



# CST CHATTERBOX

## Disability Spotlight: Traumatic Brain Injury

**Traumatic brain injury (TBI)**, occurs when an external force injures the brain. TBI can be classified based on severity. TBI can result in physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral symptoms, and outcome can range from complete recovery to permanent disability or death.

Causes include falls, vehicle/sport collisions, and violence. Brain trauma occurs as a consequence of a sudden acceleration or deceleration within the skull or by a complex combination of both movement and sudden impact. In addition to the damage caused at the moment of injury, a variety of events following the injury may result in further injury.

Brain injuries can be classified into mild, moderate, and severe categories. With mild TBI, the patient may remain conscious or may lose consciousness for a few seconds or minutes. Other symptoms of mild TBI include headache, vomiting, nausea, lack of motor coordination, dizziness, difficulty balancing, lightheadedness, blurred vision or tired eyes, ringing in the ears, bad taste in the mouth, fatigue or lethargy, and changes in sleep patterns. Cognitive and emotional symptoms include behavioral or mood changes, confusion, and trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking.

A person with a moderate or severe TBI may have a headache that does not go away, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions, an inability to awaken, dilation of one or both pupils, slurred speech, aphasia (word-finding difficulties), dysarthria (muscle weakness that causes distorted speech), weakness or numbness in the limbs, loss of coordination, confusion, restlessness, or agitation. Common long-term symptoms of moderate to severe TBI are changes in appropriate social behavior, deficits in social judgment, and cognitive changes, especially problems with sustained attention, processing speed, and executive functioning. Cognitive and social deficits have long-term consequences for the daily lives of people with moderate to severe TBI, but can be improved with appropriate rehabilitation.

Small children with moderate to severe TBI may have some of these symptoms but have difficulty communicating them. Other signs seen in young children include persistent crying, inability to be consoled, listlessness, refusal to nurse or eat, and irritability.

Prognosis worsens with the severity of injury. Most TBIs are mild and do not cause permanent or long-term disability; however, all severity levels of TBI have the potential to cause significant, long-lasting disability. Most mild TBI is completely resolved within three weeks. Almost all people with mild TBI are able to live independently and return to school or the jobs they had before the injury, although a

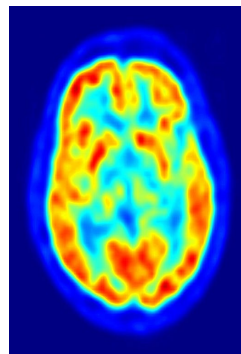
small portion have mild cognitive and social impairments. Over 90% of people with moderate TBI are able to live independently, although some require assistance in areas such as physical abilities, employment, and financial managing.

Anyone with signs of moderate or severe TBI should receive medical attention as soon as possible. Because little can be done to reverse the initial brain damage caused by trauma, medical personnel try to stabilize an individual with TBI and focus on preventing further injury.

Resources:

<https://www.biausa.org/>

[https://www.cdc.gov/traumat/braininjury/get\\_the\\_facts.html](https://www.cdc.gov/traumat/braininjury/get_the_facts.html)



Winter 2020

Volume 6, Issue 2

February-March 2020

### Inside this issue:

**Special Education Resources - Anxiety - KEEP CALM AND TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME** 2

**Community Resources** 2

**On trend: Mindfulness** 3

**Get to Know Your CST - CHRISTINE MATRISCIANO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS** 4

# KEEP CALM AND TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME



One of the newest trends in education these days is **Social Emotional Learning** or SEL! It's not really new, but the latest name to bundle concerns that have been known to impact student performance. You may have already been receiving information from your school community about this.

Anxiety is one of the most prevalent emotions exhibited by children in schools. Students with anxiety generally have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Aside from anxiety that may be expected, say before taking a test, anxiety may be generating excessive school absences, health complaints, aggressive/disruptive behavior, or problems with learning.

So, let's work through some of the anxiety by teaching our students some calming strategies. These may include becoming aware of breathing, with deep breaths being taken at a slower pace. Or, provide the student with an opportunity to talk about what is bothering them. Proven practices include walking and talking with a student. This strategy removes the student from the situation, gives the student a chance to explain the issue to a caring adult and gets blood pumping, which clears out the anxiety-producing energy and brings in the positive exercise endorphins. Problem solve with others, slow things down, and take one step at a time.

RESOURCES: Childmind.org    Mayoclinic.org    Trends [www.cornerstonedayschool.com](http://www.cornerstonedayschool.com)

## Community Resources!

Parents have expressed interest in events and activities focused on special needs children that are taking place in the area. We hope the following will interest you and/or your child!

### PROJECT HIRE, 2/27/20 6:30 in Parsippany

With the help of experienced job developers & job coaches, this innovative approach provides placement assistance, on-site training & long term support to ensure continuing job proficiency. RSVP to 973-265-1317 or [epedersen@alliedwealthpartners.com](mailto:epedersen@alliedwealthpartners.com).

### BOOKS, BALLS, & BLOCKS— 2/29/20 10 AM-1 PM, Sparta

Inviting families of children birth to five years of age! A free, fun event to track your child's developmental milestones! Learn about how your child talks, plays, learns, and interacts with their world. Register with [boeticherj@norwescap.org](mailto:boeticherj@norwescap.org)/973-383-3461



### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID ADULT MODULE, 8 hr Course, 3/4 & 3/11 9-1 PM in Denville

Someone you know may be experiencing a mental illness or crisis. You can help them. Take the course, save a life, strengthen your community. Register with Ro Klingener, St. Clare's Behavioral Health, 50 Morris Ave. Denville/ [rosaele-naklingener@primehealthcare.com](mailto:rosaele-naklingener@primehealthcare.com)

### THE EMPOWERED PARENT, 3/5/20 6-8 PM, Budd Lake

If you are a parent who would like to learn some new tools that will help your family connect and interact on a new level, this is the program for you. Weekly sessions will provide childcare by trained staff, light dinner, 1 on 1 mentoring support, local transportation as available.

Contact Daniela from Mount Olive Child-care & Learning Center, [danielap@mtolivechildcare.org](mailto:danielap@mtolivechildcare.org)

### NAMI Family to Family, Beginning 3/18/20 in Vernon

"Family to Family" is a free, 12 session family education course provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) which will be offered on Wednesday evenings 6:30-9 PM, beginning March 18 at St. Francis de Sales Church in Vernon. Advance registration is required: call 973-214-0632.

### DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR OCD IN KIDS, TEENS, AND ADULTS- MARCH 18, 7:30-8:30

This presentation will explore OCD across different age groups. Webinar attendees will learn how OCD presents in children, adolescents, and adults and how Exposure and Response to Prevention therapy (ERP) could be adapted to each group. For more information contact [bburkert@njcts.org](mailto:bburkert@njcts.org).

# On trend: Mindfulness

According to [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com), Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention to the present. This state encompasses observing one's thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad.

To live mindfully is to live in the moment and reawaken oneself to the present, rather than dwelling on the past or anticipating the future.

Mindfulness can also be a healthy way to identify and manage latent emotions that are causing problems in personal or professional relationships.

Mindfulness is frequently used in meditation and certain kinds of therapy. It has many positive benefits, including lowering stress levels, reducing harmful ruminating, and protecting against depression and anxiety.

Research even suggests that mindfulness can help people better cope with rejection and social isolation.

At best, mindfulness is a tool that allows people to be more aware of their physical and emotional conditions without getting bogged down in self-criticism and judgment.

## How does this translate into the classroom, and to our students?

Source: <https://childmind.org/article/mindfulness-in-the-classroom/>

"It's about developing attentional control," she says. Wynne Kinder ends every class with "deep quieting" because, she says, "if you can quiet yourself and get yourself to a place where your mind is settled, that is a great tool to have."

Kristina Suter is convinced that teaching mindfulness is helping her kids—particularly the ones who suffer from anxiety. And there are many. "Often they're worried about everything else that's going on," Suter says. "What's going to happen later. They have trouble focusing on the moment." "The mindfulness brings them back into the present moment so they can learn."

"Once the kids feel that they can actually calm themselves even just through breathing it's like the 'wow' moment," he (Rick Kinder) adds. "The ultimate goal is self-awareness and self-regulation."



Read more by visiting [childmind.org](http://childmind.org)

## FREE APPS for kids of all ages to play (and learn) !!!

### PBS Kids Games

PBS has created hundreds of games based on their popular children's shows. Learn math with Peg + Cat. Explore creature powers with the Kratt Brothers. Or go on a space adventure with the Kids from Ready, Jet Go! If your child loves PBS shows, they're going to love learning with their favorite characters. Ages 2 and up. For Android and iOS

### Phonics Ninja

Your preschooler can slash her way through letter sounds, blends, and diagraphs with this cute ninja. The game uses sight, sound, and touch to help your child learn important phonics skills, and with three difficulty settings. You can even record your own audio clues, so your child can hear your voice — or even her own — in the game. Ages 4 and up. For iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch

### Pizza Fractions 1

Does your elementary-aged kid need some extra help with fractions? What more delicious way to illustrate the concept than with pizza? Pizza Fractions 1 gives your child a visual approach to fractions and adjustable difficulty levels let beginners start with the basics and progress as they learn. Math has never been so tasty! Ages 6 and up. For iOS

### Middle School Math Planet

Does your middle schooler need to brush up on important math concepts like geometry, fractions, and mixed numbers? Middle School Math Planet teaches these and other math skills through over 30 games that support Common Core State Standards. Fly spaceships and help aliens complete tasks in these out-of-this-world games designed by learning scientists at Carnegie Mellon University. Ages 10 and up. For iOS

## Shared Services Child Study Team

Wharton Borough Schools  
973-361-3010

Mine Hill Township School (CAS)  
973-366-0590

Rockaway Borough Schools  
973-625-8601



The Shared Services Child Study Team has made it a goal to increase communication and Special Education knowledge with parents as well as teachers and administration within the three school districts. As part of this goal, you will now be receiving newsletters from the team three times a year filled with information on special education practices/law, community resources, special needs tips, etc. We hope you find this helpful!

Leslie Mozulay, LDTC  
Stephanie Dzikowski, LDTC  
Stacy McCoy, School Psychologist  
Brooke Hanenberg, School Psychologist  
Armi Clancy, School Social Worker

## Get to Know Your CST

Christine began her career as an Occupational Therapy Assistant at The Cerebral Palsy League in Union County. She received a wealth of experience in various aspects of occupational therapy including wheelchair fittings, adaptive equipment, alternative communication techniques, splinting, motor and sensory processing skills. She quickly realized that she wanted to pursue her career of a Registered Occupational Therapist.

Christine then went on to receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Science and a Master of Science Degree in Occupational Therapy.

Since then she has worked for various school districts including Wayne, Montville and the Morris County Educational Commission. It is her role as occupational



**CHRISTINE MATRISCIANO  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST  
ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS**

therapist in Rockaway Borough that feels most "at home". The Rockaway Borough staff provides commendable support and services to students and their families. It is a warm and caring environment to work in.

Christine also works in Early Intervention part time. This is an exciting time to be working with families in their homes as Early Intervention practitioners are often the first people to provide families with support and understanding.

A career as an occupational therapist is both challenging and extremely rewarding. Watching children grow and make progress, along with providing resources to parents is very fulfilling.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much". *Helen Keller*