

Do you feel that you are on an emotional roller coaster...?

What is liability?

Liability is a quick and extreme change in a person's feelings, often for no apparent reason. A person may cry over nothing or laugh about things that are not funny. Sometimes the person may know inside that their tears or laughter are not the right response but may be unable to stop.

How do I know if I am emotionally liable?

- Giggling or laughing, even in sad situations such as hearing bad news.
- Crying or being tearful, even when you are not sad.
- Crying for very little reason.
- Being irritable and snappy.
- May feel that you are being 'picked on'.
- Brief crying spells or anger outbursts and then quickly going back to being calm again.
- You may seem 'over the top' for the situation.

'Debbie's' Story

'Debbie' is a 27-year-old woman with a high-grade brain tumour (Glioblastoma) in her frontal lobe. After surgery her family found that one minute she was very snappy and the next smiling. They also said that she cried for no clear reason at all. When given the devastating news about her diagnosis, 'Debbie' did not show much sadness or distress at all. Her family were more upset about the news than she was. The family felt that they were overwhelmed trying to cope with the diagnosis and not knowing how 'Debbie' was going to react at any given moment.

Strategies

For the person with a brain tumour

- Use anger management strategies (see Resource sheet – Anger management).
- Make sure you keep yourself calm and quiet and avoid stressful situations.
- Try taking four deep breaths (Resource sheet – Stress Management).
- Walk away when your feelings are out of control.
- Try to distract yourself by doing something that you know makes you feel calm (for example, going out into the garden).
- If you are laughing or crying, take the tip of your finger and place it on your lips. This will help to bring your feelings back under control.

For the family member

- Try to ignore the behaviour.
- Be positive when the person is able to control their feelings - help them talk about how they were able to do it.
- Try to act calmly yourself.
- Look for triggers which may cause the laughing, crying or anger - avoid them if you can.
- Try to limit the number of stress factors that the person is facing.
- Try to avoid criticism, as this may even make things worse.
- Encourage the person to use their strategies such as walking away, controlled breathing or distraction.

KEY FACTS

- A survey of people with a brain tumour found that 10% found it hard to manage their feelings.
- Carers of people with a brain tumour who were surveyed said that:
 - 24% of their relatives showed frequent liability.
 - 19% of their relatives laughed or cried too easily.

Questions to ask your health professional

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



Links to other information:

- <http://braininjury.org.au/portal/fact-sheets/emotional-lability---fact-sheet.html>
- http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/documents/behaviour_mgt/labability.pdf
- http://www.chw.edu.au/rehab/brain_injury/information_sheets/behaviour/emotions.htm
- Resource Sheet – Anger Management
- Resource Sheet – Stress Management & Relaxation Techniques