



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
- info@usbia.org

• Your state brain injury association

- (800) 669-4323
- www.bianj.org

• Internet support groups

- www.tbinet.org
- www.tbihome.org
- www.48friend.org
- www.dailystrength.org
- <http://groups.yahoo.com>
- www.braininjurychat.org
- 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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