

Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA) and Stroke

- Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA)
- Emotional Lability
- Emotional Incontinence

Sudden and unpredictable episodes of crying or laughing, often in socially inappropriate situations.



- PBA is triggered by damage to an area of the brain
- Stroke, TBI, MS, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's



- It's enough to make you feel like you're going crazy
- It's not depression or mania



Differentiating PBA from Depression

Clinical Feature	PBA	Depression
Emotional Expression	Crying, laughing, or both	Crying
Underlying Neurologic Conditions	Neurologic disease or brain injury always present	May or may not have underlying neurologic disorder
Episode Length of Time	Seconds to minutes; brief	Weeks to months; on-going mood
Ability to Control Episodes	Uncontrollable	May be moderated or controlled
Emotional Experience	Exaggerated or does not match feelings inside	Emotions match mood of sadness inside
Accompanying Thoughts	Outbursts have no specific link to underlying thoughts	Worthlessness, hopelessness, thoughts of death



- 53% of stroke survivors report symptoms of PBA
- 40% say PBA interferes with social activities

Coping and Treatment

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COPING

- **Be open** about the problem so people aren't surprised
- Try to **distract yourself** (count objects on a shelf, think about something else)
- Take **slow, deep breaths**
- **Relax** your forehead, shoulders

TREATMENT

- Ask your doctor
- SSRI anti-depressants, other medications
- See PBAinfo.org

HELPING A LOVED ONE

- **Relate** - remind them that you understand the outbursts aren't controllable
- **Remind** them that it's a neurological condition
- **Reassure** them: they're not alone. Nearly 2 million people have PBA.