



Brain Injury  
Alliance  
of New Jersey

732-745-0200  
Helpline: 1-800-669-4323  
www.bianj.org

No Brain Injury is  
Too Mild to Ignore,  
or Too Severe to  
Lose Hope

## Checklist for Success: The First Few Days

By Garry Prowe

\_\_\_ Do you know that it's best to look for improvement in your survivor's condition on a weekly, rather than a daily, basis?

\_\_\_ Do you understand that in the early days of a brain injury it is impossible to predict the nature and extent of the impairments your survivor will suffer?

\_\_\_ Have you begun a journal that includes:

- A brief medical history and list of medications taken by your survivor prior to the brain injury
- The name, specialty, and telephone number of the doctors treating your survivor
- The doctors' treatment plans and goals for your survivor
- Your impression of your survivor's condition
- Any changes you see in your survivor's condition
- All instructions you receive from the doctors and nurses
- Your observations on the care your survivor is receiving

\_\_\_ Are you wondering how best to interact with your survivor's doctors?

\_\_\_ Have you prepared a list of questions to ask the doctors? Don't forget to update this list regularly.

\_\_\_ Have you established guidelines for visitors? You should:

- Decide beforehand who may visit your survivor.
- Prepare visitors for what they will see, especially if your survivor has an ICP monitor.
- Expect relatives and friends to react and cope differently.
- Insist that visitors remain positive.

\_\_\_ Are you familiar with the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS)? What was your survivor's GCS score when she arrived at the hospital?

\_\_\_ What do you know about comas?

- Comatose individuals do not always lie quietly; they can be hyperactive.
- People do not snap out of a coma. It is a very slow process.
- Do you know how you should you interact with a comatose person?



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\_\_\_ Do you recognize the difference between involuntary neurological responses and the purposeful acts that signal the end of a coma?

\_\_\_ Are you familiar with the Rancho Los Amigos Scale of Cognitive Functioning? At what level is your survivor?

\_\_\_ Do you know that you probably will see improvements in your survivor's condition before the doctors?

\_\_\_ Have you sought the support of those who know brain injury well? Here are some places to start:

**United States Brain Injury Alliance**

- [www.usbia.org](http://www.usbia.org)
- [info@usbia.org](mailto:info@usbia.org)

**• Your state brain injury association**

- (800) 669-4323
- [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org)

**• Internet support groups**

- [www.tbinet.org](http://www.tbinet.org)
- [www.tbihome.org](http://www.tbihome.org)
- [www.48friend.org](http://www.48friend.org)
- [www.dailystrength.org](http://www.dailystrength.org)
- <http://groups.yahoo.com>
- [www.braininjurychat.org](http://www.braininjurychat.org)
- [www.avbi.org](http://www.avbi.org)

\_\_\_ Do you know that survivors of a serious brain injury often enjoy full and satisfying—albeit transformed—lives after their rehabilitation? It is important to remember this.

*Garry Prowe is well known in the brain injury community for his research and expertise in how survivors of a brain injury and their families overcome the considerable challenges they face every day. The author, who holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of Michigan, formed a panel of more than 300 survivors, family members, and healthcare professionals. The author's research also is informed by his role as caregiver to his wife, Jessica, who has a severe brain injury.*

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