



TIPS

for Dealing With Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA)

Pseudobulbar affect (PBA) is a neurologic condition characterized by frequent, uncontrollable outbursts of crying or laughing. The condition may occur in people with certain brain injuries or neurologic diseases. An episode of PBA can take place at any time, even in inappropriate social settings. People with PBA may take comfort in knowing that various techniques can help them manage their condition.

Receive an accurate diagnosis. PBA can be treated, but is often mistaken for depression, which can cause it to be underdiagnosed, go undertreated, or be inappropriately treated. Only a health care provider can provide the proper diagnosis.

Open the lines of communication. Be open with others about having PBA by informing them that you cannot always control your laughing or crying because of a neurologic condition. Doing so will ensure that people are not confused, insulted, or surprised when incidents occur.

Log your experiences. Recording your episodes in a diary can help you and your doctor understand what may trigger your episodes of PBA.

Build your support system. Reaching out for support from others with PBA can prove to be beneficial. These individuals

can help you feel that you are not alone and may be able to offer practical advice about how to cope with your PBA symptoms.

Welcome distractions. When you feel an episode coming on, try to distract yourself by, for example, thinking about something unrelated or by counting the number of objects on a shelf.

Learn to breathe. People with PBA can sometimes shorten their episodes by using different breathing patterns. Concentrate on breathing out for crying and breathing in for laughing.

Switch positions. Notice your posture when you are having an episode, then change your body position when you think you are about to cry or laugh.

Relax and regroup. Practicing relaxation techniques can help ease symptoms of PBA. Release the tension in your shoulders, forehead, and other muscle groups that tighten during an episode.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

