

# Emotional Changes After a Traumatic Brain Injury

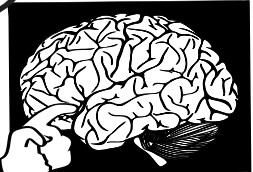
SOME PEOPLE WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY OR "TBI" OFTEN HAVE A HARD TIME CONTROLLING THEIR EMOTIONS.

## "EMOTIONAL LABILITY"



SOME PEOPLE WITH TBI MAY HAVE INTENSE MOOD SWINGS. THEY MAY GO FROM FEELING HAPPY, TO ANGRY, TO SAD VERY QUICKLY. USUALLY THEY CAN'T CONTROL THIS.

"EMOTIONAL LABILITY" CAN BE CAUSED BY DAMAGE TO THE PARTS OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROL EMOTION.



DR. CUSHING TOLD ME THAT MY EMOTIONS WILL PROBABLY BECOME "MORE NORMAL" AFTER THE FIRST FEW MONTHS.

### SO WHAT CAN I DO?

THAT'S GREAT! COUNSELING CAN HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS BETTER. THERE ARE ALSO MEDICATIONS THAT CAN STABILIZE MOOD.

FOR NOW MY FAMILY AND I ARE TALKING TO COUNSELORS TO HELP US COPE.

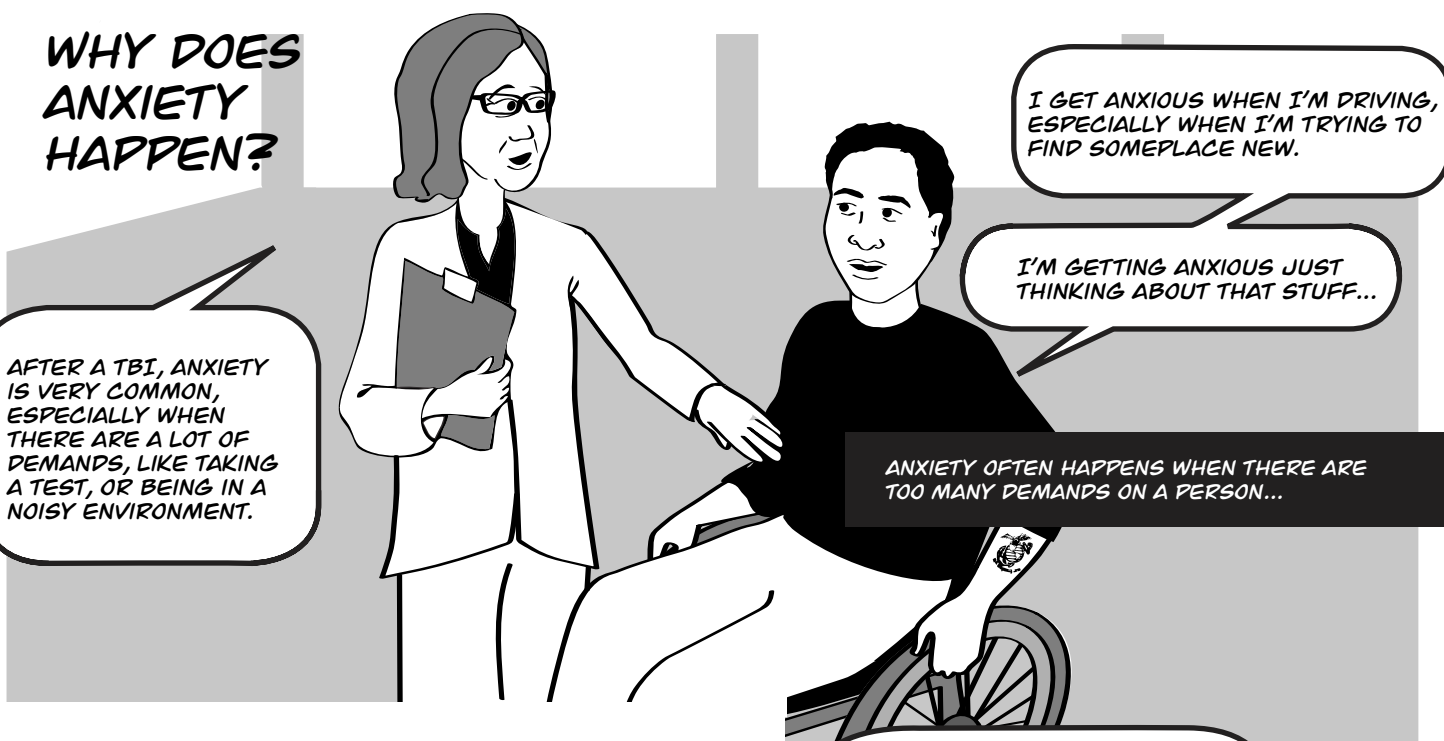
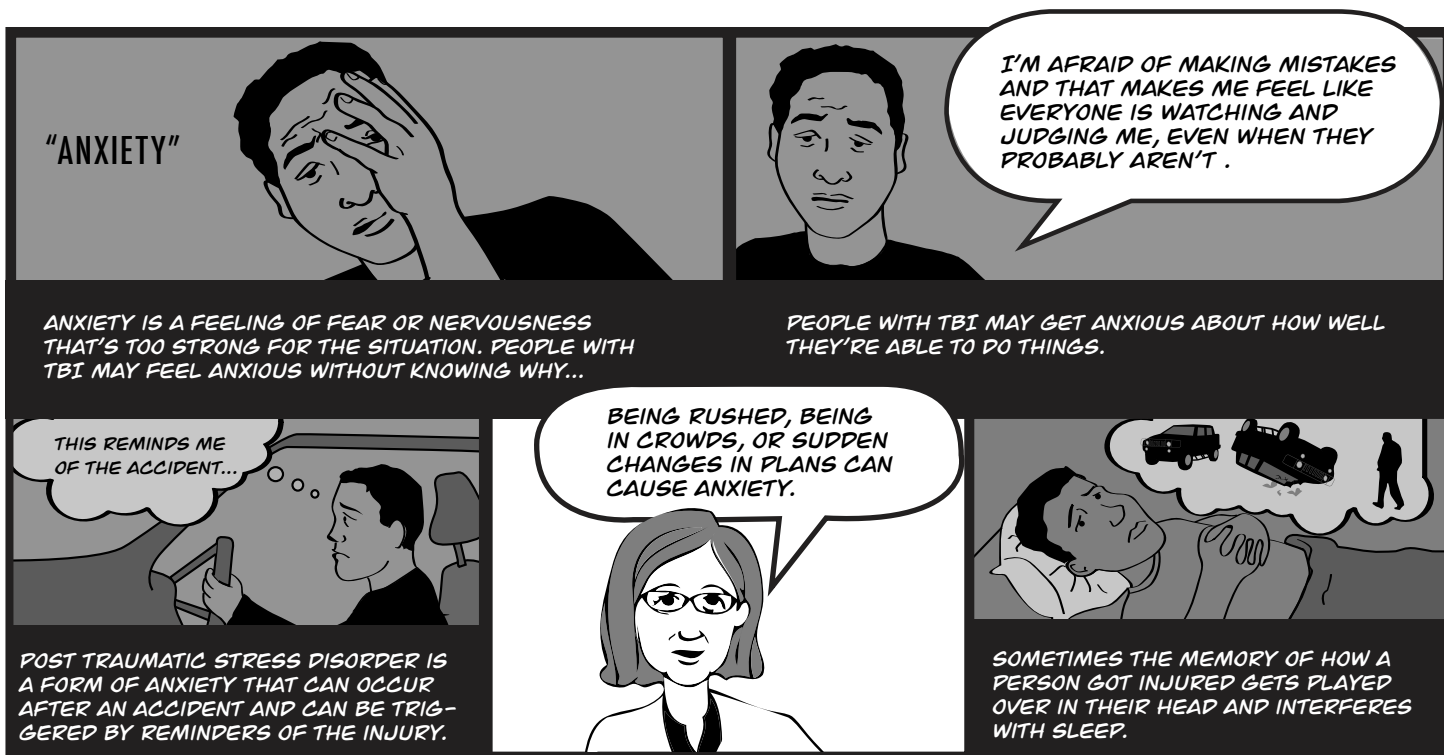
IF YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE ARE EXPERIENCING THIS, THE FIRST STEP IS TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR.

## HOW CAN YOUR FAMILY HELP?



GREAT QUESTION! HERE'S A LIST OF A FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP...

1. REMAIN CALM. AVOID REACTING EMOTIONALLY.
2. GENTLY CHANGE THE SUBJECT OR SUGGEST DOING SOMETHING ELSE.
3. GET THEM TO A QUIET AREA. THIS WILL HELP THEM REGAIN CONTROL.
4. GIVE THE PERSON A CHANCE TO TALK CALMLY.
5. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS.
6. PROVIDE FEEDBACK GENTLY AND SUPPORTIVELY AFTER THEY REGAIN CONTROL.



## "DEPRESSION"

IT'S NORMAL TO HAVE FEELINGS OF SADNESS, FRUSTRATION, OR LOSS AFTER A TBI.

I STARTED FEELING REALLY SAD A FEW MONTHS AFTER MY INJURY, WHEN I REALIZED IT WOULD HAVE A LONG TERM IMPACT ON MY LIFE...

## COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- FEELINGS THAT YOU ARE SAD OR WORTHLESS
- CHANGES IN SLEEP OR APPETITE
- TROUBLE FOCUSING
- FEELING DISTANT OR WITHDRAWN FROM OTHERS
- LOSS OF INTEREST IN OR PLEASURE FROM LIFE
- FEELING TIRED OR HAVING LITTLE ENERGY

BECAUSE THESE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION ARE ALSO COMMON EFFECTS OF BRAIN INJURY, THEY DON'T ALWAYS MEAN DEPRESSION, THEY'RE MORE LIKELY CAUSED BY DEPRESSION IF THEY BEGIN A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE INJURY.

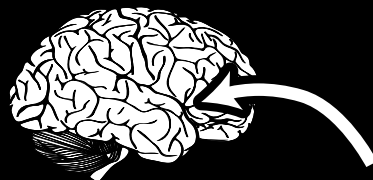
## WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION AFTER A TBI?



DEPRESSION CAN ARISE AS SOMEONE STRUGGLES TO ADJUST TO A TEMPORARY OR LASTING DISABILITY.



PEOPLE MAY BECOME DEPRESSED WHEN ADJUSTING TO THEIR NEW ROLE IN THEIR FAMILY OR COMMUNITY.



DEPRESSION CAN ALSO BE CAUSED BY CHEMICAL CHANGES OR DAMAGE TO PARTS OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROL EMOTIONS.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT DEPRESSION?

DEPRESSION IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. YOU CAN'T JUST "GET OVER IT". DEPRESSION IS AN ILLNESS.



AEROBIC EXERCISE AND DAILY ROUTINES HELPED ME REDUCE MY DEPRESSION.



EITHER COUNSELING, MEDICATION, OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH CAN HELP SOME PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION.



IT'S BEST TO TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE HAS THESE SYMPTOMS, TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR. DON'T WAIT!

## "TEMPER OUTBURSTS AND IRRITABILITY"

AHHH! I JUST GET IRRITATED SO EASILY!!!

FAMILY MEMBERS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH TBI OFTEN DESCRIBE HAVING A "SHORT FUSE" OR A QUICK TEMPER.

STUDIES SHOW THAT 71% OF PEOPLE WITH TBI ARE FREQUENTLY IRRITABLE.



## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

PEOPLE WITH TBI GET ANGRY FOR MANY REASONS...

...I'M FRUSTRATED AND UNHAPPY WITH HOW MY LIFE HAS CHANGED.

...I FORGET THINGS AND CAN'T CONCENTRATE WELL.

...I FEEL ALONE, DEPRESSED AND MISUNDERSTOOD.

...I HAVE DAMAGE TO THE PART OF MY BRAIN THAT CONTROLS EMOTIONS.

...I GET TIRED EASILY.

...I LOST MY JOB AND A LOT OF MY INDEPENDENCE.

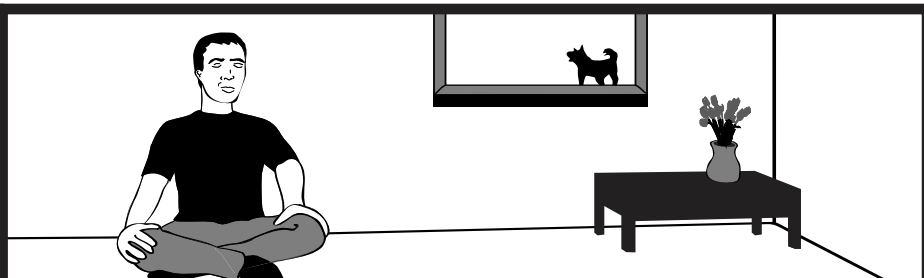
...I'M IN A LOT OF PAIN.



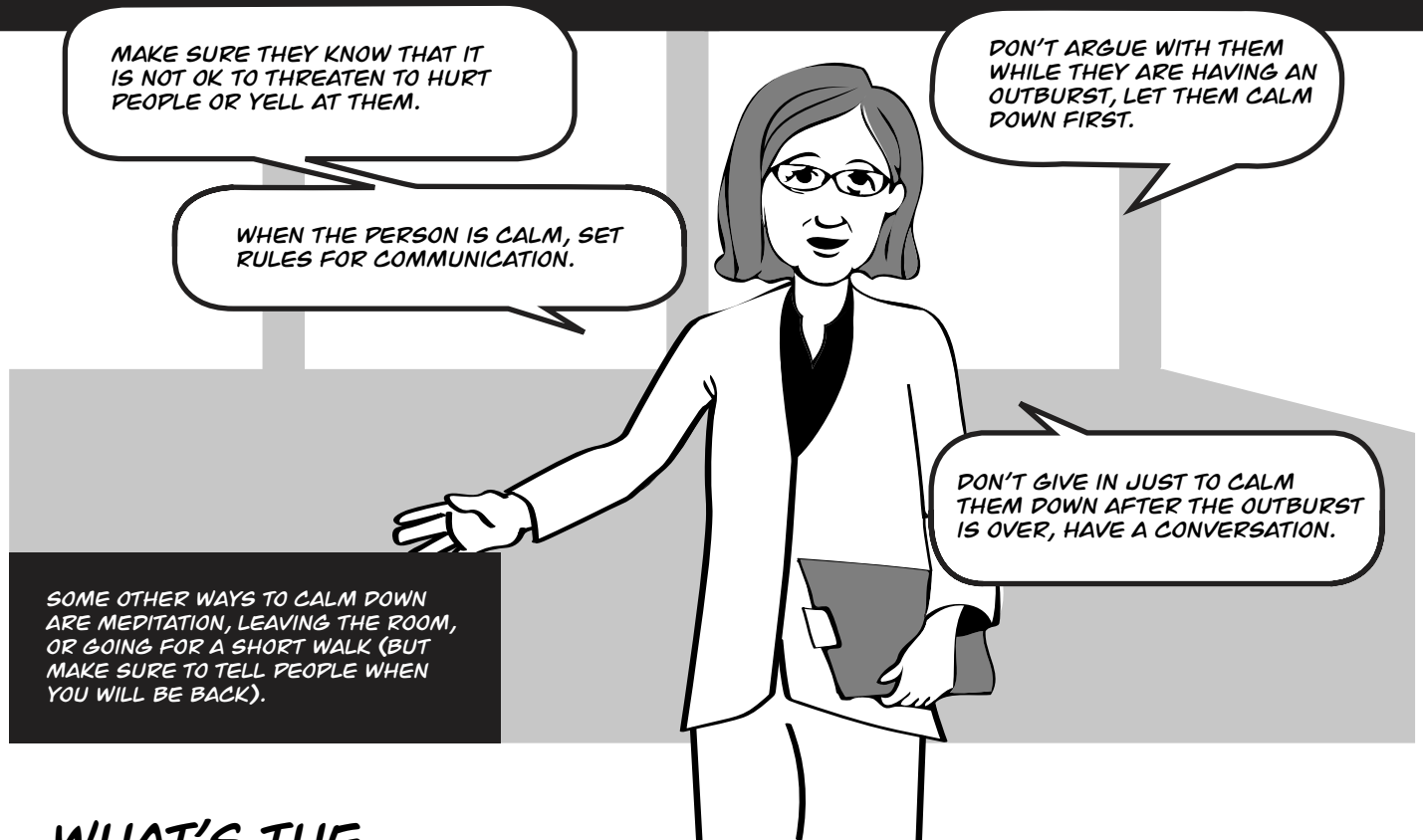
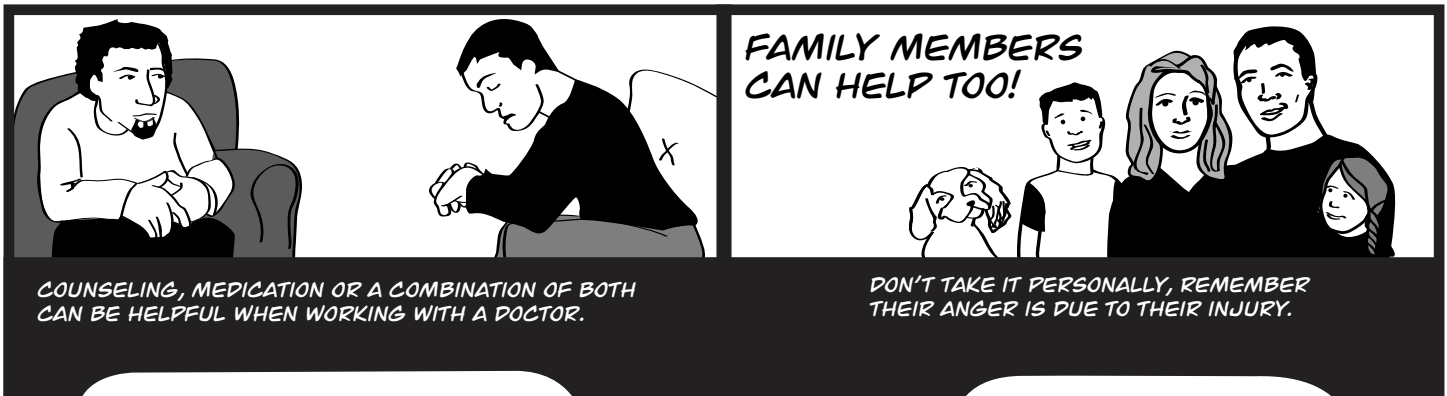
## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MY TEMPER AND IRRITABILITY?



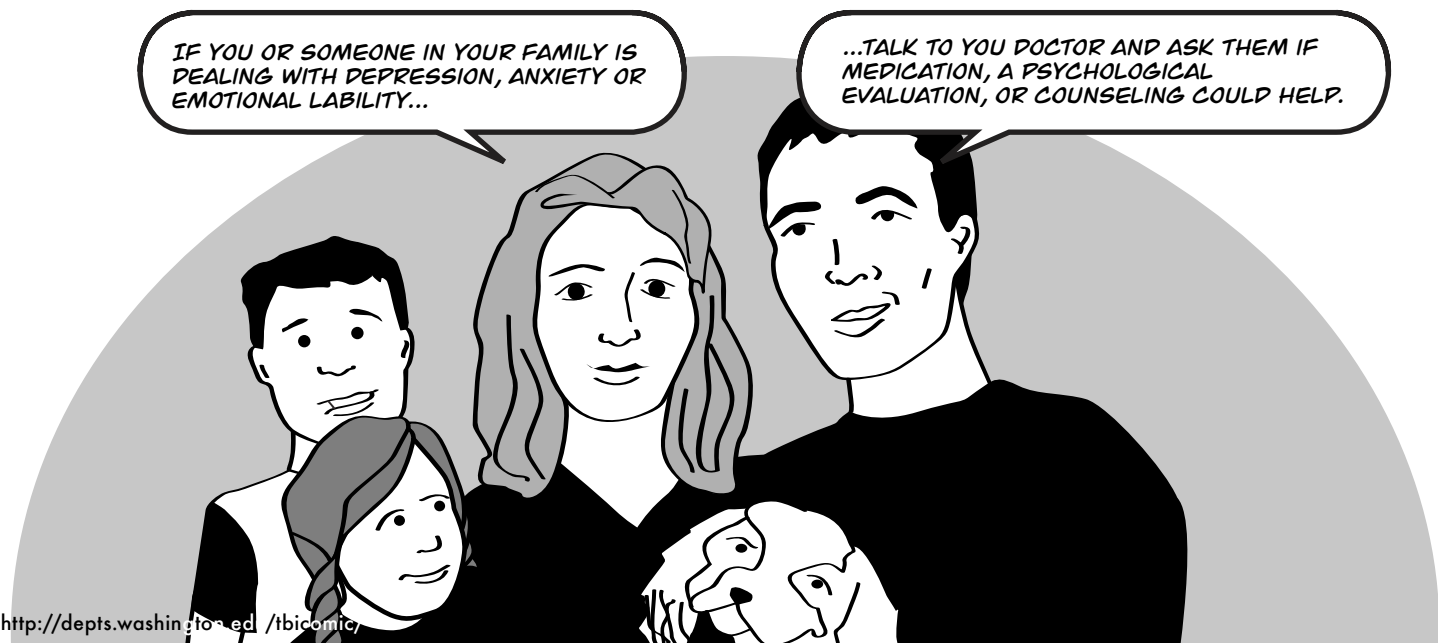
REDUCE STRESS AND DECREASE IRRITATING SITUATIONS.



PEOPLE WITH TBI CAN LEARN SOME BASIC ANGER MANAGEMENT SKILLS LIKE SELF-CALMING, RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AND BETTER COMMUNICATION.



## WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?



## MORE ABOUT MEDICATIONS

IF YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBER ARE TAKING MEDICATIONS FOR ANY OF THESE PROBLEMS IT'S IMPORTANT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR DOCTOR AND BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS.



THERE CAN BE A DELAY BEFORE THE MEDICATION STARTS WORKING.

YOUR DOSE MAY NEED TO BE ADJUSTED BY YOUR DOCTOR OR YOU MAY NEED TO TRY DIFFERENT MEDICATIONS BEFORE YOU FIND THE ONE THAT WORKS BEST. EXCEPT IN AN EMERGENCY, DO NOT STOP TAKING THE MEDICATION YOUR DOCTOR HAS PRESCRIBED WITHOUT TALKING TO THEM FIRST.

## PEER SUPPORT AND OTHER RESOURCES



REMEMBER NOT ALL HELP COMES FROM HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS!



PEER MENTORING IS WHEN SOMEBODY WHO IS IN THE SAME SITUATION HELPS YOU COPE WITH PROBLEMS THEY MAY HAVE DEALT WITH THEMSELVES.



A BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP CAN BE A FANTASTIC SOURCE OF PEER SUPPORT; SOME GROUPS ARE OPEN TO PEOPLE WITH TBI OR THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS; OTHER GROUPS ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE.



## SOURCE

The health information presented in this Graphic Fact Sheet is based on evidence from research and/or professional consensus and has been reviewed and approved by an editorial team of experts from the TBI Model Systems.

## AUTHORSHIP AND ILLUSTRATION

This content was taken from the document Emotional Problems after TBI, which was developed by Tessa Hart, PhD and Keith Cicerone, PhD, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center.

Portions of the original Document were adapted from materials developed by the UAB TBI Model System, the Carolinas Rehabilitation and Research System, and from Picking up the Pieces after TBI: A Guide for Family Members, by Angelle M. Sander, PhD, Baylor College of Medicine (2002).

Emotional Problems after TBI, was adapted into this Graphic Fact Sheet by Silas James and Illustrated by Matthew Cory.

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