



Indiana “Brain Beat” Newsletter

January 2021

Letter from the President:

Greetings and Happy New Year!! My name is Wendy Waldman and I am the President of Brain Injury Association of Indiana (BIAI). Welcome to our inaugural BIAI newsletter titled “***Indiana (IN) Brain Beat***”!

We are so happy to bring you news and information from BIAI as well as from external sources everywhere. We plan to have “***IN Brain Beat***” serve as a ***bridge*** for BIAI to communicate with you and provide connection to what is going on statewide and universally that you may want to know about.

BIAI has had a very busy year, even with a global pandemic. Throughout 2020, we have been able to continue on our mission of raising awareness, providing education and reaching out to bring a voice to brain injury - the silent epidemic. This year has brought more and new challenges to everyone, not individually and from a universal perspective.

When the pandemic first hit in March, we recognized the importance and need of connection, especially within the population we serve. BIAI purchased Zoom to virtually connect statewide brain injury support groups to minimize the isolation and separation so many feel regularly but even more so during a more confining situation. We are happy to report that we have hosted many BIAI support groups across our state through our Zoom account and look forward to continuing to do so.

The Indiana Brain Injury Support Groups and Support Group Leaders are at the heart of what we do, and BIAI is dedicated to supporting them in any way we can. We have started holding regular support group leader discussions where all of the leaders gather together and share what is going on in each group as well as learn from, discuss, troubleshoot and brainstorm ideas for upcoming meetings. Our support group leader discussion initiative continues in 2020 with our fourth meeting.

The first Art Therapy Experiential was held in collaboration with the IU Neuroscience Art Therapy Department. See page # for more details on the event. We are looking forward to our next Art Therapy Experiential in March 2021 for Brain Injury Awareness Month - stay tuned for more information!

We are very proud to report that we held our first official Brain Injury Association of Indiana FUN-raiser at the beginning of November! We held BIAI “Use Your Noggin” Trivia through our virtual platform, and had so much fun with awesome trivia facts and meeting new people. We had great participation from

around Indiana and even other states, such as California and Massachusetts! Be on the lookout for future FUN-raising events!

BIAI is very excited to share that we are officially a membership organization again! By joining BIAI and investing in membership, you help us move forward with our mission to be the first call for help in the state of Indiana and bring forward support, advocacy and funding for brain injury. Sharing in BIAI as a member builds and strengthens our community and helps to provide a common ground and meeting space for those impacted by brain injury while also providing development and support for our mission and population served.

We are providing various options to become a member of BIAI and hope you will join in our communal voice as your state brain injury association. Please visit www.biaindiana.org/membership for more information about how you can join.

On behalf of the Brain Injury Association of Indiana and from me, personally, I hope you all are having a wonderful and blessed holiday season. We send out warm Happy New Year Greetings to each and every one of you for a 2021 filled with health, happiness, and hope.

Sincerely,



Wendy Waldman,

President- Brain Injury Association of Indiana



Tele-what??? Navigating Virtual Communication



With the emerging need for social distancing, we have seen a growth in telecommunication and telemedicine. These platforms allow individuals to connect virtually through technology, typically telephone, computer or other electronic handheld devices. This remote form of communication, known as telemedicine, enables healthcare providers to minimize the risk of spreading germs by safely treating individuals from their homes' comfort. Additionally, telemedicine eliminates healthcare barriers imposed by transportation and distance and allows providers to meet with clients sooner and more frequently. Although convenient for some, telemedicine is not conducive to the needs of all. Some questions to consider include:

- Is telemedicine offered by my health providers and covered by my health insurance?
- Do I have the internet for remote access?
- Do I have the technology required to support telecommunication? Because devices used may vary across healthcare providers, we advise that you confirm your access to the appropriate device (i.e., cell phone, laptop, or tablet) required for digital meetings
- Do I have a camera and microphone if the meeting requires videoconferencing? While some meetings require visual communication, others allow individuals to dial in without visual demands.
- Am I comfortable using technology and navigating the virtual portal? If not, do I have someone who can assist me during the time of the appointment?

If telemedicine is a viable option, it is important to prepare for the meeting to ensure an optimal outcome. Unlike in-person appointments, telemedicine relies on the effectiveness of technology. There may be technological issues causing glitches, lagging, and failed connections as well as other factors that lead to poor results. Below are some tips for using telemedicine so you can ace your next healthcare appointment.

- Confirm and download the application your medical provider will communicate with you on.
- Identify a private/non-distracting environment to discuss confidential or sensitive information. Make sure the determined location also has adequate lighting.
- Charge your electronic device or keep a charger close by in case the battery runs low.
- Login to the telemedicine appointment 5 minutes early, and allow your doctor between 5-10 minutes to sign-in before contacting the doctor's office.
- Confirm that your camera and microphone are on, and that your healthcare provider can see and hear you.
- Write down symptoms, topics, and concerns to address during the appointment, and keep handy something for note taking.
- Record your weight, pulse, blood pressure, and temperature on the day of the appointment.
- Speak slowly and take pauses to avoid miscommunication
- If your device freezes or cuts out, check your internet signal and refresh the page, or re-login to the system. If this does not resolve the issue, call your health care provider to determine if the appointment needs to be rescheduled or can be completed over the phone.



[Brain Injury Support Groups: Contact BIAI for Zoom link & phone](#)



Parkview Support Group - 1st Monday, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Bridging the Gap Support Group - 4th Monday- 6:30 pm

Heads or Tails Support Group - 2nd Tuesday- 6:30 pm

Southern Indiana Brain Injury Foundation - 3rd Thursday- 7 pm

Lafayette Support Group- 3rd Thursday- 5 pm- (may vary)

Bloomington Support Group- 1st Monday- 5:30 pm.

Indianapolis Support Group - 1st Monday- 6:30 pm

[Self-Care During Covid-19](#)

During these uncertain times, it is critical for people to start practicing positive coping mechanisms to nurture their health and well-being. As people are grieving significant losses, including a lack of a sense of connection, normalcy in their daily lives, financial and personal security, and more, these detrimental effects of COVID-19 easily can pose a toll on mental health. People are collectively experiencing emotions such as fear, isolation, and fatigue between limited social outlets to economic strife and overwhelmed healthcare systems, all of which are being referenced as 'the new normal.'

Many individuals who have been previously impacted by brain injury relate to the reported isolation many have been feeling since March 2020. There are many even labeling this as the new normal for the world.. But individuals who have been living with a brain injury report this to be their normal most of the time, regardless of the pandemic. Survivors have found strength in their ability to manage and acclimate to these challenges surrounding the pandemic, which can be helpful for others to try and emulate in order to cope with 'the new normal.'

"One of the most powerful ways to stay positive is to list at least three things each day that you are grateful for. I have also found that hobbies such as crocheting, reading, and knitting keep my mind off of what is currently going on in our world, and more focused on what I'm doing at the moment."

"I've rediscovered Sweatin' to the Oldies to help combat the added stress, worry, and helplessness that's come along with the pandemic. My kids think it's goofy, which makes me laugh, but for 20 minutes a day I feel like my own superhero."

Below are a few other tips and strategies that may help promote positive emotional, mental, and physical well-being during ‘the new normal.’.

- Create routine and structure
- Find balance in your thoughts: for every negative outcome, consider an alternative positive outcome.
- Stay connected with others from a distance by communicating virtually and digitally
- Limit exposure to news outlets and social media
- Incorporate light, physical activity in your routine
- Engage in healthy hobbies and learn new skills
- Practice meditation and breathing strategies
- Consider speaking with a mental health professional
 - Emotional Support Hotline – free mental health specialist - 866-342-6892
 - www.coronavirusonlinetherapy.com – connection to therapists offering psychotherapy at a reduced rate.

Disclaimer: If you are grieving during this time, you are not alone. If you are experiencing suicidal ideations or experiencing significant distress and need immediate attention, please speak with a trusted individual or call the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

[Art and Creativity](#)

Art Therapy Experiential

Brought to you by IU Health Neuroscience Center (IUNC) Creative Arts Therapy Program and the Brain Injury Association of Indiana (BIAI)

Event Description: The IUNC Creative Arts Therapy Program and the BIAI held a zoom event on 10/26/2020. This event served to educate individuals with Brain Injury (BI) and their caregivers about what art therapy is and how it can provide support in coping with BI. This event was attended by nearly 20 individuals. Included in the event was the following: a presentation about art therapy, a time to experience what art therapy can look like, and a time of sharing thoughts and feelings that came about with the pieces created during that time. Participants were asked to create a puzzle piece and decorate it in a way that reflected "what makes them feel most connected and disconnected while living with a BI, and how it may look during a pandemic.

What is art therapy?

Art therapy can be understood as mental health counseling in addition to having art as another language in the sessions. Art therapy is a mental health profession led by a masters level art therapist. Art therapists are both trained in human development and are trained in how to appropriately engage each individual with art materials. These art materials act as another form of communication during therapy sessions. Art can help convey what is often inexpressible through words. It can be like a bridge, acting as a pathway to new expression and understanding of what was once hard to put into words. Art Therapy is not only an emotional experience for individuals with BI, the process also promotes the development of new pathways in the brain (neuroplasticity) to encourage physiological healing.

"Holding the space for these individuals was a humbling thing. I was able to witness the participants come together and express themselves freely through a common experience. It seemed that they were able to engage in a sense of community support and understanding. It appeared to have, just for a little while, lessen the feelings of isolation that can so often accompany someone who is living with a BI" - Jessie Swihart, LMHCA, ATR-P, Primary art therapy clinician at IUNC

**Jessie Swihart and Barbara Van Der Vossen (IUNC, Art Therapy Intern for The Creative Arts Therapy Program) will be leading another Art therapy experiential in March during Brain Injury Awareness Month. More details on this to come in the future.*

Brain Injury Association of Indiana- “Use Your Noggin Virtual Trivia

BIAI held the “Use Your Noggin” Fundraiser on Friday, November 5th. We had an excellent turnout with individuals with brain injury, their supports, and professionals from all around Indiana as well as from other states-- including Massachusetts and California! We learned all kind of fun facts and bits of interesting information on various topics and had a great time filled with socializing and laughter! We thank all of our players and sponsors for their support and contribution to our inaugural FUN-raiser. Stay tuned for many more events to come!

Informational Links on Brain Injury

Brain Injury Association of Indiana: www.biaindiana.org

Brain Injury Association of America: <http://www.biausa.org/>

TBI Model Systems Knowledge and Translation Center: <https://msktc.org/tbi>

Brainline: <http://www.brainline.org/>

National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury- Virginia Commonwealth University: <http://www.tbinrc.com/>

BITES – Brain Injury and Technology Education Support Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BITESGroup>

LoveYourBrain: <http://www.loveyourbrain.com/>

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC): <https://dvbic.dcoe.mil/>

United States Brain Injury Alliance: <http://usbia.org/>

A thank you from BIAI:

The Brain Injury Association of Indiana wishes to express its profound thanks for the donations it has received through personal and anonymous measures. We thank you for your continued support in making our mission a reality.

And thank you to our official BIAI Corporate Sponsors:



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