



**Try these things to cope with an episode of IEED:**

- Be open about the problem; that way, people are not surprised or confused when you have an episode.
- When you feel an episode coming on, try to distract yourself by counting the number of objects on a shelf or by thinking about something unrelated.
- Take a slow deep breath and continue doing this until you're in control.
- Relax your forehead, shoulders and other muscle groups that tense up during an emotional episode.

Where can I go for more information?

**National Stroke Association**  
1-800-STROKES (800-787-6537)  
[www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)

**Involuntary Emotional Expression Disorder** website  
[www.ieed.org](http://www.ieed.org)

**IEED Information Center**  
866-928-2647

**National Institutes of Health**  
[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

**Research**

Clinical trial listings by disease or condition  
[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)  
[www.centerwatch.com](http://www.centerwatch.com)

## Explaining Unpredictable Emotional Episodes

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## What is IEED?

Involuntary emotional expression disorder (IEED) is a medical condition that causes sudden and unpredictable episodes of crying, laughing or other emotional displays. IEED is also called pseudobulbar affect, emotional lability or emotional incontinence.

If you have this problem, a diagnosis of IEED can come as a relief. The diagnosis can help explain why you may find yourself crying hard when you don't feel sad, why you may laugh at a sad story, or why you get angry over things that didn't used to make you mad.

IEED may occur when disease or injury damages the area of the brain that controls normal expression of emotion. This damage can disrupt brain signaling causing a "short circuit," triggering episodes of emotional outbursts. The emotions you display may be out of proportion to the situation. Or, they may be out of context. For example, you may laugh at a funeral or other solemn occasion.



If you have IEED, the inappropriateness, intensity and suddenness of the outbursts can make you feel as if you have lost control over your life. The disconnect between your internal emotions and external expressions can be frustrating - both for you and your loved ones.

Understanding the condition can be a big step to reclaiming your confidence and improving your relationships and quality of life.

## Who gets IEED?

IEED is triggered by damage to an area of the brain, sometimes from stroke. It is thought to impact more than 1 million Americans who may also suffer from stroke, traumatic brain injury, or neurologic diseases such as multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease), parkinson's disease and dementias including alzheimer's disease.

## Do I have IEED?

Only a doctor can diagnose IEED. But you can look for signs. First of all, **do you suffer from alzheimer's, parkinson's, ALS or MS or have you had a stroke or traumatic brain injury?**

### If yes, then ask yourself the following:

- Do you cry easily?
- Do you find that even when you try to control your crying you can't?
- Do you laugh at inappropriate times?
- Do you have emotional outbursts that are inappropriate to the situation?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, ask your doctor about IEED.

## Why is IEED so distressing?

IEED can be emotionally painful for both those that have it and their loved ones. One of the hardest things for people with IEED is a feeling of loss of control. IEED-related episodes can happen without warning in social and professional situations. This can fuel feelings of embarrassment and anxiety. Many people don't go out in public for fear of crying or laughing inappropriately. Some start missing days of work, stop eating in restaurants and/or avoid family gatherings. This can lead to feelings of isolation. Also, many people with IEED are frustrated that they can't seem to manage something as basic as their own emotions.

## How can I manage it?

The first step to treating IEED is to get an accurate diagnosis. Then ask your doctor about ways to manage IEED.

Remember that IEED is a distinct neurologic disorder and should be diagnosed and treated separately from stroke. While there is some promising research, there is no medical treatment for IEED approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Because people with IEED may cry a lot, they may be diagnosed with depression. But, IEED is not depression. IEED episodes are often sudden, unpredictable, and may be contrary to the person's actual mood. Since it is often confused with depression, many people with IEED are prescribed anti-depressant drugs by their doctors.

Stroke survivors may see their IEED symptoms lessen over time as the brain heals.

## Coping with IEED

Learning about IEED and accepting that it is a distinct neurologic condition may help.

See the resource box on the next panel for coping ideas.

