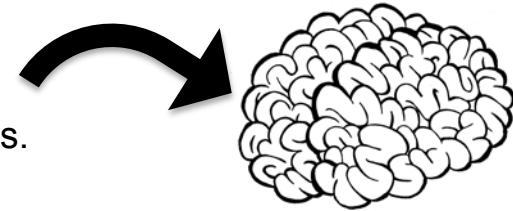
Chapter 1

What Can I Expect Now That I Have a TBI?



I'm an individual with a TBI. When I was injured, the frontal lobe of my brain was injured.

The frontal lobe is responsible for many functions.
Here are some things that my frontal lobe does:



Self-awareness: An understanding of my own personality and actions and how they might be viewed by others.

Recognition of others' emotions: Understanding what other people are thinking based on their tone of voice, what they say, and their body language.

Inhibition: Ability to control my actions.

Emotional regulation: Ability to control my emotions and express them in a healthy and productive way.

These are some things that have happened with damage to my frontal lobe:

Potential Challenges	Explanation	List a personal example you may have experienced
<p>Decreased self-awareness: I have a hard time understanding how my personality and actions impact other people.</p>	<p>I say and do things that may not always match the situation. Understanding how my personality and actions may impact other people will help better my interactions with them.</p>	
<p>Difficulty reading others' emotions: I have a hard time understanding what other people are thinking based on their tone of voice, what they say, and their body language.</p>	<p>Figuring out what people mean when their words don't match their tone of voice or body language can be confusing.</p>	
<p>Disinhibition: Sometimes I have a hard time controlling my words and actions, which may negatively impact other people.</p>	<p>At times I think thoughts that are not nice, but I should not say them because it may hurt someone. This means I need to "filter" my thoughts before I say them out loud.</p>	
<p>Decreased emotional regulation: I have a hard time controlling my emotions and expressing them in a healthy and productive way.</p>	<p>I often get angry and frustrated, but it's important to control the way I express these emotions so that I do not hurt other peoples' feelings.</p>	

All of these changes to my frontal lobe have made it difficult for me to talk with others, form romantic relationships, and develop my sexuality.

*If you are not sure what an underlined word means, you can find the definition in the glossary located on page 29.

Look for me in the illustrations, I'll help guide you through some situations and show you some strategies that you may find useful when interacting with others and forming relationships.



Chapter 2

Matching Your Actions to Certain Situations

Understanding how your personality and actions impact your interaction with others is an important step when trying to develop relationships. Here are some strategies that may help with increasing your self-awareness.

Here are things to think about when entering into an interaction:

1. What do I think will go well and what are possible problems?
2. What skills do I have to make this interactions go well and what skills do I need?
3. Decide to enter into the interaction or decide not to at this time.
4. Reflect on the interaction: did it go as planned?
5. What can I do differently next time?

OH THERE'S BECCA, I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK HER OUT

GREAT IDEA! WHAT ARE POSSIBLE WAYS THIS MIGHT GO?

1. SHE WILL SAY YES.
2. SHE'LL SAY MAYBE.
3. SHE'LL SAY NO.

OK, SO NOW THAT YOU HAVE A PLAN... WHAT SKILLS DO YOU HAVE TO ASK BECCA ON A DATE?

SKILLS I HAVE

WHAT MIGHT BE HARD FOR ME

1. I CAN START A CONVERSATION.
2. I AM POLITE.
3. I'M FUNNY.

1. I'M SOMETIMES IMPATIENT.
2. I MIGHT NOT WANT TO TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER.

I THINK YOU'RE REALLY HOT, DO YOU WANT TO GO OUT WITH ME?

ENTER INTO THE INTERACTION

UMM, NO THANKS, I'M NOT INTERESTED

REFLECT ON INTERACTION. WHAT CAN YOU DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?

I NEED TO PRACTICE INTRODUCING MYSELF, I'M NOT AS GOOD AT THAT AS I THOUGHT.

MAYBE NEXT TIME I SHOULDN'T STAND SO CLOSE TO HER SO SHE'S NOT UNCOMFORTABLE.

NEXT TIME I SHOULD ASK HER HOW SHE'S DOING IN ORDER TO BE POLITE, OR COMPLIMENT HER PERSONALITY INSTEAD OF HER LOOKS.

Things to think about when entering into an interaction:

1. What do I think will go well and what are possible problems?
2. What skills do I have to make this interactions go well and what skill do I need?
3. Decide to enter into the interaction or decide not to at this time.
4. Reflect on the interaction: did it go as planned?
5. What can I do differently next time?

How can you apply these strategies for successful interaction in your own life?

*This is a worksheet to help you work on your self-awareness. This can be completed alone, with a family member, or with a friend.

Imagine a situation where you would like to interact with someone, and write it in the box below.

Think of the people involved in this interaction and list them in the box below.

What strategies (listed on the previous page) would you like to use during this interaction? List them in the box below.

How can you apply the strategies you wrote above to your chosen situation for successful interaction? List your answer in the box below.

Chapter 3

People Can Be Confusing: How to Tell What Other People are Feeling

It is important to understand what others are thinking so you can interact with them successfully. Here are some strategies that may help you better recognize others' emotions.

Signs that show others are interested in conversation:

1. Body is facing towards you.
2. Eye contact is being made.
3. Tone of voice is calm, pleasant, or serious.
4. Responses are longer and well thought out.
5. Facial expressions match the conversation.

Signs that show others are not interested in conversation:

1. Body is facing away from you.
2. No eye contact is being made.
3. Tone of voice is sad, angry, or judgmental.
4. Responses are short or there is a lot of silence.
5. Facial expressions do not match the conversation.

Now I will show you two scenarios...





Signs that show others are interested in conversation:

1. Body is facing towards you.
2. Eye contact is being made.
3. Tone of voice is calm, pleasant, or serious.
4. Responses are longer and well thought out.
5. Facial expressions match the conversation.

Signs that show others are not interested in conversation:

1. Body is facing away from you.
2. No eye contact is being made.
3. Tone of voice is sad, angry, or judgmental.
4. Responses are short or there is a lot of silence.
5. Facial expressions do not match the conversation.

How can you apply these strategies for successful interaction in your own life?

*This is a worksheet to help you work on recognizing the emotions of others. This can be completed alone, with a family member, or with a friend.

Imagine a situation where you would like to interact with someone, and write it in the box below.

Think of the people involved in this interaction and list them in the box below.

What strategies (listed on the previous page) would you like to use during this interaction? List them in the box below.

How can you apply the strategies you wrote above to your chosen situation for successful interaction? List your answer in the box below.

Chapter 4

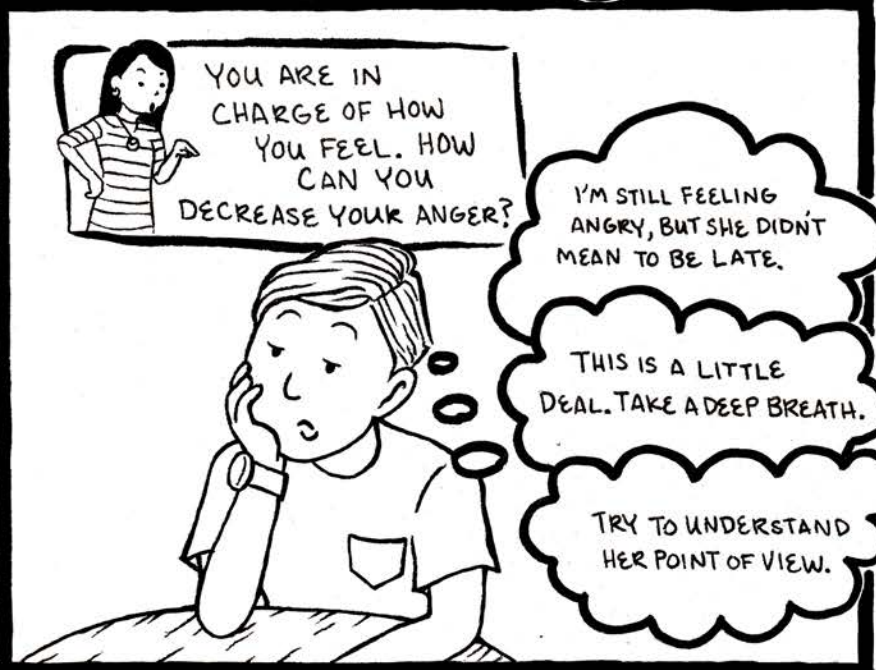
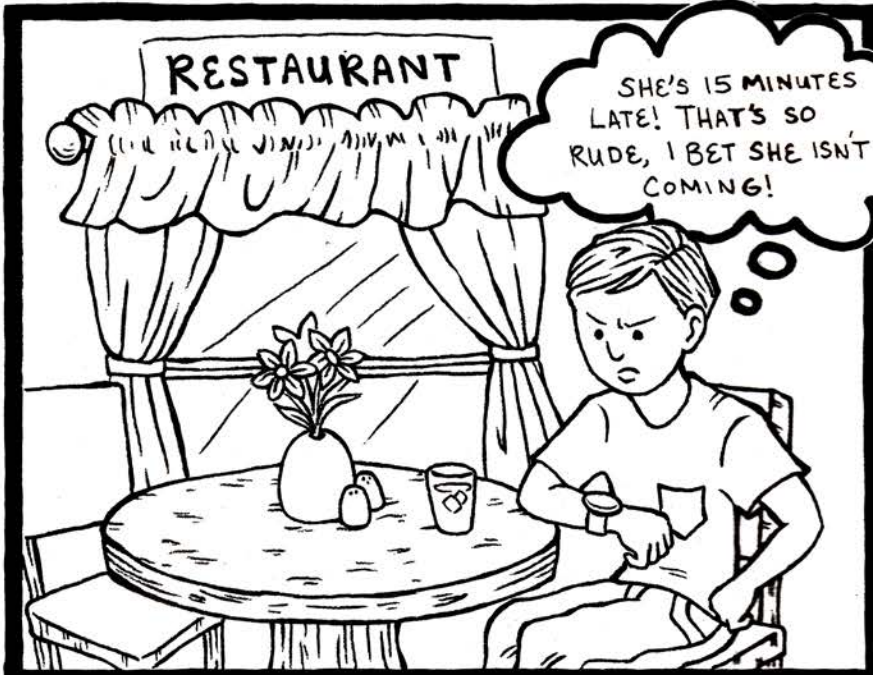
Taking Charge of Your Emotions

Understanding and controlling your own emotions and frustrations is important when interacting with other people, this is called emotional regulation. This may be difficult to do during times of frustration; however, it will help maintain healthy and successful relationships with others.

1. If feeling bad, frustrated, or confused, stop and think, “What am I feeling?”
2. Think, “What might be making me feel this way? Is my anger due to this specific interaction OR is my anger the result of past frustrations that I have from previous interactions?”
3. Decide, “Is this a big deal or a little deal? Is this scary or not scary?”
4. Know that you are in charge of the way you feel.
5. Think, “What can I do to decrease my anger or frustration?”

Here are some of the things I try to do when I’m upset:

- Try to understand the other person’s point of view
- Take a break from the conversation
- Take deep breaths
- Slowly count to 10 before responding to the person



Strategies to help with emotional regulation:

1. If feeling bad, frustrated, or confused, stop and think, “What am I feeling?”
2. Think, “What might be making me feel this way? Is my anger due to this specific interaction OR is my anger the result of past frustrations that I have from previous interactions?”
3. Decide, “Is this a big deal or a little deal? Is this scary or not scary?”
4. Know that you are in charge of the way you feel.
5. Think, “What can I do to decrease my anger or frustration?”

Here are some of the things I try to do when I’m upset:

- Try to understand the other person’s point of view
- Take a break from the conversation
- Take deep breaths
- Slowly count to 10 before responding to the person

How can you apply these strategies for successful interaction in your own life?

*This is a worksheet to help you work on emotional regulation. This can be completed alone, with a family member, or with a friend.

Imagine a situation where you would like to interact with someone, and write it in the box below.

Think of the people involved in this interaction and list them in the box below.

What strategies (listed on the previous page) would you like to use during this interaction? List them in the box below.

How can you apply the strategies you wrote above to your chosen situation for successful interaction? List your answer in the box below.

Chapter 5

Engaging in Healthy Relationships

It feels comforting to be in a relationship and share intimate experiences with another person. However, sometimes relationships can become unhealthy or unsafe. Here are some signs that describe a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship. Also listed are some strategies on how to recognize when you may be in an unhealthy relationship.

Signs of a healthy relationship:

1. Both individuals have an equal say in the decisions that are made.
2. Both individuals listen to one another equally.
3. Both individuals say more positive comments to one another than negative comments.
4. Arguments are normal in a relationship and may include sharing your personal frustrations with your partner and respectful disagreement.

Signs of an unhealthy relationship:

1. One person is taking control of the decisions being made.
2. One person is not listening to what the other individual has to say.
3. There are more negative comments being made to one person than positive comments.
4. Unhealthy arguments may include hurtful comments, name calling, or physical violence (such as hitting, pushing, or throwing things).

Strategies you can use to recognize an unhealthy relationship:

1. Identify signs that the relationship may be healthy or unhealthy.
2. Is your boyfriend or girlfriend isolating you from your family and friends? It is important that first dates be in a public place or with others.
3. Ask a trusted individual for advice on the situation.
4. Know that you have the power to control your response to a situation.
5. You have the power to remove yourself from the interaction, situation, or the entire relationship.



John: Hey, I think we should meet in person.

Me: Awesome, I've been telling my friends about you, can they come?

John: No, I think it should just be the two of us. I don't want to meet your friends yet.



Me: Ok, well then let's go to a coffee shop downtown.

John: No, I was thinking you could come to my house for coffee.



IF YOU ARE UNSURE ASK A TRUSTED FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER FOR ADVICE.



I MET THIS GUY ONLINE. HE WANTS ME TO GO OVER TO HIS HOUSE ALONE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'LL ASK MY SISTER

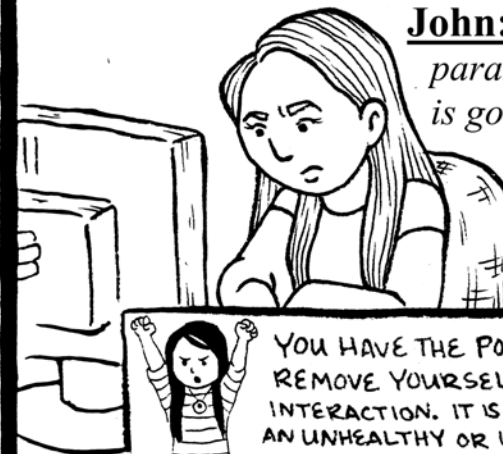


WOW. I WONDER WHAT HE HAS IN MIND. I DON'T THINK THAT IS SAFE.

Me: I want to meet you, but it just doesn't feel right the way you are in charge of everything. I would like to meet in a coffee shop or bring a friend.

John: Well you are just paranoid. I don't think this is gonna work

Me: If that is how you feel I don't think this will work either.



Signs of a healthy relationship:

1. Both individuals have an equal say in the decisions that are made.
2. Both individuals listen to one another equally.
3. Both individuals say more positive comments to one another than negative comments.
4. Arguments are normal in a relationship and may include sharing your personal frustrations with your partner and respectful disagreement.

Signs of an unhealthy relationship:

1. One person is taking control of the decisions being made.
2. One person is not listening to what the other individual has to say.
3. There are more negative comments being made to one person than positive comments.
4. Unhealthy arguments may include hurtful comments, name calling, or physical violence (such as hitting, pushing, or throwing things).

Strategies one can use to recognize an unhealthy relationship:

1. Identify signs that the relationships may be healthy or unhealthy.
2. Is your boyfriend or girlfriend isolating you from your family and friends? It is important that first dates be in a public place or with others.
3. Ask a trusted individual for advice on the situation.
4. Know that you have the power to control your response to a situation.
5. You have the power to remove yourself from the interaction, situation, or the entire relationship.

How can you apply these strategies for successful interaction in your own life?

*This is a worksheet to help you engage in healthy relationships. This can be completed alone, with a family member, or with a friend.

Imagine a situation where you would like to interact with someone, and write it in the box below.

Think of the people involved in this interaction and list them in the box below.

What strategies (listed on the previous page) would you like to use during this interaction? List them in the box below.

How can you apply the strategies you wrote above to your chosen situation for successful interaction? List your answer in the box below.

Glossary

Self-awareness: An awareness of my own personality and actions and how they might be viewed by others.

Recognition of others' emotions: Understanding what other people are thinking based on their tone of voice, what they say, and their body language.

Inhibition: Ability to control my actions and not act on or say everything I think. Use your “filter” during social interactions.

Emotional regulation: Ability to control my emotions and express them in a healthy and productive way.

Romantic Relationships: A relationship that is willingly entered into by two people, based on love or attraction, and positively benefits both individuals involved (Collins, 2003).

Sexuality: A person's sexual identity and how he or she may express this identity through thoughts, feelings, desires, and behaviors (World Health Organization, 2006).

References

- Collins, A. W. (2003). More than myth: The developmental significance of romantic relationships during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13, 1-24. doi:10.1111/1532-7795.1301001
- World Health Organization. (2006). Defining sexual health report of technical consultation on sexual health: Geneva, *World Health Organization*, Retrieved from http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/sexual_health/defining_sexual_health.pdf

