

Can't seem to get yourself going...? Don't seem to care about anything...?

What is apathy?

Apathy is a lack of interest or concern, most often in relation to matters of general importance or appeal. It can also appear as a lack of initiation in that the person has difficulty starting activities or coming up with ideas. Apathy may seem as if someone just doesn't care about anything anymore.

How do I know if I am apathetic or lack motivation?

- Finding it hard to get started or show initiative.
- Lack of energy, drive or motivation.
- Know how to do something but need to be prompted.
- Finding it hard to start or finish everyday activities or jobs.
- Less interest in starting activities that were enjoyed before.
- Inactive at home or with leisure activities.
- Finding it hard to make the effort to keep concentrating.
- Not wanting to get out of bed, shower, and dress or join in conversations.
- Sit around all day watching television.
- Complain of boredom and be restless and agitated.
- Loss of interest in life.
- Seem not to care about anything.
- Finding it hard to talk with others or think of what to say.
- Giving up easily.

'Sue's' Story

'Sue' is in her late fifties and was diagnosed with a meningioma in the right frontal region of her brain. Since her surgery, her son says that she seems

to have lost interest in doing anything. She sits around in her pyjamas all day unless prompted to shower and dress. 'Sue' now finds it hard to start activities, is slow moving and lacks energy. Before the brain tumour, she took great pride in making sure she was perfectly groomed and was very hard working looking after the house and family.

Strategies

For the person with a brain tumour

- Use a weekly timetable and keep it in a place that is easy to see (for example, a whiteboard or timetable pinned to a notice board).
- Write the list the day before or plan the week with someone on a Sunday night.
- Use lists for tasks that need to be done, and then tick off each one as it is done.
- Work with another person to help keep motivation – for example, cook a meal with someone else.
- Plan outings with someone else to ensure you keep up your energy levels and interests

For the carer/family member

- Make a routine for the person to follow.
- Use a weekly timetable.
- Write a list of activities and have the person with the brain tumour tick off each item as it is done.
- Ask a doctor if medication can help.
- Give lots of prompts in a positive way that still respects the person.
- Give help to get the person started on activities.

KEY FACTS

- A survey of people with a brain tumour found that **33%** needed frequent prompting, lacked interests and found it hard to finish things.
- Carers of people with a brain tumour who were surveyed found that **27%** of their relatives found it hard to get started on anything (problems with initiation).

- Try to let the person do as much of the task as they can – only give as much help as is needed.
- Do things together such as cooking dinner.
- Change tasks often to stop boredom.

Questions to ask your health professional

- What is the likely cause of the apathy?
- Is it related to the tumour itself?
- Is it related to the treatments given for the tumour or other medications?
- Could the apathy be an unrelated medical condition and does this need treatment in itself?
- Do I/we expect the apathy to get better or worse over time?
- Are there any medications that can help the problem?
- Can a psychologist help to treat this problem?
- Are there any diet or lifestyle factors that can help with the apathy?



Links to other information:

- <http://braininjury.org.au/portal/fact-sheets/fatigue-and-lack-of-motivation---fact-sheet.html>
- http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/documents/behaviour_mgt/adynamia_motivation.pdf
Resource Sheet – Checklist for Getting Ready
Resource Sheet - Timetable