

Dr. Maria Mouratidis Talks About Expressing Emotion After The Injury

Credit: BrainLine.org (Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King)

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1084>

Dr. Maria Mouratidis: Often times patients who have had a traumatic brain injury and some psychological injuries actually too, feel in some ways that they are not who they used to be, that somehow that their sense of self is lost. Also family members, especially those closest to them will make comments like "he's not who I married" or "he's different now." It's important one hand to acknowledge that this is the same person, however the way of relating to him or her is different. There is a loss in that and so validating that sense of loss and helping them really work through some of that grief that comes through that, but recognizing the essence of the person or the love that you have with them it doesn't get broken because there has been an injury it maybe harder or different to access or connect with, and that we can help families and couples deal with, how do you connect now?

For example I can think of a patient who is affect, basically our emotional expression, not our feelings, but how someone outside of you can tell how you are feeling. One consequence of brain injury is what we call flat affect, basically it's hard to tell what someone is feeling. So it kind of looks like that they aren't feeling anything. We rely on all those cues from each other, especially the ones from people who are intimate and close to us. We know their glances, we know kind of if it's a look of something's on their mind, or something's not quite right. With someone who has a brain injury sometimes those cues are different now, and so just because in this example the patient may not look like he or she is feeling anything, it doesn't he isn't.

I was working with a couple where the patients' wife would say, "he doesn't seem to love me", but if you were to ask him if he loved his wife he loved her as much or as more as ever. Because it doesn't look the same the wife wasn't sure in the same way and that caused her own sense of worry and loss and until we were able to talk about it they could find some new ways of trying to relate and connect and develop perhaps some of the new intimacies if you will about that closeness that doesn't have to be gone, it maybe different, but it's not gone. Love doesn't necessarily exist in the brain; I'm sure there could be argue that point that everything sort of exists in the brain. However, I have observed time and time again that that love, that connection, that biological connection especially I've witnessed it stronger in parents in children, than even with a spouse, That that doesn't get broken because there has been a brain injury.