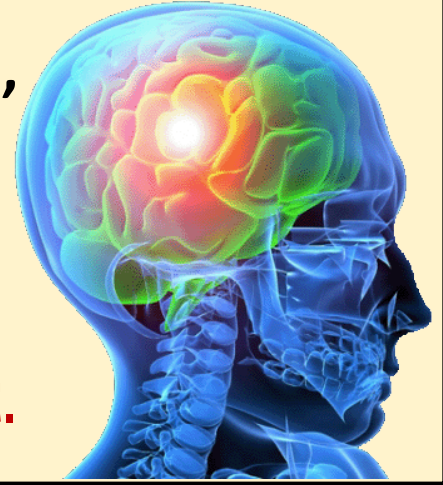


Brain Injury (BI), Mental Health (MH), Developmental Disability (DD), and Dementia – are they the same?

NO -

Each type of disability is different.



Brain Injury

Brain Injury is defined as a loss of brain function that can be caused by:

- Trauma to the head or neck from Accidents (motor vehicles accidents are the cause of 70% of all brain injuries), Violence, including Domestic Violence, Explosive blasts and other combat injuries, Sports injuries
- Brain tumors
- Lack of oxygen from airway obstruction, near drowning, choking, shock, heart attack, stroke
- Toxic exposures to chemical and gases, Poisoning
- Infections, infectious diseases, meningitis, some venereal diseases, insect-carried diseases, AIDS
- Metabolic disorders, hypo or hyperglycemia, hepatic encephalopathy, uremic encephalopathy
- Electrical shock
- Lightning strike
- seizure disorders

As a direct result of a brain injury a person may develop impairments in one or several aspects of their life including:

- Loss of mobility
- Difficulty in solving problems or making decisions
- Fatigue and tiredness
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Sticking to the one idea for a long time
- Becoming easily distracted
- Quickly aroused to anger or sadness
- Seizures, Blood vessel damage, Nerve damage
- **Cognitive problems:** Memory, Learning, Reasoning, Speed of mental processing, Judgment, Attention or concentration
- **Executive functioning problems:** Problem-solving, Multitasking, Organization, Decision-making, Beginning or completing tasks
- **Communication problems:** Difficulty understanding speech or writing, Difficulty speaking or writing, Inability to organize thoughts and ideas, Trouble following conversations
- **Social problems:** Trouble with turn taking or topic selection, Problems with changes in tone, pitch or emphasis to express emotions, attitudes or subtle differences in meaning, Difficulty deciphering nonverbal signals, Trouble reading cues from listeners, Trouble starting or stopping conversations, Inability to use the muscles needed to form words (dysarthria)
- **Behavioral changes:** Difficulty with self-control, Lack of awareness of abilities, Risky behavior, Inaccurate self-image, Difficulty in social situations, Verbal or physical outbursts

- **Emotional changes:** Depression, Anxiety, Mood swings, Irritability, Lack of empathy for others, Anger, Insomnia, Changes in self-esteem
- **Sensory problems:** Persistent ringing in the ears, Difficulty recognizing objects, Impaired hand-eye coordination, Blind spots or double vision, A bitter taste, a bad smell or difficulty smelling, Skin tingling, pain or itching, Trouble with balance or dizziness

A brain injury that is "acquired" as an adult does not affect previously stored memories & experiences. A person may have little or no change in their I.Q. test scores because they can still draw on their past memories and skills. However, a person's level of adaptive functioning (problem solving, organization, personal management) is often impaired. The individual's self-identity and expectations of life are still strongly shaped by their social and intellectual development before the brain injury.

Brain injury cannot be "cured". The impairments are caused by permanent damage to the brain. However, over time, many people return to work and maintain a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle.

Mental Illness Disability

Mental Illness Disability is a range of functional difficulties often linked with a past or current mental illness, associated institutional dependence or the adverse effects of medications. Mental illness is characterized by the presence in a person of one or more symptoms including:

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Serious disorder of thought form
- Severe disturbance of mood
- Sustained or repeated irrational behavior.

A person who has a mental illness or has had a mental illness in the past does not necessarily have a psychiatric disability. The three most common disorders are:

- Schizophrenia
- Bi - Polar disorder
- Depression.

Medication can often be used to assist the person to cope with their disability. However, some medications create a range of additional problems. People who have a psychiatric disability can enjoy a satisfying and fulfilling life.

Developmental Disability

Developmental Disability refers to a slowness to learn and process information that can affect how a person functions in society. Intellectual disability is not a sickness, it cannot be cured and it is not medically "treatable". While people with intellectual disability often encounter difficulties in learning and development, it is not an inability to learn. People with intellectual disability can and do learn a wide range of skills throughout their lives. It is through appropriate levels of support, early intervention and educational opportunities that the effects of intellectual disability can be minimized. Intellectual disability is often evident from birth. The period of one's life between birth and adulthood, 0-18 years, is referred to as the "Developmental Stage". The fact that intellectual disability occurs during the developmental stage is one important factor that distinguishes it from other types of disability.

There is no one identifiable cause for intellectual disability, however there are some reasons that we do know about which include:

- brain damage before birth due to conditions such as rubella, a drug or diet problem.
- brain damage resulting from a lack of oxygen during the birth, e.g. as a result of a prolonged labor.
- brain damage after birth due to an illness e.g. encephalitis or accident.
- Abnormal chromosome count resulting in e.g. Down Syndrome.

Dementia

Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning—thinking, remembering, and reasoning—and behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Dementia ranges in severity from the mildest stage, when it is just beginning to affect a person's functioning, to the most severe stage, when the person must depend completely on others for basic activities of living.

Signs and symptoms of dementia result when once-healthy neurons (nerve cells) in the brain stop working, lose connections with other brain cells, and die. While everyone loses some neurons as they age, people with dementia experience far greater loss.

While dementia is more common as people grow older (up to half of all people age 85 or older may have some form of dementia), it is not a normal part of aging. Many people live into their 90s and beyond without any signs of dementia. One type of dementia, frontotemporal disorders, is more common in middle-aged than older adults.

Memory loss, though common, is not the only sign of dementia. For a person to have dementia, he or she must have:

- Two or more core mental functions that are impaired. These functions include memory, language skills, visual perception, and the ability to focus and pay attention. These also include cognitive skills such as the ability to reason and solve problems.
- A loss of brain function severe enough that a person cannot do normal, everyday tasks.

In addition, some people with dementia cannot control their emotions. Their personalities may change. They can have delusions, which are strong beliefs without proof, such as the idea that someone is stealing from them. They also may hallucinate, seeing or otherwise experiencing things that are not real.

The causes of dementia can vary, depending on the types of brain changes that may be taking place. Other dementias include Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal disorders, and vascular dementia. It is common for people to have mixed dementia—a combination of two or more disorders, at least one of which is dementia. For example, some people have both Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.

Certain medical conditions can cause serious memory problems that resemble dementia. These problems should go away once the conditions are treated. These conditions include:

- Side effects of certain medicines
- Depression
- Certain vitamin deficiencies
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Blood clots or tumors in the brain
- Head injury, such as a concussion from a fall or accident
- Thyroid, kidney, or liver problems

Doctors have identified many other conditions that can cause dementia or dementia-like symptoms. These conditions include:

- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare brain disorder
- Huntington's disease, a hereditary disorder caused by a faulty gene
- Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), caused by repeated traumatic brain injury
- Subdural hematoma, bleeding between the brain's surface and its outer covering

The overlap in symptoms of various dementias can make it hard to get an accurate diagnosis. But a proper diagnosis is important to get the right treatment. Seek help from a neurologist—a doctor who specializes in disorders of the brain and nervous system—or other medical specialist who knows about dementia.

Multiple Disabilities

A person can have more than one form of disability. For example, a child can develop an developmental disability and a physical disability because of a brain injury.

A person who sustains a brain injury or has an developmental disability has the same chances of developing a psychiatric disability as any other member of the community.

Any form of disability can have very serious effects on the lives of people who have the disability and those who support and assist them.

Conclusion

People who have a disability have the same rights as any other member of the community. Just like every other member of the community, they are individuals who have personal needs that are unique to them.

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