

## **IMAGINE YOURSELF . . . ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY**

**Imagine you have had no sleep for three nights, have a bad headache and are walking on a very uneven surface following a map to get to a very remote part of a loud shopping centre. At the same time as doing this, you are trying to have a conversation with your child, and remember a very long shopping list.**

**WHAT WOULD YOU NEED TO HAPPEN SO THAT YOU CAN FEEL UNDERSTOOD?**



# Communication tips: acquired brain injury

## In general:

- Remember, emotions are like gatekeepers for information. The person won't hear your message unless they feel safe and can trust you.
- Be aware that trauma can sit behind apparently irrational or disengaged behaviour.
- Ensure a quiet, calm environment where possible to minimise stress.
- Try to assess the person's communication needs at the outset and adjust your communication style accordingly.
- Check if the person needs a support person or companion with them.
- Speak to the person not their companion.
- Speak normally. Don't exaggerate your speech or movements.
- Introduce yourself by name.
- Address the person by name
- Be patient and give your undivided attention.
- Listen carefully and avoid assuming too much.
- Don't patronise or talk down to the person.
- Inform the person of what you are about to do; say why; and say what you need them to do for you.
- Stop and check comprehension from time to time.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person to do or say something.
- Relax. Anyone can make mistakes. Offer an apology if you feel you've caused embarrassment. Keep a sense of humour and be willing to communicate.

## Specifically:

- Face the person directly and maintain eye contact.
- Speak clearly and evenly, not too fast or slow. Repeat important information.
- Be polite and patient when offering assistance, and wait until your offer is accepted. Be prepared for your offer to be refused.
- Don't exaggerate your speech or movements.
- Use short sentences.
- Use visual aids if necessary.
- Never pretend to understand what the person is saying if you don't. Ask the person to repeat or rephrase, or offer them an alternative means of communication, such as pen and paper or iPad.