

Psychological Effects of having a Brain Tumour

on:

Thinking

Mood

Behaviour

Family

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Questions often raised about cognitive function

- Why is my memory affected ? Will it get better ?
- Why is my concentration reduced?
- Can vision be affected? Or hearing ?
- Can speech be affected?
- ‘ I know what I want to say but can't get the words out’.

Questions often raised about mood and personality

- *Why can some people suffer a 'personality' change?*
 - Short tempered; sharp, Moody
 - Frustrated, Loss of confidence
 - Behaving unusual – quieter, brooding, anxious, crying easily

When does it improve ?

Questions often raised about coping and family support

- how do you help someone when they feel they don't need it ?
- Can relatives and friends be over-protective? Can this affect confidence and mood?
- How can family and friends be helped?
- How do I cope with tiredness and fatigue ?

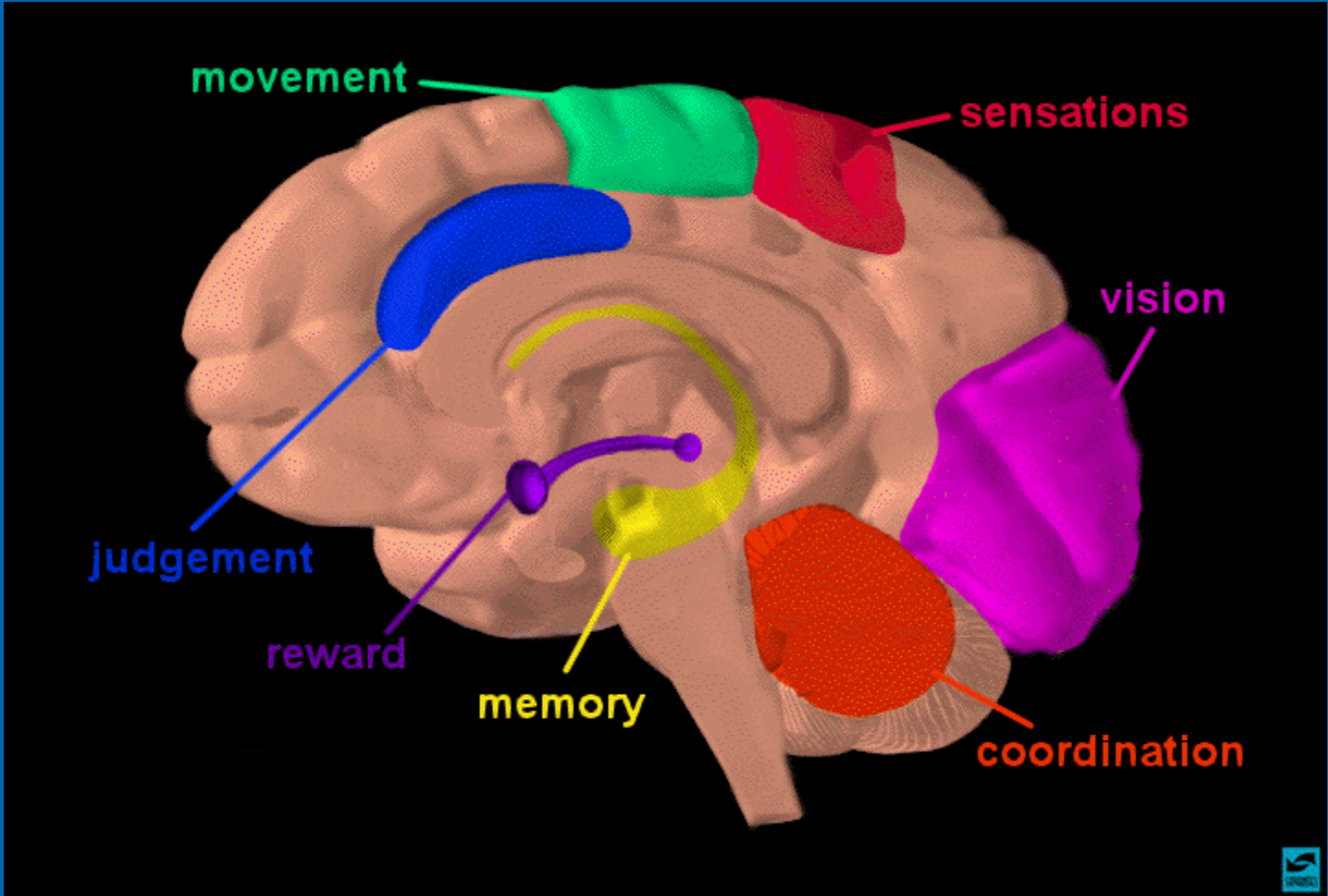
Psychological problems can be influenced by:

By tumour:

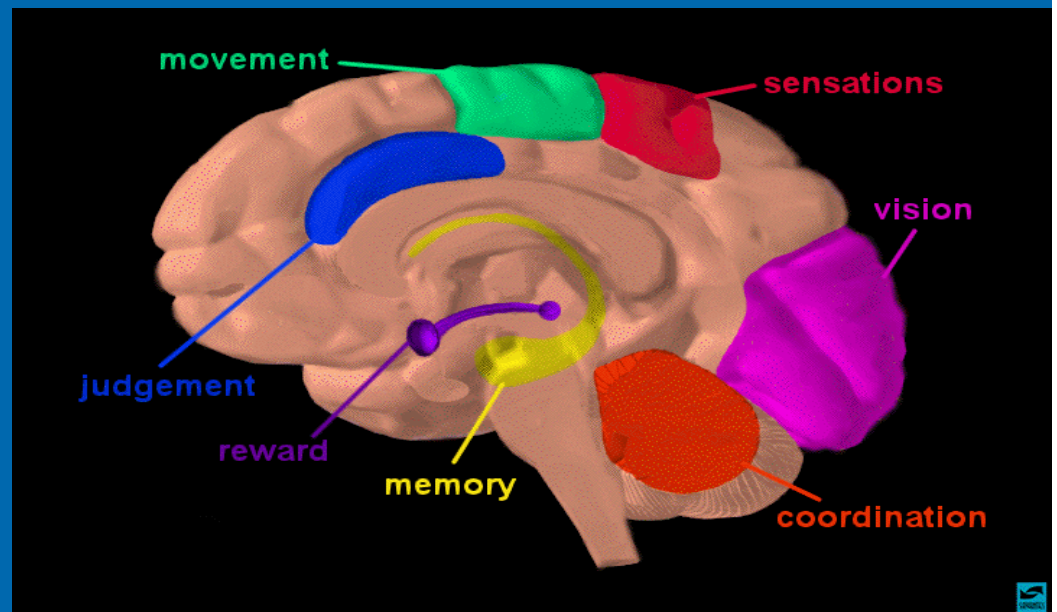
where it is
size/extent

By person factors:

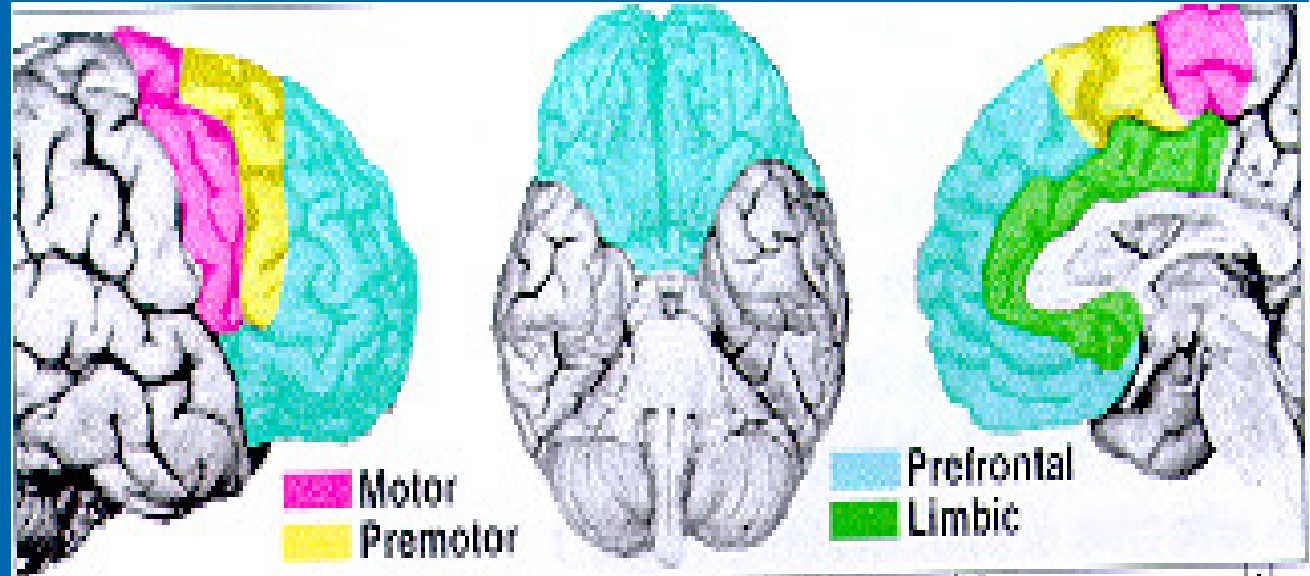
before tumour
coping strategies
family support



Location of injury



- Parietal region –sensory disturbances, difficulty in recognizing objects by touch or from unusual angles
- Left/right orientation problems, reading problems



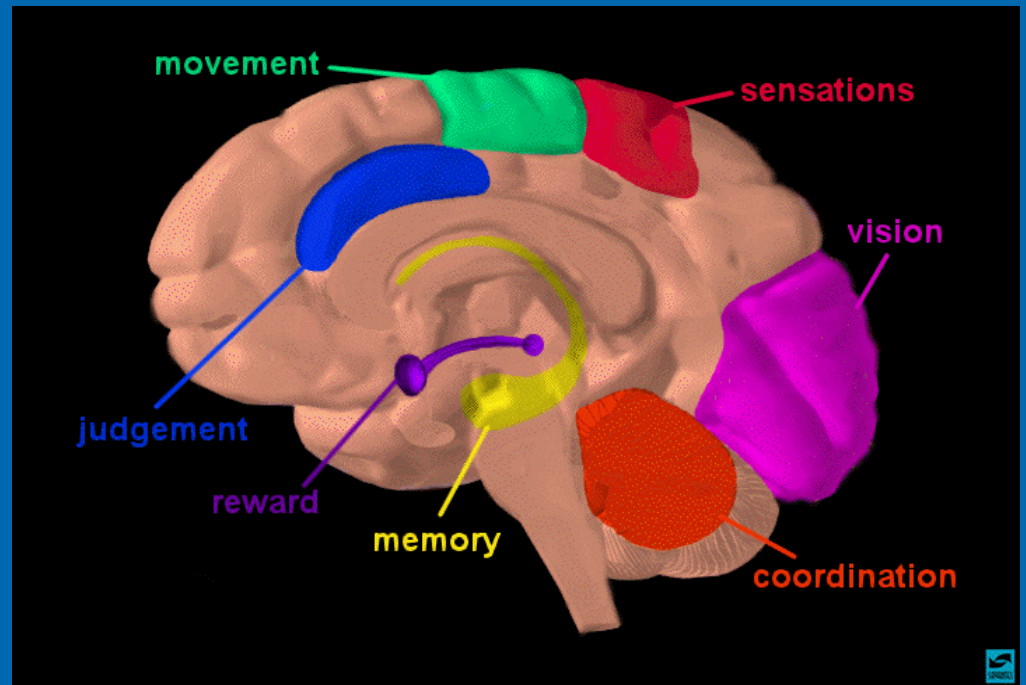
Frontal Lobe

Problems with cognition: abstract reasoning, memory and attention deficits, and difficulty in initiation of cognitive activity

Behaviour and personality disturbance - impairment of attention, and inappropriate emotions and behaviour, emotional insensitivity

Temporal region

- If on left, language problems, understanding what has been said, Right sided, problems with recognizing emotional tone in others voice

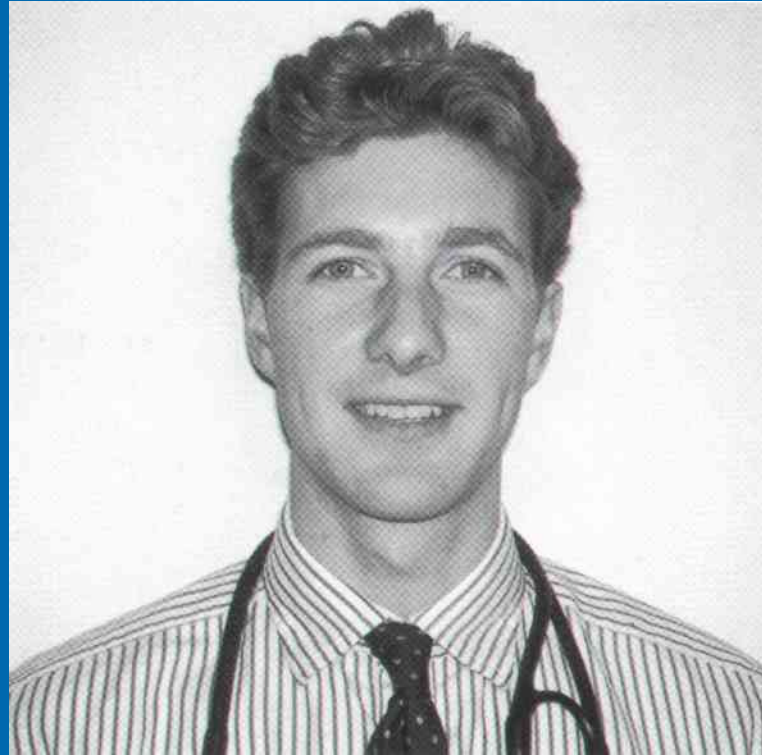


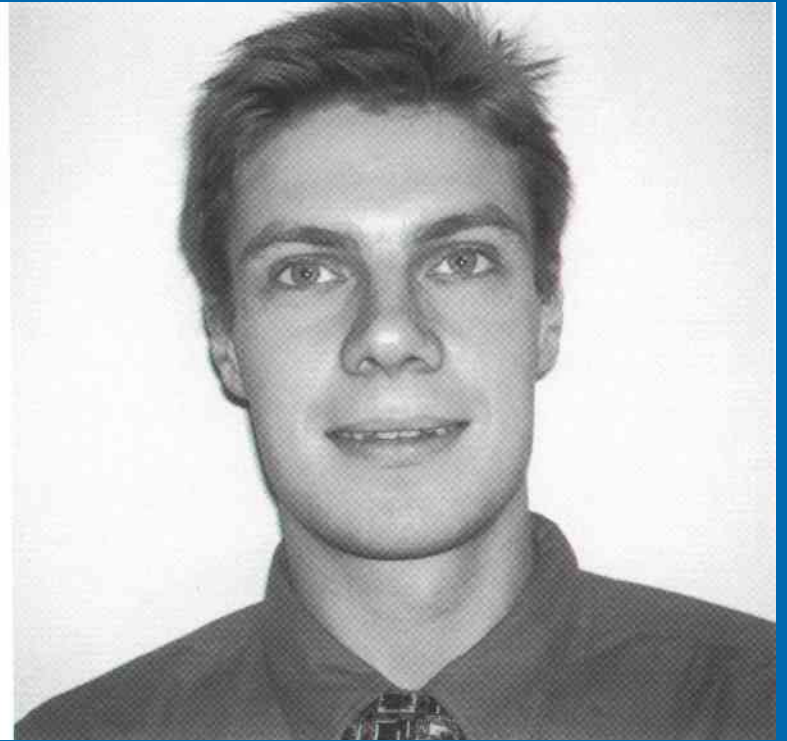
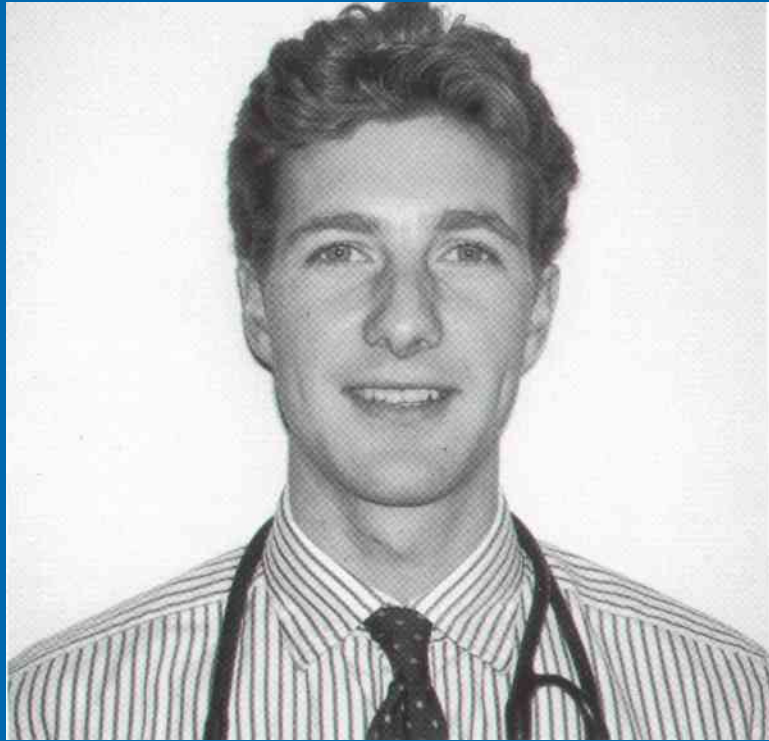
Memory

Different types of memory

- **Listening memory** (Auditory memory) – recalling a story, a phone number
- **Seeing memory** (Visual memory) – remembering a face or a picture
- **Immediate memory** - last few minutes or so
- **Delayed memory** - 20 minutes to years
- **Recognition memory** – recognizing something you have seen or heard before

Recognition Memory Test





Understanding what others say

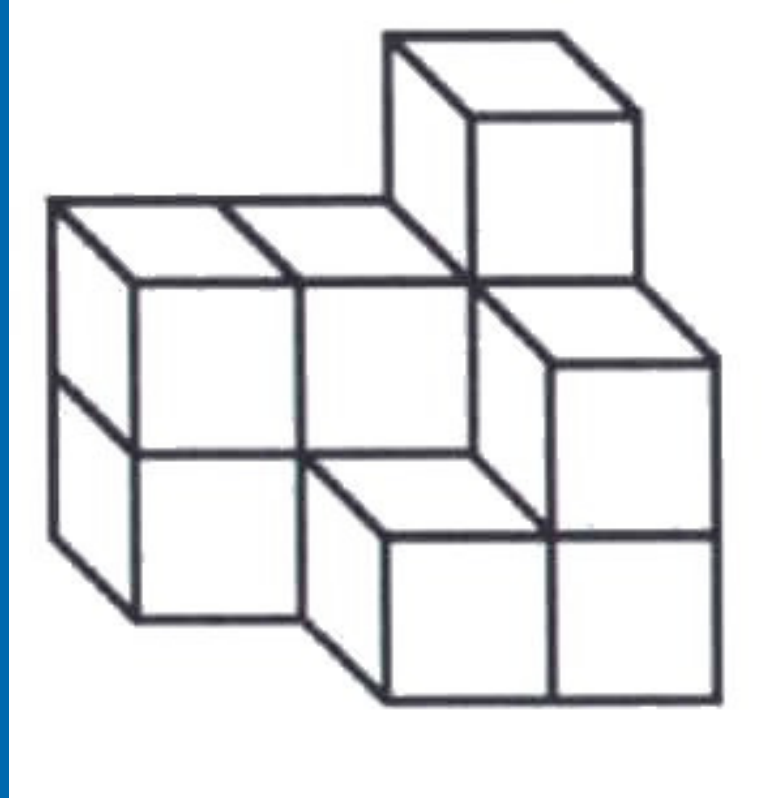
- Speed of Comprehension Test

- Rats have teeth✓
- Nuns are sold in pairs✗
- Beefsteaks crush their prey✗

- Spot-the-Word Vocabulary Test

- puma✓ laptess
 plorium levity✓

Visual Orientation and Space Perception



complex thinking

- Ability to plan
- Ability to prioritize – *do what is important first*
- To be flexible and adaptive
- not to jump to conclusions
- Able to inhibit behaviours
- Able to put yourself in another's position

Stroop Test

Red

Yellow

Green

Blue

Black

Helping memory

see memory handouts

Adapt and be organised

Organisation *A place for everything and everything in its place*

- Keys **always** in the same place
- a filing cabinet with all-important information/documentation in it
- Agree on a place where your friends/relatives diary or to-do-lists are kept.
- notebook by the phone.

Modify your environment (*de-clutter*)

- Label cupboards.
 - a noticeboard, with a list of frequently used information (e.g. Telephone numbers, bus routes).
 - Clock that also has day and date on it
-
- Use a digital camera – photographs are great memory aids

Emotions

Depression

Depression at least in 25-40% of sufferers

- Due to *directly* the tumour itself (esp if left side, i.e. neuropathological)
- Reactive – due to the *loss* of function & self – *a sense of loss of parts of the self*

Symptoms of depression

sometimes we are depressed and we don't know it

- Sadness, loss of interest in hobbies, personal care,
- Self hate, guilt
- Apathy or agitation
- Weight change
- Poor sleep / constant tiredness
- Forgetfulness

Symptoms of anxiety

- Constant worry (about *everything*)
- Socially avoidant
- Fear of being alone
- Jumpy
- Checking on people or things a lot
- Poor sleep, restless
- Night sweats
- Panic attacks

Personality & behaviour change

Can be a *direct* effect of the brain tumour

Can be a *reaction* to it, or both

Apathy: no interest in anything

Crying or laughing out of context

Indifferent to others' feelings

Anger from 'nowhere',

Gets angry over small things

Act without thinking of the consequences or not
concerned by consequences

Dealing with emotions

- We can't always control our world around us
- But we may be able to control how we *react* to these changes

- Identify what you can and can't control in the world.

e.g. health, finance, tidy house,
relationship with family friends

- For the areas you *can* control, ask:

Do I need to or want to control or these areas?

What's important to me?

For areas you can't control

- Ask yourself: *How do I deal with them?*
- *If I get angry does that help?* Sometimes it may seem to help in the short term but in the longer term it may become unhelpful,
- Then you feel you can't even control your reactions to a situation

Spend time ...

- In the past – reminisce
- In the present – focus your mind of what is around you *now*
- In the future – plan activities for today, tomorrow & the future

For family member

- Delegate responsibility
- – share practical tasks (*and sometimes emotional ones*)
- Be assertive and clear with visitors
- Take time for yourself
- Develop & maintain routines to help retain a sense of control over situation

Managing fatigue

Managing fatigue

- Brian 49 computer programmer
- Brain tumour
- mentally tired all the time
- Brian found work difficult due to poor concentration

Brian's beliefs

- 'Need to push myself harder to overcome problems'
- 'No pain no gain' 'don't give in'
- More effort equals more success'

An alternative view

- Success doesn't mean doing everything I did before the tumour
- 'I do have some limitations now, and trying harder may make things worse

Two competing views

- A. 'I will get more effective work done if I use my strategy of trying harder and push on.
- B. I will get more *effective* work done if I try taking small breaks as advised'

Experiment

2 conditions (A versus B)

A. work without breaks until he was too tired to continue

B. work with 10 min break every hour whether he felt like it or not

Measure the actual time spent on task and amount of effective work in each condition

2 weeks later Brian found...

- He did more *effective* work with breaks
- He realised difference between 'being maximally effective rather than putting in maximum active effort
- 'I can only do my best and that may involve doing things differently from before'