



Cognition and mood



PSP is a challenging condition, and at times you may feel overwhelmed by your diagnosis, causing you to feel low in mood or depressed. However, you may also experience problems with cognition. Cognition refers to our mental processes and includes things like our ability to learn, reason and remember. It also refers to our ability to use and understand language.



If you are experiencing any problems with your cognition, you may feel that you lose confidence in situations that you used to find easy to deal with, or perhaps that you become more anxious than you used to. It is important to remember that PSP is causing this problem, and that you are not doing anything wrong.

The following information explains the various changes that can take place when cognition is affected. Please remember that symptoms vary enormously and that everyone's journey with PSP is different.

Apathy

You may feel apathy, or a sense of withdrawing from everyday life. You may feel less enthusiastic about things that used to interest you, such as hobbies, or meeting up with friends and family. It can be hard to reignite the old spark if these feelings occur, but try to remember that it is PSP that is causing this change. Sharing your feelings with those around you may help them to understand what you are going through, and enable them to offer you the best support.

Impulsive behaviour

You may sometimes find it hard to accept that PSP has limited your ability to do the things you always used to do. You may find that those around you are concerned about your behaviour, but this will often be because they are worried about your safety. For example, you may try to move around alone, even though you have poor balance. It can take some time to adjust to the fact that you need more help than you used to and at times you may feel very frustrated about the affects of PSP. You may also feel frustrated with those around you.

Mood swings

You may occasionally have episodes of inappropriate laughing or crying. Try to remember that PSP can sometimes cause your reactions to be exaggerated.

Memory

You may find that your memory is affected and that you find it difficult to learn new things or store new memories or information.

Language and thinking

You may find it difficult to understand what is being said, or to find the words to express yourself and get your ideas across. You may also find it hard to sequence events in your head, so that getting conversation in the right order is more difficult than it used to be. You may also find it difficult to sequence actions, to the point that doing two things at once can become very confusing.

Sometimes you may have difficulty answering 'yes/no' questions, because 'yes' and 'no' become mixed up in your head. It is important for people around you to know if you are experiencing these issues so that they can support you effectively.

Behaviour

Your family, friends and carers may notice that you do some things that are out of character. This may include becoming obsessed with certain things, repeating the same actions over and over. You may develop a sweet tooth and start to overfill your mouth with foods, which may cause concern to those close to you.

What can I do?

Get as much support as you can. Be sure to discuss any cognitive changes with your GP or neurologist who can refer you for a specialist assessment to ensure that you and your family receive the best care and advice to help you manage these changes.