

Centre for Neuro Skills Presents a Case Study

Overcoming Behavioral Struggles, a Woman Embraces Life Again

Before her aneurysm, Melanie was a respected career woman, praised by her clients and adored by friends. But the effects of her brain injury were devastating and she struggled with severe behavior issues that shattered her closest relationships.

She was a daily risk to herself and those around her, and needed protection 24/7 while receiving treatment at an acute care hospital. Melanie was physically aggressive, hitting, swatting, biting, and kicking family and staff. Angry language and impulsivity were constant problems. Her deficits included memory loss, poor attention span, confusion, disorientation, visual impairments, imbalance, and trouble with walking. Melanie's parents were the primary care givers and had to medicate her to control outbursts. Frustrated and bewildered, they had to relentlessly advocate until Melanie was approved for the CNS program.

The Path to Progress: Behavior Therapy, Reduced Medications, Skill Building

To address the extreme behavior issues, CNS developed a goal-oriented treatment plan that included intensive work with staff behavior analysts. A multidisciplinary team was formed to address the physical and cognitive deficits, and CNS' staff physician worked with Melanie's case manager to reduce her behavior medications.

CNS is known for a clinical approach that emphasizes behavior treatment tailored to a patient's need, injury, and capability. Rather than depend entirely on medication to control eruptions and inappropriate language, therapists teach patients communication skills that are socially acceptable and effective. As these skills were modeled in the inpatient program during the day, CNS staff helped Melanie practice new behaviors at night in the residential rehabilitation program. When she'd refuse to complete a task, staff would challenge her, staying true to the desired outcome.

Medications were evaluated and many were reduced or stopped completely, so that her overstimulation and erratic emotions could normalize. Her CNS staff physician started her on neuro-nutrient supplements to support brain health and he also introduced a mild mood stabilizer. With these adjustments, coupled with a consistent approach outlined in her behavior program, Melanie improved. Within a month, her behavior scores progressed from 40 to 77 percent. She is now at 98 percent cooperative and engaged in her therapy.

A New Life of Competence

A year post-injury Melanie now shops, dines out, goes to the movies, cleans her apartment, and has engaging conversations with friends and family. Her vision improved following guidelines established by the neuro-optometrist who treats CNS patients. Melanie's team rebuilt the pathways of her brain, and she gained cognitive and emotional skills due to targeted therapy, repetition of tasks, guidance, and clear expectations established by the CNS team.

Today, Melanie can reframe her perspective to see the positive in her life. She's able to hear feedback from counselors and family. The yelling and angry tones have decreased and she's able to express herself appropriately. "She's a pleasure to speak with," her case manager said. "Melanie says hello to staff and patients and wants to interact with others. Her potential is flourishing."

To tour a CNS facility, call 800.922.4994 or visit neuroskills.com.

To make a CA referral, fax 661.873.2509. For a TX referral, fax 972.871.5332.