# Dealing with Strong Emotions after a Brain Injury

Created by: The Brain Injury Association of Ohio

Overview

Strong emotions like frustration and anger can be very common after a brain injury. There are ways that you can manage these emotions more effectively. Holding onto frustration and anger can lead us to saying and doing things that do not align with our values as well as increase cortisol levels- which is not healthy for our minds and bodies! So, what can you do when you are overwhelmed with a strong emotion?

Walk Away	**If you are concerned that you may say something you will regret or may end up lashing out at someone. Remember that you will need to return when you have calmed down and communicate to resolve the issue!**
Count Backwards	**Slowly from 10 to 1 and practice your deep breathing as you count down.**
Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation	**Start with clenching your jaw tightly for 2 or 3 seconds, then actively relaxing it. Move to your shoulders –bring them up towards your ears and hold for 2 to 3 seconds, then actively relax with a big sigh. Continue on down your body until you reach your toes. Once you finish, take a few deep breaths and relax your whole body.**
Exercise	**As you are able. Go on a walk, dance like nobody is watching, move your body.**
Write	**In your journal until you are calm. This can help you organize your thoughts, so you are ready to share them with others in a productive way.**
Scream	**Into a pillow- sometimes you need to let it all out!**
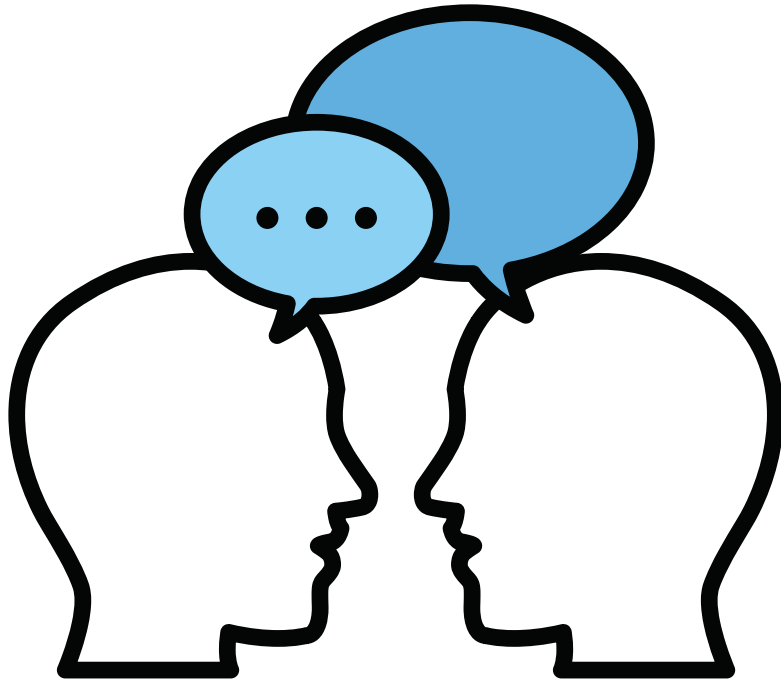
How to Communicate after Strong Emotions

After you have returned to a calm state, it is important to communicate your concerns, feelings and needs in a way that is not threatening and does not place blame. One way you can do that is by using "I statements".

I statements allow you to communicate your feelings without placing blame, while still sharing your needs. Tone is important- try to speak in a calm voice.

Formula for I Statements:

I feel _emotion word_ when _explanation_

Instead of saying: "You are a jerk and always make fun of me."
Use an I statement: "I feel hurt when you make fun of the way I dress because your opinion matters to me."