

## **Fact Sheet 7**

(For more information about Hydrocephalus refer to fact sheet 3)



# **Cognitive issues & hydrocephalus**

Having hydrocephalus does not stop anybody from living a full, independent and rewarding life. People with hydrocephalus attend university, participate in volunteer activities and gain employment in a variety of areas; however there are some specific cognitive issues which people with hydrocephalus may experience. These issues can be grouped under the following categories.

### **1. Perception & motor ability**

Most people with hydrocephalus have difficulty with accurately interpreting what they see in terms of shape, size, space and distance and then correctly matching their movements.

*"I'm clumsy and not very aware of the space I use"*

### **2. Concentration**

Most people with hydrocephalus are interested and motivated to learn, however they may be easily distracted and find it difficult to sustain concentration until the completion of the work.

*"I get distracted, lose my train of thought and get caught up in irrelevant details"*

### **3. Language & comprehension**

People with hydrocephalus often have well developed vocabulary skills; but may have difficulty monitoring what they say for logic, relevance or appropriateness. Many also have problems formulating language for written work and conversation.

### **4. Memory & learning**

Poor short term memory may be a problem; however it is more common to have difficulties retrieving appropriate information from long term memory. People with hydrocephalus can learn effectively, however it usually takes longer.

*"I forget where I put things"*

*"Learning is a difficult process for me"*

### **5. Planning & organisational skills**

Organisational skills are often lacking and there are difficulties with planning ahead and thinking flexibly. These problems stem from an impaired ability to know when and where to start.

*"I have difficulty developing a consistent routine and following it through. Acting on plans is difficult"*

### **6. Problem solving & decision making**

People with hydrocephalus may have difficulty generating strategies for solving problems or in altering their approach if the first attempt is unsuccessful.

*"If shown how, I can cope for a short period of time, until something unexpected occurs"*

*"I have difficulty making positive active decisions"*

### **7. Social skills**

The learning difficulties people with hydrocephalus have experienced since childhood have made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to pick up the verbal and non-verbal cues necessary for the acquisition of certain social skills.

*"I have difficulty in working out appropriate social responses"*

### **8. Self –confidence**

People with hydrocephalus may lack self-confidence and doubt their own abilities.

*"I have a lack of self confidence" "People, in general, seem to think I can pull myself together but I don't know how to start"*

### **Facts to remember**

- Learning is a varied experience for all
- Most people with hydrocephalus will exhibit similar issues yet, the range and their severity in individuals varies
- Although many of the difficulties discussed can affect anybody at times, it must be realized that for people with hydrocephalus these problems are pathological in origin and need to be addressed accordingly.

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