

Alcohol related brain impairment - behaviour

Alcohol related brain impairment (ARBI) affects the way people think, feel and behave. People living with ARBI often exhibit challenging or difficult behaviour. This can be the result of medical, cognitive (thinking related), psychological or environmental causes or simply the frustration of coping with everyday life.

Common types of behaviour

Carers, family and friends of people with ARBI can find themselves faced with a range of behaviours that cause problems. Some common behaviours include:

- Aggressive and angry outbursts
- Moodiness
- Confusion
- Withdrawal
- Lack of motivation
- Untidiness and poor hygiene habits
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour
- Poor control of emotions.

Causes of challenging behaviour

There are a number of possible causes or reasons why people with ARBI may exhibit these types of behaviour. It could be related to a medical problem, their cognitive disability, physical discomfort, adverse effects of medication, or fatigue from lack of sleep. Alternatively, problem behaviour may be a reaction to stress, anxiety or a change or upset to daily routine.

Dealing with challenging behaviour

There are two key things to keep in mind when trying to deal with challenging behaviour:
Ignore problem behaviour (where possible).
Reward appropriate behaviour immediately.

Other helpful strategies include:

- Reassure the person that you are there to help them.
- Speak in a calm, soothing tone.
- Give praise when the person regains their composure after an outburst.
- Set clear and firm limits and repeat them as often as possible.
- Be prepared to listen – people with ARBI need to feel listened to and understood.
- Acknowledge feelings.

What to avoid

There are some responses you should try to avoid when trying to deal with challenging behaviour:

- Avoid arguing or reacting to any provocation.
- Avoid using a bossy tone or ordering the person around.
- Ignore negative, critical or aggressive comments.
- Do not take the behaviour personally.

Where to get help

- **arbias** – specialist services for people with alcohol and substance related brain impairment
Tel. (03) 8388 1222

- Your regional Department of Human Services office
- Family Drug Help – for information and support for people concerned about a relative or friend using drugs Tel. 1300 660 068

Things to remember

- Ignore problem behaviour and reward appropriate behaviour.
- Be prepared to listen – people with alcohol related brain injury need to feel listened to and understood.
- Do not take the behaviour personally.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

ARBIAS

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