



Moving Forward Following a Brain Injury

**Second Chance to Live
Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

Introduction

Following a brain injury can be a very scary time in an individual's life. What may have made sense to the individual, now may seem baffling and confusing. Life as we knew it may no longer make sense to us. Consequently, we may find ourselves looking for life lines that seem out of reach. We question whether life will ever seem normal again.

In my experience I attempted to find normal for many years. I did so by trying to compare myself to other people. Little did I know it but I was living with a disability that was invisible. Because I was unaware for many years that my life was being impacted by a brain injury and an invisible disability, I stayed baffled and confused.

The impact of staying baffled and confused left me doubting myself. Through my recovery process I came to realize some things that I would like to share with you. I needed to stop berating myself for what I could not do because of what I discovered was out of my control. With this realization I discovered that I needed to grieve my reality.

Grieving my reality helped me to accept the things that I could not change. Facing my denial, as well as what other people wanted or needed me to believe helped me to move forward. Through grieving and accepting what I could not do, I was given new freedom. The freedom to realize I could take a different course of action to get different results in my life.

In this e Book I would like to share some things that I discovered about myself through my recovery process. Through my process and journey, I have come to realize that there is tremendous power in identification. I have come to realize that identifying with other people – instead of comparing myself to them – gives me the freedom to come out of hiding. Breaking free from isolation gives me hope.

The focus of this e Book is to share what I have learned about myself through my recovery process and journey. What I have learned and share in this e Book has developed over the past 48 years. My hope is that as you read through the pages of this e Book that you will find a new freedom. A freedom to be yourself as you move forward following your brain injury. A freedom to experience hope in your life.

The Power of Identification Part 1

April 18, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Through my process and in my experience I have discovered an undeniable truth. There is tremendous power in identification. Although living with brain injuries, invisible disabilities, other disabilities — or adversity in general — can leave you and I feeling alone and isolated, the good news is that we no longer have to remain alone or isolated. We can reach out to one another. We can find comfort, courage and hope through the power of identification.

By reaching out to and identifying with my fellows, I find the comfort, courage and hope to explore beyond my feelings of being alone and isolated. By reaching out and identifying with my fellows, I find the ability to move beyond my struggle to accept myself. By reaching out and identifying with my fellows, I find the ability to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

Several years ago I wrote an article to share what I have learned about the power of identification. Because I have experienced comfort, courage and hope — through the power of identification — I share very personal information in the articles that I write for Second Chance to Live. My motivation in sharing this information is that as you read my articles, you will no longer feel alone or isolated.

My hope is that as you read, listen to or watch articles from Second Chance to Live, you will experience the power of identification. My hope is that you will be given the comfort, courage and hope to explore beyond your feelings of being alone and isolated. My hope is that as you read, listen to / watch articles from Second Chance to Live, you will be able to move beyond your struggle to accept yourself.

The Power of Identification

Welcome back and I am so glad you decided to stop by and rest. You are a gift to me. I am fired up about a particular topic today. I have been fired up about this topic for most of my life. As a person with a disability, I never quite felt like I was enough or that I measured up. I never quite understood why I did not measure up until I began to understand the insidious nature of comparison. For too long, I measured my worth by the status quo. I allowed the measuring stick of other people to dictate how and what I thought about myself.

When I started treating myself with dignity and respect, I began having spiritual awakenings. One of these awakenings revealed that having a disability challenged the status quo. Although I sought to measure up to expectations, I found myself consistently falling short in my efforts. Living with my brain injury and my invisible disability left me clueless in my attempts to compensate for my real — yet unknown — deficits and limitations. In the process of my attempting to overcompensate I lost sight of who I was as a person. In the process, I became a human doing rather learning how to be in life.

Doing, instead of being became more important as I sought to prove my standing amongst the status quo. Even as I attempted to overcompensate through overachieving I had no idea how my brain injury and my invisible disability intrinsically impacted my world. What made matters worse was that I sought to defend the notion that my brain injury, invisible disability, deficits and limitations had nothing to do with my inability to meet expectations. In the course of defending my denial, I found that I was denying who I was as an individual.

The Power of Identification Part 2

April 18, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In the course of maintaining and defending both my denial and the denial of family and friends, I grew weary in my attempts to prove that I was not an individual living with a brain injury, an invisible disability with real deficits and limitations. In my weariness, I reached a point in my life when I could no longer deny my reality. When I reached this place of despair — in which I could no longer deny my reality — I discovered a series of cause, effects and contrasts. I will share some of what I learned through examining those cause, effects and contrasts. This list is not exhaustive and can be expanded.

After you read my contrasts, get a pen and paper and determine what other contrasts you can add to my list. In the process of reading my cause, effects and contrasts and then developing your own list, you may find that you have been berating yourself for no good reason.

Identification as opposed to Comparison

Identification empowers, where as comparison minimizes contribution. Comparison asserts stipulation to inclusion. Comparison mandates that certain criteria be met. Comparison predicates acceptance. Comparison demands compliance. Comparison postulates performance. Comparison shuns that which is different. Identification encourages progress while comparison specifies and expects outcomes. Identification celebrates small successes, whereas comparison, by its nature seeks to invalidate. Identification encourages individuality and motivates self-expression. Identification cultivates creativity.

Individuality is not considered a threat. Status quo is dismissed. Identification empowers and motivates. Identification musters enthusiasm in the face of any discouragement. Identification breaks down the walls of isolation. Alienation is dismissed. Eccentricity is held in esteem. Self-respect, self-esteem, and self-worth no longer need to be qualified. Value and ability is accepted at face value. Identification seeks to reconcile. Identification promotes humility.

As I seek to identify with others I practice love and tolerance. Identification frees my humanity to explore apart from comparison's dictates. Identification encourages individual expression. Identification encourages hope, where as comparison predicates performance. Identification encourages process. Identification promotes self-confidence. Progress is accepted as a function of seeking to accept both others and one self. As I love and accept myself, I am free to create with my being.

My being and worth is not tied to a specific "toy" or outcome. I no longer need to keep up with the Jones. I no longer need to chase after external validation. Identifying with others dispels my need to judge. Identification gives me permission to take risks and to scrape my knees in the process. Identification promotes excellence, not perfection. Identification frees me to stay in the moment and to live life on life's terms. Identification promotes unity.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient – Part 1

November 16, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I am sorry I have not been writing more recently. I have been preoccupied with taking care of some other business for Second Chance to Live. Although I have been distracted, I now believe I have clarity. I want to share a concept with you that I learned through studying Family Systems Theory. The information has enriched my life tremendously. First of all let me say that I do not believe there is any added value in pointing my finger in anyone's direction. As an adult I am responsible to and for my decisions my choices and myself. What I have learned through my recovery process has empowered and continues to empower my ability to pursue my unique creativity.

In families where there is conflict, secrets or unresolved emotional pain different members of a nuclear family are assigned or assume different roles with in the family system. These roles are a way to contain the displaced sadness. Please read my post, [Displaced Sadness](#). One of these roles is the scapegoat or the identified patient. The identified patient with in the family system absorbs the dis-ease within the family. The identified patient becomes the focus and the distraction. The identified patient or the scapegoat invariably has to carry the shame of the dis-ease within the family. Please read my post, [Whose Shame are You Carrying?](#) Shame is different than guilt in that guilt can be resolved through making an amends, whereas shame is a being wound. The individual who experiences shame does not believe that they make mistakes, but instead that they are a mistake.

In the process of carrying the family's shame, the individual is unknowingly shackled to the shame created by the unspoken conflict, secret or unresolved emotional pain. The identified patient is led to believe that they are the reason for the conflict with in the family. Consequently, the identified patient develops a sense of responsibility for the conflict and in the process is led to believe that there is something inherently wrong with them. In response the identified patient may act out the conflict through anti-social behavior or attempt to do more or be more to resolve the conflict. Grandiosity manifests through an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. Because the identified patient or scapegoat believes they are the reason for the family conflict debilitating shame keeps them trapped in the role.

Overcompensation becomes a way of life for the identified patient as they attempt to resolve the conflict.

In my experience, I was placed in the role of an identified patient at a very early age. In the process I embraced an overdeveloped sense of responsibility in my attempt to be more and do more. Instead of being, I became a doing. I believed that if I was more than, then I could avoid my inherent sense of shame for not being enough or doing enough. I also believed that if other people were irritable, restless or discontent I had to somehow make them "OK" so we could be "OK" so that I could be "OK" with myself. In my attempt to anticipate what was expected of me I spent considerable time people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading. None of these strategies proved to be effective, but only reinforced my sense of inadequacy and self-contempt. Nevertheless, I still strove to be perfect in my attempt to resolve the family conflict. Self-loathing distracted and perpetuated my grandiose sense of responsibility.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient – Part 2

November 16, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

As I have mentioned previous posts, I was in a motor vehicle accident in 1967 at the age of 10. I sustained an open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain contusion with brain stem involvement. Denial of my injury became a familiar component within my family because I was able to teach myself (with the encouragement of my Mom) how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. Although I acquired a real disability, the invisible nature of my traumatic brain injury placed my disability in an all too familiar mindset — if we can not see the disability, no disability exists. Nevertheless, the impact of my traumatic brain injury presented me with cognitive / psyche / social deficits and limitations. My previously assigned role as an identified patient in the process took on a new meaning.

In the first part of this series I spoke about displaced sadness, shame and the identified patient as these topics relate to family systems theory. After reading the first part, you may find yourself scratching your head and asking yourself how does this apply to me. I will seek to clarify and tie together those questions today. My experience has taught me that assigned or assumed family roles — such as the scapegoat, hero, mascot or lost child — seek to control and constrain parts of the individual that displease or disrupt the family system. In the process the individual is covertly or overtly expected to discard parts of themselves to maintain the system and contain the conflict, secret or unresolved loss. The roles become substitutes and the actors become reactors. The individuals within the system adopt a false self. The false self evolves out of the individual's drive to comply in order to avoid being criticized, shamed and / or threatened with emotional or physical abandonment.

When the individual seeks to maintain their role or identity to avoid losing love / approval or to prevent being shamed, blamed and criticized they become hyper vigilant. Like a cat on a hot tin roof they seek to avoid conflict in order to maintain the role. In the process of complying the individual's creative energy is redirected to enforce the unspoken code of the family. The individual's creative energy is used to validate their role and to maintain denial. Denial is used to dismiss any need to address or process the conflict, secret or loss. When an individual within the family system has or acquires an invisible disability, denial is used to dismiss the need to address the disability. Consequently the individual with the invisible disability internalizes their struggles. Such internalization sets the individual up to be blamed, shamed and made to be the problem within the family. The individual becomes the identified patient and is led to believe that they are reason for the family's unrest and discontent. In these circumstances the individual then takes on the responsibility for what is out of their control – their invisible disability for which they may be unaware of themselves – the irritability, restlessness and discontent of the family system.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient – Part 3

November 16, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

When the individual leaves the nuclear family system, they take their role with them. The role once again becomes the vehicle that drives them as they interact with other people – beyond the family system. Consequently, life for them becomes a gauntlet as they attempt to fix and compensate for the restlessness, irritability and discontentment found within their relationships. Their overdeveloped sense of responsibility is mirrored through and in other interpersonal relationships. The identified patient or scapegoat consequently becomes hyper vigilant in their relationships as they attempt to repair or fix the restless, irritability and discontent to avoid being criticized, blamed, shamed or abandoned. As mentioned in **part 1** of this series, these individuals become human doings rather than human beings. In the process of doing their creative energy is exploited to manage the unmanageable. As with other roles with in the family system, the identified patient trades their creative energy for a crusade that can not be won. In the event that the identified patient continues in that crusade their essence will slowly be drained and distracted.

In my experience, I had to begin to accept myself as a person with an invisible disability before I could begin to break free from the role as an identified patient. I had to learn how to accept myself as a person who has an invisible disability, rather than a person who is disabled. I had to realize that although I have deficits and limitations, I am not those deficits and limitations. I had to stop living the lie that I am responsible for other people's irritability, restlessness and discontentment. Through identifying and accepting my reality — rather than buying into anyone's denial system for me — I have been able to use my creative energy and learn from my experiences rather than internalizing my deficits and limitations through the eyes of shame. I sincerely believe that I became an identified patient because of a lack of information. No one is to blame and pointing the finger in anyone's direction is of little value. My motivation in sharing the above is not to complain, but to use my experience to illustrate a reality. People with invisible disabilities many times are criticized, belittled, ostracized and shamed for matters that are out of their control.

The sad reality is that as an individual with an invisible or visible disability, you may have people in your life that want to make you the problem — identified patient. I have good news for you. You are not the problem. The problem exists because of a lack of willingness to understand and empower. In the event that you have people in your life, who for whatever reasons want you to live through their denial, I want you to know, you have a choice. You no longer need to buy into their denial system my friend. You are the solution. You are not your disability, your deficits or your limitations. You no longer need to live in the shadows of shame and contempt. You are a beautiful person who has an invisible disability. You are remarkable and resilient. Through accepting yourself as a person with a disability you will find a new vitality. You will learn to embrace yourself and fly like a bird that is set free from the cage that once limited the bird's flight. You will discover your creative energy and you will use your gifts, talents and abilities. You will move in the direction of your dreams and you will fulfill your destiny. Please read my post, [Following your bliss...regardless](#). Be encouraged my friend. More will be revealed!

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Brain Injury and What Might Have Been? Part 1

December 5, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Recently a friend asked a question that many of us who have experienced a brain injury have asked at some point in time, “Have you ever thought about what might have been if you had not experienced a brain injury?”. I thought his question was relevant to many of us asking, “Why?” and “What Might have Been?; that I decided to write this article to share part of my answer to his question.

My experience has shown me that I certainly do not have the big picture AND I do not know what is best for me. Consequently, I come back to the reality – each time that I also find myself in a funk and a black hole (at least feeling as though I am in a black hole) that more will be revealed in time. What now may not make sense, will become more clear to me. The pieces of the puzzle will come together at the right time and in the right order. I wrote an article in 2007 called the **Flight of the Butterfly**, in which I spoke about the development of the butterfly from the pupa to the larvae, to the caterpillar, to the cocoon and then to the butterfly. Each stage of the butterfly’s development of value and is apparent through struggle.

In that article I spoke about the need for the butterfly (in the cocoon) to struggle to strengthen its wings. Apart from struggle, the butterfly would not be able to fly and would fall to the ground to die or be eaten. With struggle, by the butterfly expanding and releasing it’s wings in the cocoon, the butterfly slowly cracks the shell of the cocoon. Through the process expanding /relaxing/ expanding it’s wings the butterfly strengthens it’s wings and gains the ability to fly to fulfill its purpose. The butterfly’s experience speaks to me in that apart from struggle I too could or would not be able to fulfill the purpose for which I was created and destined to live.

I have also come to realize that my brain injury served to be a switch on the railroad of life. Although my life was traveling down a tract of life, the impact of my traumatic brain injury served as a “switch” to lead me down an unintended track of life. A track of life that would reveal new possibilities to me. A track of life that I would have not otherwise traveled. A track that would help me to find my way to create a good life for myself and fulfill my destiny.

In the case of being an individual living with a brain injury, I am faced with a paradox, challenge and a conundrum. I am faced with – as time makes my reality more real – the reality that I can not do anything to change the impact that and ripples of living with a brain injury. The reality that I longer have the ability to fulfill what might have been, if I had not sustained a brain injury. I am faced with the reality that I can stay stuck by staring at the door that has closed or I can begin to look at / for the door that is opening for me. By looking for the new door, I begin to realize that I have choices. Although I am faced with a paradox, challenge and a conundrum I do not have to stay stuck.

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed-door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.” Helen Keller

Brain Injury and What Might Have Been? Part 2

December 5, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

By realizing that I have choices, new possibilities become realistic. By realizing that I have a choice to look for the door that is or is set to open for me, I am given hope. Hope of what might be instead of focusing on what might have been, if only I hadn't sustained a brain injury. Gaining acceptance of my reality is and continues to be – at times – a long journey from the “what if’s “ in life. Embracing the reality that my life has been and continues to be impacted by a brain injury is a struggle at times. But what I need to remember about the experience of the butterfly, is that my wings are and continue to be strengthened. My wings are being strengthened through struggle and the work that I am putting into building on my lot in life.

“Regardless of your lot in life, you can build some thing beautiful on it.” Zig Ziglar

Acceptance is a very HARD pill to swallow, especially when I want what is out of reach. But the good news is that I can build upon that acceptance. I do not have to remain feeling stuck. By accepting what is, I am able to stop fighting against myself. I am able to cease from striving and I am able to let go of outcomes. I am able to experience the possibilities of creating hope in my life. And in the process of creating hope in my life, I am able to stop focusing on **what might have been** – if I had not experienced a brain injury – to **what can be** because I experienced a brain injury. On June 16, 2015 I launched a second website in which I share what has helped me to stop focusing on what might have been, so that I could create a good life.

I would invite and encourage you to visit **Create a Spark of Hope** by clicking on this link: [Create a Spark of Hope](#). Simply scroll down the website to read articles from each of the below categories. As you do and questions come to mind, please send those questions to me. I would love to hear from you. All questions are good questions. All comments are welcomed.

Not Giving Up
Overcoming Blocks
Building Self-Esteem
Achieving Success
Moving Forward
Finding Rest

“I was told over and over again that I would never be successful, that I was not going to be competitive and the technique was simply not going to work. All I could do is shrug my shoulders and say, ‘we’ll just have to see.’” Dick Fosbury (Olympic Gold Medalist. Inventor of the “Fosbury Flop” High Jump Technique)

Surviving a Brain Injury — Will I ever Feel Normal Again? Part 1

March 24, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. Recently, I received a question that I feel led to address in this article. The question is one that many brain injury survivors face. “I am just wondering...will I ever really feel normal again. I still struggle with depression...and not feeling like myself. It has been x amount of years...” When the individual asked that question I thought about a statement that I do not particularly like, but in respect to living with a brain injury, it pertains — “a new normal”.

In my experience and for many years, I had no idea what normal looked like, much less; what a new normal would look like for my life. I spent a lot of time guessing at what was normal. I lived in several denial systems for many years, trying to not be impacted by whatever was impacting my life. Once I came out of the 3 week coma, my external wounds healed — the impact of my open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damaged, severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement — and I learned how to walk, talk, etc and looked normal, the impact of the injury to my brain was never again factored into the difficulties that I experienced as I lived my life.

Instead of understanding and learning to compensate for (but who knew in 1967) the difficulties that I experienced, related to my brain injury, unbeknownst to me, I was blamed, shamed and made a scape goat. In response, I joined in with the chorus; of blaming and shaming myself for not being enough. In the process, I internalized the difficulties that I encountered as there was some thing wrong with me. As I repeatedly internalized my difficulties, I turned my anger inward — at myself. In my experience, I denied my reality, and defended the denial system that could not accept my reality, in an attempt to not feel less than, for the difficulties that I experienced, for not meeting expectations.

In my experience, I denied my reality, and defended the denial (systems) that could not accept my reality. I defended these denial systems in an attempt to not feel less than in an attempt to not be blamed and shamed for not being enough. Not only did I defend the denial, but I strove all the more, until I reached a threshold in time, when the pain of denying my reality, superseded my need to defend and deny my reality. But I am glad that I did not give up, because of the pain. To read more about what led up to my reaching this threshold, you may click on the following link: [Traumatic Brain Injury and Facing Denial](#)).

By facing my denial, I began to heal.

Surviving a Brain Injury — Will I ever Feel Normal Again? Part 2

March 24, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

By facing my and other peoples denial — concerning how my life had and was being impacted by my traumatic brain injury — I started to heal. By confronting the denial that perpetuated my feeling less than, I was able to get into action. I was able to begin to grieve. To grieve what I could not be, learn to accept who I was meant to be and in the process find a way to pursue my dreams and my destiny. In my experience, I found that as I moved through the grieving process, doors were opened for me. One of those doors was hope. Moving through the grieving process helped me to find a way to be, where I was, with what I had. Several years ago I wrote a series to share how I moved through the grieving process. To understand the process of grieving that helped me, you may click on this link: [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process](#).

This process did not happen over night and it took a commitment to facing and working through my denial — despite family and other people who sought to convince me that it was all up in my head. That if I just tried hard enough, then I would not be impacted by the traumatic brain injury that occurred in the motor vehicle accident when I was 10 years old. Although facing my denial, and the denial that was coming from outside of me; was difficult and painful, I am glad that I stuck with the process. What I discovered, through sticking with the process; was my new normal. By grieving what was, I was able to begin to create and build a life in my new normal.

More will be revealed to all of us — in time. You will get through this period of time in your life. I went through black periods in my life too. Passing through these dark periods is a necessary part of the process — facing our denial, experiencing anger, realizing that all the bargaining in the world is not going to change the reality that our lives have and are being impacted by our brain injury and then experiencing the accompanying depression that comes with this reality —prepare you and I to accept our reality. By accepting our reality — that our lives have changed because of our brain injuries — we are able to get into action. We are able to rebuild our lives.

We are able to create our new normal, as individuals living with brain injuries.

You're Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Part 1

February 17, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In the event that you are living with an invisible disability, I am writing this to you. To encourage you, as I need to encourage myself; to not give up. Although there may be people who want or need to deny our realities, we can still excel. We can excel in our realities. Our invisible disabilities do not have to continue to make us crazy. We can own and accept our realities and we can move forward with our lives. We can be aware. We can create a good life for ourselves. We can pursue our dreams and our destinies. We can create hope.

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. In my past three articles, [Denial and Brain Injury Recovery](#), [Brain Injury and Anger](#) and [Brain Injury, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance](#) I shared my experience grieving my reality. A reality that remained hidden to me for many years. A reality that I needed to be able to accept, but discovered I could not do without confronting my denial, processing my anger, trying to change what I did not like and working through my depression and despondency.

In these 3 articles I shared what helped me to realize that I was not crazy. That I was living with an invisible disability. That although I could not change my reality, I no longer had to feel limited because of my invisible disability. That I no longer had to feel stuck, because of my invisible disability. That I could succeed.

“When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed-door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.” Helen Keller

What I began to realize was that I am not equipped to walk through certain doors. What I also began to realize was that not being equipped to walk through certain doors, did not have to make me crazy. What I began to realize was that, although; I am not equipped to walk through certain doors, I am equipped to walk through other doors. With this realization, I experienced a new freedom. A freedom to look for doors that would open for me.

As I shared in my article, Brain Injury, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance; I reached a bottom in my life when I realized that I could not maintain employment. I could not maintain employment in a traditional setting, regardless of how hard I had tried for many years. With this realization came the sadness that no one wanted what I had to offer. With this realization came the challenge to believe or not believe that I was inept. Inept, because the department of vocational rehabilitation had deemed me unemployable and the Social Security Administration had declared me disabled. With this realization came the awareness that I could either believe the department of vocational rehabilitation and the social security administration and do nothing or I could I could seek to follow a different path. A path that would equip me to and lead me to walk through other doors.

You're Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Part 2

February 17, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Awareness: In my experience, over the years I took many interest inventories. These interest inventories helped me to understand my interests, but did not show me how I could best use my gifts, talents and abilities. What I discovered was that these interest inventories did not factor in my invisible disability. In my experience, I would have never thought I would be using my gifts, talents and abilities writing. In college English class, use of verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, semi-colons and the like were hard for me to grasp. I now realize that my difficulties stemmed from my difficulties learning sequences of information. I share with you that I did poorly in English class. so as to encourage to not count out what you did poorly in high school or college. In my experience, I discovered that my ability to communicate through writing developed over years. Your style of creating may take time too.

What I discovered was that although I could not do somethings, I could learn how to do other things very well. So, I spent 6 more years exploring how this could be accomplished. I wrote poems, an autobiography, a book (registered but not published) and then at the encouragement of a friend, a blog [Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 1](#) and [Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 2](#). The reason that I share with you that it took me 6 more years before I found a way, is to encourage you. To encourage you to not give up exploring how to use your gifts, talents and abilities to follow your dreams. Persistence, tenacity, being intentional and maintaining focus were and continue to be part of my process and journey. Part of my process and journey, as I continue to learn how to tweak and develop how to my craft. And I need to stay encouraged, as more will be revealed.

Here are several links to articles that I have written that helped me that may help you my friend: [Answering the Call that Never Came Part 1](#), [Answering the Call that Never Came Part 2](#), [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1](#), [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2](#), [Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets](#) and [From Brain Injury Awareness to Brain Injury Acceptance to Creating Hope in Our Lives](#)

Be encouraged my friend. Doors will open for you, as they will open for me. And as I need to remember, stay committed and keep running your race.

Permission to Be Different Part 1

January 22, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In life there are many forces that want to convince us that unless we conform, we are nothing. Going along to get along can leave us feeling as though we do not have a voice. Having and living with a visible or an invisible disability can further lead us to believe that being different needs to be denied or defended. Being different and unable to change our realities can leave us feeling alone and isolated. Our disabilities can also leave us feeling depressed and dejected. Depressed and dejected, we may find ourselves among other people who are “different”. In response, we may feel as though we have no other options but to accept our lot in life.

In our compliance to not “rock the boat”, we may find that we have become increasingly complacent. In our complacency, we may discover that we have been led to believe that we powerless and helpless to do otherwise. Powerless and helpless to the influence the agendas of a patriarchal system that, by “it’s” behavior; does not have our best interests at heart.

In this conditioning, we may have been led to believe that we are powerless and helpless to impact both our lives and our generation.

But there is good news. We have more power than we may realize. We can bring about change, as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther Jr. did in the civil rights movement. We can speak up [Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery](#).

We can have a loud voice, if we all speak up!

Let me share something that helped me to realize that I had more power than I was being led to believe.

In life, some times we don’t know how to give ourselves the permission to do what we need to do for ourselves. I am thankful that I have had people in my life who helped me to realize that I had the permission to do some thing different. To be some thing different. Something different from what I had readily, but unknowingly; been led to believe about my self. I could decide to separate myself from the crowd and pursue a road less traveled. I no longer had allow myself to be defined by what other people believed or denied. I could follow my own path and be happy about doing so with my life. I could stand out from the crowd. I could be uniquely me. I could follow my dreams by learning to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. I could live life with a new freedom.

Let me give you the permission to be different.

Let me give you the permission to be uniquely you.

Let me give you the permission to follow your dreams.

Let me give you the permission to live your life with a new freedom.

Permission to Be Different Part 2

January 22, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Below are several quotes that inspire, encourage and give me the permission to be Different, to be Uniquely me, to Follow my Dreams and to live my Life with a New Freedom.

“Regardless of your lot in life, you can build something beautiful on it.” Zig Ziglar

“Every man’s life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another.”

Ernest Hemingway

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

John Quincy Adams

“The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm.”

Aldous Huxley

“If you take responsibility for yourself you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams.”

Les Brown

“My mother said to me, ‘If you are a soldier, you will become a general. If you are a monk, you will become the Pope.’ Instead, I was a painter, and became Picasso.”

Pablo Picasso

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”

Helen Keller

“Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they’re not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can’t do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

Steve Jobs

Permission to Be Different Part 3

January 22, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

Theodore Roosevelt

If you move confidently in the direction of your dreams and endeavor to live the life that you have imagined... You will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

Henry David Thoreau

“Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along with which comes the inner voice which says, “This is the real me” and when you have found that attitude, follow it.”

James Trusdale Adams

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Break the rules, not the law, but break the rules. It is impossible to be a maverick or a true original if you're too well-behaved and don't want to break the rules. You have to think outside the box. That's what I believe. After all, what is the point of being on this earth if all you want to do is be liked by everyone and avoid trouble?”

Arnold Schwarzenegger

“Often people ask how I manage to be happy despite having no arms and no legs. The quick answer is that I have a choice. I can be angry about not having limbs, or I can be thankful that I have a purpose. I chose gratitude.”

Nick Vujicic

“Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice.”

Wayne Dyer

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Ghandi

Permission to Be Different Part 4

January 22, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.”

Steve Jobs

“Jump, and you will find out how to unfold your wings as you fall.”

Ray Bradbury

“It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.”

J. K. Rowling

“I’ve come to believe that all my past failure and frustration were actually laying the foundation for the understandings that have created the new level of living I now enjoy.”

Tony Robbins

“Forget about the consequences of failure. Failure is only a temporary change in direction to set you straight for your next success.”

Denis Waitley

“Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.”

Dale Carnegie

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure, it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone. And as we let our own light to shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same, as we are liberated from our own fear. Our presence automatically liberates others. Sir, I just want to say thank you. You saved my life.”

From the movie, Coach Carter, quote attributed to Marianne Williamson

Living with a Brain Injury — "it's all up in your head" — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Part 1

November 9, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome Back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. The reason why I am writing this article is to share what I discovered through my own process and journey of being told, "It's just up in your head and if you just...then you would not be impacted by your brain injury". If you have heard this phrase or some thing similar, I believe you will benefit from reading this article.

Several days ago I wrote an article: [Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't](#). In this article I shared how became aware of the impact that denial was having upon my life and well-being. In my experience, I stayed in denial for many years because I internalized what was denied and defended surrounding the impact of the traumatic brain injury that I experienced when I was 10 years old. As I shared in yesterday's article, once my external wounds healed, the impact of the traumatic brain injury that I experienced when I was 10 years old was no longer considered relevant.

Because I bought into the denial system, by my actions; I engaged in validating and defending the denial system that kept me striving in my attempt to overcompensate for what was not seen or understood. As a result, I found myself engaging in a cycle of justifying, answering, defending and explaining why I could not do more, to be more than what was being denied and what was expected of me. This ongoing cycle left me in loose /loose relationship with denial, myself and others. The loose / loose relationship with denial, myself and others that held me captive to a system that "promised" me freedom, but kept me deceived.

Let me explain:

As time continued, I remember my Dad telling me, "It's just up in your head and if you just... then you would not be affected by any brain injury". So for many years I strove to to get over what was, "up in my head" so that I would not be blamed and criticized for the difficulties that I encountered because of what needed to be denied so that changes did not have to take place in the family. For more insight click: [Traumatic Brain injury and the Identified Patient](#). Because, I bought into this message — that it was my fault for not getting "it" right— I strove all the more to over compensate for what was, "all up in my head".

Because I had no idea how to "get over it" I continued in my attempts to not be impacted by "what was up in my head". This continued until after being employed by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a rehab counselor, in Florida; I was made a client because of the difficulties that I encountered on the job. After becoming a client I underwent another EEG, which confirmed the impact of the open skull fracture that I experienced at 10 years of age. I also underwent a neuro psyche evaluation. The results revealed how the injury to my brain impacted the difficulties I encountered through out my life time.

Living with a Brain Injury — "it's all up in your head" — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Part 2

November 9, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Upon sharing the results of the EEG and the Neuro Psyche with my Dad, my Dad told me that the Neuropsychologist, who did the neuro psyche eval; did not know what he was talking about — that in essence, his findings were wrong. Other family members tended to side with my Dad, which led me to continue to believe that, the difficulties that I encountered were just “up in my head” and if I just...then I could get over “it”. Although I completed the voc rehab process in Florida there was no job placement. For the next 5 years I continued to buy into the notion that “it was up in my head” and if I “just...”then I would get over “it”.

The proverbial “last straw that broke the camel’s back” resulted from a series of events that occurred after being recruited to begin a job in North Carolina as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. These are the events that led to my no longer being able to deny my reality. I was fired from that job 4 months later, had an unsuccessful job search, applied to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, went through that process, was told at the end of that of the evaluation process that I was unemployable, submitting my 3rd application for SSDI, being approved by the Social Security Administration and finding myself of a fixed income.

Although I had a long history of not being able to work, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation deeming me to be unemployable, the Social Security Administration determining that I was disabled and finding myself on a fixed income, I still found myself struggling with the notion that maybe, “it was all up in my head, and that if I just...then I would not be affected by a brain injury.” But then I remembered the emotional and spiritual pain that I experienced over the course of 38 years. For more detailed information, click on this link: [Detailed About Page](#).

With the emotional and spiritual pain, I finally admitted to myself that I was indeed powerless over, “what was in my head”.

With my emotional and spiritual bottom, I realized that I could no longer validate and defend the denial system that held me hostage for many years. I realized that I needed to guard myself, lest I be lulled back into the denial system that kept me in a loose / loose relationship with myself and other people. I realized that I could no longer attempt to fit into the “mold” that denial set for me. I realized that I needed to break free from that “mold”. I realized that I could create my own “mold”. I realized that I could learn how to excel beyond the limitations set forth in “It’s just up in your head... and if you just.... then you would not be...”.

Living with a Brain Injury — "it's all up in your head" — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Part 3

November 9, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do." Helen Keller

"I realized the I needed to guard myself, lest I be lulled back into denial." Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

In August 2007 I wrote a 2 Part article to share what I discovered that keeps me, lest I be lulled back into denial.

I would invite you to read this 2 part article series by clicking on the below links:

[**Having an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying my Reality — Part 1**](#)

[**Having an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying my Reality — Part 2**](#)

I have created a video series of the article and will include links to the presentation below:

[**Living with an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying My Reality — Part 1 Revisited Video Presentation**](#)

[**Living with an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying My Reality — Part 2 Revisited Video Presentation**](#)

Yes I am disabled, but Don't Count Me Out! Part 1

October 22, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

As an individual living with a disability have you ever had the feeling that you were somehow less than or discounted because of your disability. As though you were less of a person. I have my friend. Several days ago, during a brief conversation with some one that I had not seen in about 6 or 7 years, she asked me if I was working.

She asked because she knew that my disability had previously interfered with my ability to work.

When she asked me if I was working, I told her that I was still disabled and receiving assistance. When I said that I was not working, I got the feeling from her that being disabled, receiving assistance and not being able to work in traditional settings made me less of a person. I got a feeling that as a result of being disabled and receiving assistance, I could not really have a place of significance in the world. A feeling of "Yes, but..." coming from her.

A feeling of what I was accomplishing with my life was trite and insignificant. A feeling of minimization and marginalization. A feeling of "that's nice" after sharing with her what I have been doing and am doing through Second Chance to Live.

Although I realized that I did not have to own or take any of those feelings personally, I realized that I needed to remind myself that, **"Yes I am disabled, but Don't Count me Out"**. Although I realized that I did not have to own or take those feelings personally, I realized that I needed to remind myself to run my own race, to stay committed to using my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me and to not lose sight of my mission and vision.

Today's Thought

In the event that you are living with a disability, that interferes with your ability to work; let me encourage you with this my friend – as I need to remember. **"Yes I am disabled, but Don't Count Me Out"**. Although you may have people in your life who leave you feeling minimized and marginalized stay committed to your course. Run your own race. Keep using your gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for you. Don't lose sight of your mission and vision.

Yes I am disabled, but Don't Count Me Out! Part 2

October 22, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Several quote to Inspire

“I was told over and over again that I would never be successful, that I was not going to be competitive and the technique was simply not going to work. All I could do is shrug my shoulders and say, ‘we’ll just have to see.’ Dick Fosbury (Olympic Gold Medalist. Inventer of the “Fosbury Flop” High Jump Technique)

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.” Christopher Reeve

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.” Helen Keller
“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

“Show me someone who has done some thing worthwhile, and I’ll show you some one who has overcome adversity.” Lou Holtz

“Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life’s cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half- possession. Do that which is assigned to you and you can not hope too much, or too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they’re not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can’t do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.” Steve Jobs

“He who joyfully marches in rank and file has already earned my contempt..He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would have been enough.” Albert Einstein

To read more about my process, you may click on this link: [My About Page](#)

Baby Steps Turn into Miles, When put Together

August 21, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Have you ever had anyone discourage you from running your race. I have my friend. I would like to share one of Aesop's Fables — The Tortoise and the Hare — and some reflections with you. The fable illustrates how slow and steady wins the race. As you read Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own Race may you be encouraged to stay committed to your mission and vision.

“Baby steps turn into miles, when put together.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own Race

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 11, 2010

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. Thank you. Over the past several days I have been writing a series **Living with a brain injury and Having Options**. Last night I began thinking about the story of the Tortoise and the Hare. Although I have not finished the series, I feel led to speak to the [fable](#) of **The Tortoise and the Hare**.

In the fable, the tortoise challenges the hare to a race. The story goes on to share how the hare scoffs at the tortoise's challenge. The hare, because his “superior speed” thought he would surely beat the tortoise. In the hare's arrogance — by what he said and did — he minimized, marginalized and discounted the possibility that the tortoise could run and even win the race.

As the fable comes to a close, we find that the tortoise is actually waiting for the hare at the finish line. The line written at the base of the fable denotes the meaning of the story. **Slow and steady wins the race**. Although the hare was much quicker than the tortoise, because the tortoise stayed committed to running his race, the tortoise went on to finish and even win the race.

Today's Thought

In life, you may feel like the tortoise in the fable. Like the tortoise, you may have people in your life who behave like the hare. You — like the tortoise — may find there are hares, who by what they say and do discount you are and your ability to participate in any race. You — like the tortoise — may find that there are hare (s) in your life, who by what they say and do dismiss your ability to run in, much less win your race.

Like the tortoise, you may have hares in your life — who by what they say and do — seek to discourage you from running in your race.

To that I would say. No worries. Be like the tortoise and determine to run your race. Be like the tortoise and be who you are my friend. Be like the tortoise and go about your business. Stay committed to your mission and vision. And as the tortoise found, you will finish and win your race — because you did not pay attention to what the hare (s) said or did — as you ran your race. And as you run your race, remember — **Slow and steady wins the race**.

“Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you only have a extemporaneous half-possession...Do that which is assigned to you and you can not hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Predictions — What May be Limiting Your Recovery Process? Part 1

November 18, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. Thank you for deciding to stop by to read this article. In this article I will share 3 contributing factors that I believe influence recovery predictions for individuals who sustain and are living with traumatic brain injuries. In my experience, these 3 contributing factors, in effect; kept me focused on what I could not change. These 3 contributing factors, in effect; kept me fighting against myself, instead teaching me how to champion the gains that I was and am making as an individual who is living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury.

As your read, watch / listen to this article, may you be encouraged to change your focus from what you can not change to what you can accomplish with in your set of circumstances. As you read, watch / listen to this article, may you be encouraged to stop fighting against yourself and start championing the gains that you make my friend. As you read, watch / listen to this article, may you grasp hope and move forward in your recovery process as an individual who is living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury. As you read, watch / listen to this article, may you be encouraged to run your own race.

My Observations of the 3 Contributing Factors

In my experience, I believe that no 2 traumatic brain injuries are the same, as no 2 individuals are the same. To give predictions concerning the recovery process of each individual is to place limits on each individual's recovery process. I recently wrote 2 articles in which I spoke to 2 contributing factors that I believe, in effect; undermine and limit the recovery process' of traumatic brain injury survivors. These 2 contributing factors — **“struggling to accept myself when other people can't or won't”** and **“its all up in your head”**— imply and assign blame to traumatic brain injury survivors. Blame for some thing that they are powerless over being able to change.

Let me explain. Both messages communicate to brain injury survivors that there is some thing wrong with us, that it is our fault and that is the reason why people do not accept us. The implications of these messages can lead brain injury survivors to believe that “if” they do not recover in specified ways that there is something inherently wrong with them. The implications of these messages also serve to set brain injury survivors up to fail. What I mean by setting up brain injury survivors to fail is that the brain injury survivor can be led to believe that if they do not meet specific “criteria” that demonstrate recovery gains, then they are not “recovering”. Brain injury survivors may subsequently become frustrated and disheartened in their recovery process because of these messages. For many years, I remained frustrated and disheartened.

For many years I found myself frustrated and disheartened because I bought into the 2 message that set me up to believe there was some thing wrong with me, that it was my fault and that I was the reason why people did not accept me. These messages undermined my capacity to recover, because I didn't know any better.

Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Predictions — What May be Limiting Your Recovery Process? Part 2

November 18, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In my recovery process, I discovered a **3rd contributing factor** that can limit and undermine the recovery process of traumatic brain injury survivors. Let me explain. During this past weekend, I spent some time with a friend. During our time together I asked him to show me how to back up a browser profile. He showed me and then wanted me to duplicate what he showed me. As I attempted to recreate what he showed me, he became frustrated with me. I then proceeded to sit down and write down each step of the process of backing up a browser profile, that he explained; through a list of 9 steps. I share the interaction with my friend to illustrate the **3rd contributing factor**. The way that people may be trying to teach you as a traumatic brain injury survivor may not be the way in which you learn, which may be leaving you frustrated and disheartened.

In a later conversation, during our visit; my friend said that he does not know how to teach me. His statement reinforced the significance of the 3rd contributing factor.

Solution

What the experience, with my friend over the weekend; reinforced was that the recovery process of traumatic brain injury survivors may be limited, not because of our inability to learn, but because of the way in which people have been trying to teach us. With this consideration, I would encourage you to challenge the prediction of your recovery, as a traumatic brain injury survivor. **Maybe** you have not been making the recovery gains that you would like as a traumatic brain injury survivor because of the ways that people have expected you to learn. Some thing else that you may like to consider is that **maybe** your learning style has changed after you sustained your traumatic brain injury. Consequently, the recovery predictions that have been given to you may have nothing to do with you, but with the way you now learn.

With the **3rd consideration** you may want to have your learning style tested to determine how you best learn. In September of 2007 I wrote an article to share some information that has benefited me: **Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living**. Here is a link to the article [Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living](#) and a link to the video presentation of the article [Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living Video Presentation](#). I would encourage you to read, watch or listen to the article and then ask your counselor to test your current learning style (s). By understanding and incorporating your true learning style, you may find that recovery process will take on new life. By doing so, you may find yourself surpassing the predictions that were made; concerning your recovery process.

Article and Video Presentation Links

Below are links to the **2 articles** that I spoke to at the beginning of this article, along with links to the video presentations of these article: [Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't](#) and [Living with a Brain Injury — “it's all up in your head” — Lest I be lulled back into Denial](#), as well as the **video presentations** of these 2 articles: [Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't Video Presentation](#) and [Living with a Brain Injury — “it's all up in your head” — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Video Presentation](#)

Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living

September 11, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy you decided to stop by and visit with me. Thank you. Following a brain injury individuals may experience changes in their personality and in their ability to learn. Consequently, both the traumatic brain injury survivor as well as their family and friends may experience an unfamiliar frustration. Frustration may be compounded because the brain-injured person may look “normal” i.e. as though nothing has happened to them. Recently I heard someone say, “She was in a car accident several months ago, but she is fine. She just had a head injury.”

People who have experienced brain-injuries may have changes in their ability to learn, remember and grasp new tasks or remember old ones. Activities of daily living may subsequently become laborious and even daunting for the individual impacted by a brain-injury. Once simple tasks take huge amounts of effort and energy. Executing and practicing once familiar tasks become a struggle. The individual may consequently experience increasing anxiety and fatigue.

Through my experience I have found that there are different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Some people learn best through a combination of these three learning styles, while others learn predominantly through the use of one or two of these styles. Through testing, I discovered that I learn best through two of the three styles. When auditory (listening to instructions) and kinesthetic (show me and let me do) are combined my learning aptitude increases and I am better able to learn the new material.

My learning disability, created by my brain injury necessitates that I learn through repetition and persistence. I have also discovered that my ability to learn tasks is hampered when sequences of information are presented to me. I am unable to remember those sequences even though they are given to me auditorily. My learning as a result comes at a slower pace. Because I have difficulty learning new sequences of information, I need to have a list of the steps in the sequence to follow while I learn the task. I also need to have more time to process new information. Through my ongoing process as a traumatic brain injury survivor I have developed other strategies to enhance my learning process.

Your learning style may have changed following your brain injury my friend. Consequently, the manner in which you learn may have changed; resulting in you being frustrated with life.

My encouragement to you my friend would be to discover how you best learn. Are you a visual learner, an auditory learner or a kinesthetic learner? In the event that you have experienced a traumatic brain injury, your learning style may have changed for you. As a result, you may be attempting to learn in ways that no longer work for you. Consequently you may need to ask your counselor or caseworker to test your learning style so that you can maximize your rehabilitation process. Once you have explored and discovered how you now learn best, you can develop strategies to enhance your recovery process.

Traumatic Brain Injury — Following your bliss...regardless

June 12, 2008 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am glad you decided to stop by and rest. You are always welcome around my table. In life, events, circumstances and disappointments may redirect our experience. In an instant, like a switch on a railroad, life events can set us in the opposite direction of our hopes and dreams. In the process our hopes, dreams, and aspirations may be dashed. We may have lost the use of our limbs or suffered permanent brain damage. Our damaged brain or body may subsequently limit our abilities. As a result, we may be sad, angry or even bitter with life. But that does not have to be the end of the story.

Through my process I have learned a valuable lesson. I am not my traumatic brain injury, my deficits or my limitations.

I have discovered that who I am on the inside matters more than who I am on the outside. My body may be broken and battered by my injuries. I may not be as smart as I used to be before my disability. And I may be discouraged at times, but that does not change my passion. I am not my disability, my limitations or my deficits. My passion resides within the core of my being. My passion provides the mechanism that empowers my gifts, talents and abilities.

Because my passions lie at the core of my being I can learn how to channel my creative energy even thou I may have a disability, deficits or limitations. As I follow, develop and learn to channel my passions, the fruit of my purpose becomes apparent. My passions are channeled through my gifts, talents and abilities. My gifts, talents and abilities echo my passion. My passions subsequently point me in the direction of my destiny and in the process I fulfill God's will for my life one day at a time.

Although I have limitations because I am a traumatic brain injury survivor I am not limited. Although you may have limitations because of your disability, you are not limited. Regardless, of how you or I came to be disabled we do not have to give up on our passions. We can learn how to channel those passions in ways that work for us. We can learn to experience life more abundantly. Our circumstances no longer have to define or dictate who we are in this life. We can learn to use those circumstances to enhance both our lives and the lives of those people in our world.

Be encouraged my friend. Your disability is not meant for your harm. You and I have been given a gift. What we thought was meant for our harm is to be used for our good. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that my traumatic brain injury was a switch on the railroad of my life. Although I could not see how my traumatic brain injury was to be used for my good some 42 years ago, I now know that my traumatic brain injury was preparing me to fulfill my destiny. Through my process I have come to trust the process, because I know that more will be revealed in time.

Be encouraged my friend. Follow your passions. Follow your bliss. Give yourself the time to learn to use your passions in ways that work for you. And please do not give up on yourself or on your process because more will be revealed to you with each new day. You will find your way and you will be empowered.

Only believe. And if you have a hard time believing, believe because I believe. You will learn to use your passions.

Living with Limitations and NOT Giving UP on Ourselves Part 1

August 20, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

At the end of April 2007 I wrote an article that I would like to speak to in this article. The article, Following your bliss...regardless.

In life, events, circumstances and disappointments may redirect our experience. In an instant — like a switch on a railroad — life events can set us in the opposite direction of our hopes and dreams. In the process our hopes, dreams, and aspirations may be dashed. We may have lost limbs or suffered permanent brain damage. Our damaged bodies may subsequently limit our abilities. Consequently, we may be sad, angry or even bitter with life. But that does not have to be the end of the story. I want to share something with you that revolutionized my world. I am more than a survivor.

Please read my article [Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset](#).

Who I am on the inside matters more than who I am on the outside. My body may be broken and battered by an injury. I may not be as smart as I used to be before my disability. And I may be discouraged at times, but that does not change my passion. I need to remember this reality. I am not my disability, my limitations or my deficits. My passion resides within my being and is not dependent upon the shape of my body or my mind. Because my passions lie at the core of my being I can learn how to channel my creative energy even thou I may have a disability, deficits or limitations.

My passion provides the mechanism that empowers my gifts, talents and abilities. As I follow, develop and learn to channel my passions, the fruit of my purpose becomes apparent. My passions are channeled through my gifts, talents and abilities. My gifts, talents and abilities echo my passions. My passions subsequently point me in the direction of my destiny. In the process I experience my purpose. In the process I fulfill God's will for my life — one day at a time. My encouragement to you my friend is that you do not let anyone lead you to believe that your set of circumstances count you out.

Please read my article [Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own Race](#)

Although I have limitations because I sustained a traumatic brain injury I am not limited. Although you may have limitations because of your disability, you are not limited. Regardless, of how you or I came to be disabled we do not have to give up on our passions. We can learn how to channel those passions in ways that work for us. We can learn to experience life more abundantly. We no longer need to buy in to the notion that our circumstance are meant to keep us down. Instead we can learn to use our circumstances to build us up and in the process empower our dreams.

We can learn to use our set of circumstances to enhance both our lives and the lives of individuals who touch our lives.

Living with Limitations and NOT Giving UP on Ourselves Part 2

August 20, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Today's Thought

Be encouraged my friend. You are a gift to your world. Our traumatic brain injury / disability is not meant for our harm. In reality what we have been given is a gift. What we thought was meant for our harm will be used for our good. Your disability will direct your life — like the switch on the railroad of life — in the direction of your destinies. Don't let anyone tell you or lead you to believe that you are limited. You can learn how to use your passions in ways that will enhance both your life and the lives of individuals who come into your world. More will be revealed to you in time.

Follow your passions. Follow your bliss. Take the time to breathe because you will learn how to channel your passions in ways that work for you. Do not give up on yourself or on your journey. You are on the right path. Be encouraged my friend. You will find your way. Only believe. And if you have a hard time believing, believe because I believe. You can trust the process, a loving God and yourself. More will be revealed to us. The pieces of the puzzle will come together at the right time and in the right order. What may be hidden or unclear to us now, will take on new meaning.

DON'T Give up On Yourself.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Flight of the Butterfly

March 2, 2007 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Isn't it great to be alive today! Springtime is in the air. The days are lengthening and the temperature is rising. With spring comes the rebirth of life itself. New generations of creatures will greet the morning sun. I too, long to greet the morning dew and be warmed.

As a young man, I enjoyed this time of the year. I remember that I found delight in watching butterflies as they hovered above the cornstalks. Each kind of butterfly had its own unique beauty. I was in awe of the brilliant colors and patterns that adorned their wings.

As I grew older, I learned about the stages of their development. I found fascination in their evolution. First the egg was laid, that later became a larva to become a caterpillar. As a pupa, the caterpillar attached itself to a leaf, and became a butterfly. This last stage of development amazed me.

Several years later, I learned something wonderful about the metamorphosis of change. Once fully formed, the butterfly emerges from the cocoon. In its efforts to break free from its confines, the butterfly strengthens its wings. And so the lesson is birthed. Apart from this struggle, the butterfly would not be able to strengthen its wings to soar above the treetops.

The flight of the butterfly provides wonderful insight. Life presents challenges that often come disguised as change in the form of struggle. Change provides the motivation to strengthen the wings of our destiny. Change becomes our friend, as we find ourselves being prepared for something far greater than we could possibly imagine.

So rejoice when you encounter change. Your destiny is being formed within you. You are not walking in darkness. The eyes of your understanding are being opened. You are beholding what is being formed in you. You are realizing that the process is meant for your good, not for your harm. Be encouraged my friend.

Trust the process, trust the God of your understanding, and trust yourself. Your destiny is being worked out in you.

Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Part 1

July 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure, it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone. And as we let our own light to shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same, as we are liberated from our own fear. Our presence automatically liberates others. Sir, I just want to say thank you. You saved my life.” From the movie, Coach Carter, quote attributed to Marianne Williamson

Living with a disability — visible or invisible — can leave you and I feeling impotent in many ways.

Impotent in these ways powerless, ineffective, weak, feeble, useless, worthless and futile.

We may have people in our lives who reinforce those feelings of being powerless, ineffective, weak, feeble, useless, worthless and futile. These people may lead you and I to believe that without their “special knowledge” we will not amount too much in life. We may have people in our lives who, although we have achieved far beyond all reasonable expectations despite obstacles and adversity; minimize, marginalize, discount, dismiss who we are and what we have to contribute to what they are seeking to accomplish. We may find that those individuals patronize who we are once we have learned how to overcome obstacles and achieve milestones without their help. Interestingly, those individuals do not herald who we are and what we have overcome, despite how our example could encourage, enhance and positively impact the lives of the people in their charge.

Interestingly, these individuals do not bring us to the table to encourage, enhance and better the lives of the people whom they say they want to help. As a result we may feel as though what we have achieved is insignificant and of little value.

“Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” Steve Jobs

As a result — of the people who in practice minimize, marginalize, dismiss, discount and by their actions patronize who we are as individuals — we may find ourselves shrinking back. We may find ourselves being lulled into believing that our voice and who we are as individuals really does not matter. We may have people in our lives who communicate to us — overtly and covertly — that their opinions, not ours; matter. As a result, we may find ourselves discouraged from listening to our inner voice, our intuition and our heart. As a result, we may have since paid little attention to our inner voice. As a result, we may have traded our judgment for the judgment of other people. As a result, we may have a difficult time trusting ourselves, a loving God and our process. As a result, we may have been led to believe that we are not enough.

Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Part 2

July 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Well, I have good news for you. We can trade the truth for a lie. We are enough. Our inner voice, intuition and heart do matter. Our inner voice, intuition and heart will guide us. We can trust ourselves and how we feel led, over the opinions of other people. We can trust the process, through what is being revealed to us; and we can trust a loving God to lead and guide us each day. We don't have to figure this stuff out on our own. We can ask for help and then follow our inner voice, our heart and our intuition. We can replace our judgment, for the judgment of other people. A loving God will guide us along our journey. And as we are led, we can trust that our light will shine in the darkness. That our presence will liberate other people. And that our being, by being who we are, not who other people may want us to believe; will give people the courage to carry on with their lives.

Through our example, they will in turn let their light to shine in darkness. Through our example, they will in turn liberate others. And through our example their being, by being who they are, not what other people may want them to believe; they will give other people the courage to carry on with their lives.

Some Quotes that Inspire

“Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation, but of the adopted talent of another you only have an extemporaneous half-possession. Do that which is assigned to you and you can not hope too much or dare too much.” Henry David Thoreau

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.” B.C. Forbes

“Regardless of your lot in life, you can build some thing beautiful on it.” Zig Ziglar

Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Part 3

July 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

“Don't judge your day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” Theodore Roosevelt

“If you advance confidently in the direction of your dreams and endeavor to live the life that you have imagined...you will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” Henry David Thoreau

“Absorb what is useful, reject what is useless and add specifically your own.” Bruce Lee

“I will prepare and some day my chance will come.” Abraham Lincoln

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” Zig Ziglar

“Decision is the spark that ignites action. Until a decision is made, nothing happens.” Wilfred A. Peterson

Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

“In my experience I have found that adversity is what has made me successful, because I refused to give up because of adversity.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Defining Success Following a Brain Injury Part 1

April 23, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I have been thinking about some thing that I feel led to share with you. In my experience I have found that there are several traps that can leave you and I feeling like we are failures. We can be led to believe that because of our brain injuries that we are failures, because of what happened to us. Consequently, we may find ourselves focusing on what we can not change (what happened to us), instead of making peace with what happened to us and getting on with our lives. As a result, we may find ourselves feeling trapped by the notion that we are now helpless, hopeless and contained within a model of recovery that fosters secondary gains, secondary dependencies and seeks to control and contain us.

In response, we may find ourselves buying into the notion that we are victims of our circumstances, subservient to a patriarchal system that communicates to us that we are unable to make empowering choices, for ourselves; to express our capabilities to create and enhance our lives as individuals living with brain injuries as well as the lives of individuals within the brain injury community.

Another trap that we may find ourselves falling into is believing that we are failures because our lives are not marked by opulence. That we are failures because our station in life, be it disabled by societies standards; does not give us the means to be able to acquire or possess what society considers to be measures of success. In response, we may have people in our lives who, subsequently; patronize who we are as individuals and by their attitudes minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount who we are as individuals. We may subsequently find ourselves buying into the notion that our lives are of little significance and value, beyond the ability to acquire societal measures of success. We may subsequently find ourselves undercut by notion that we can not be successful.

In the process, we may find ourselves acquiescing to fill the place that a patriarchal society has set for us, to control and contain who we are as individuals living with brain injuries; to meet and fulfill their agendas. In the process, we may find ourselves going along to get along, within those agendas. In the process, we may be led to believe that we are unable to make self-directed and empowering choices to use our creativity to enhance our capabilities and our lives. Such notions may leave us fixated on what we can not do, instead of considering the possibilities of what we can create in ways that will work for us. Such notions can leave us waiting for the approval of a patriarchal system, that in practice; invalidates our voice as individuals living with brain injuries.

Defining Success Following a Brain Injury Part 2

April 23, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The good news is that through being aware of these notions, as individuals living with brain injuries; we can make choices to express our unique capabilities to create in spite of the notions that in practice seek to keep us contained and controlled. The good news is that we no longer need to focus on what we can not accomplish, because of our brain injuries. Instead, we can be aware of our limitations and deficits, stop fighting against ourselves and discover a way (s) in which to use what we have (can do) that will work for us. Through our awareness, we can choose to walk down a different street and in the process try some thing new. Some thing that is unique to our gifts, talents and abilities. In the process, we can begin to define what success means and looks like to us.

“I was told over and over again that I would never be successful, that I was not going to be competitive and the technique was simply not going to work. All I could do is shrug my shoulders and say, ‘we’ll just have to see.” Dick Fosbury (Olympic Gold Medalist. Inventor of the “Fosbury Flop” High Jump Technique)

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.” Helen Keller

“Regardless of your lot in life, you can build some thing beautiful on it.” Zig Ziglar

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” Mother Teresa

“Do what you can, where you are, with what you have.” Theodore Roosevelt

**“Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present with the cumulative force of a whole life’s cultivation; but of the adopted talent you only have an extemporaneous half-possession...Do that which is assigned to you and you can not hope too much or dare too much.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along which comes the inner voice, which says, “This is the real me” and when you have found that attitude, follow it”. James Truslow Adams

“If you advance confidently in the direction of your dreams and endeavor to live the life that you have imagined...You will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” Henry David Thoreau

Defining Success Following a Brain Injury Part 3

April 23, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

There Is a Hole in My Sidewalk Autobiography in Five Short Chapters By Portia Nelson

Chapter One

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter Two

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend that I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter Three

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep whole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit...but,
My eyes are open
I know where I am
It is my fault.
I get out immediately,

Chapter Four

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter Five

I walk down another street.

What's Holding You Back?

July 4, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I attended a support group meeting earlier today. The topic that was selected was spiritual awakenings. The discussion was set and people began to share their experiences with spiritual awakenings. When the time came for me to share, this is what I discovered through my recovery process. First, I discovered that I had transferred my relationship with my Dad on to my relationship with God. The relationship I had with my Dad was one in which my good was rarely good enough, to be enough. I experienced a come close go away relationship with my Dad.

That coupled with being blamed, shamed and made to feel responsible for the criticism that I received for not being good enough. I internalized the message that I was therefore not worth being enough, to be able to count on my Dad. In my desire to please my Dad I strove all the more to gain his approval, which only came when I worked to meet his expectations. I also felt responsible for the reason why my Dad did not give me his approval, because I clearly did not prove my worth and value in his eyes. As an adult I continued to seek the approval of surrogate "dads".

Through my recovery process I discovered that much of my approval seeking and people pleasing was driven by my desire to gain my Dad's approval. What I discovered through my recovery process was that I had transferred my concept of God from my relationship with my Dad. I am not blaming my Dad, for he did the best he knew how to do; probably because of the example that his Dad set with him. Although I am not, I imagine being a Dad is very difficult. What I discovered through my recovery process was that I needed to forgive my Dad, to make peace with God.

What I discovered, through my recovery process; changed the way in which I see my Dad (although he has passed away) and changed the way that I see God. What I discovered forever changed my relationship with God. In October 2014 I wrote **Moving from Fear to Faith — Making Peace with God** to share in detail what I learned through my recovery process that forever changed my relationship with God. In the event that you find yourself struggling in your relationship with God, I would invite you to read my article. Here is a link to my article: [Moving from Fear to Faith — Making Peace with God](#). My experience may benefit you.

How I Am Able to Stop Beating Up on Myself

May 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. Thank you for your time. Last night while I was training at the Y an event occurred that became a teaching moment for me. This morning, during my meditation; I found myself examining that teaching moment, as well as other teaching moments that I have experienced during the past several weeks. In these teaching moments I found myself chiding and being critical of myself for how I had responded and handled what occurred, which led to each of these teaching moments.

As I meditated, I had a renewed realization concerning teaching moments; which gave me hope. My renewed realization helped me to remember that instead of berating myself for these teaching moments, I could process each teaching moment through writing in a journal.

Through processing each teaching moment, I realized that I could choose to be empowered, by each teaching moment; instead of allowing myself to feel defeated because of what I could have done differently. Through processing each teaching moment, instead of continuing to be critical of myself; I began to experience hope.

Through processing each teaching moment, I was able to stop berating myself for not being perfect. Through processing each teaching moment, I realized that I could make a choice to do things differently in the future. Through processing each teaching moment, I realized that I could stop beating up on myself and learn from each teaching moment.

Today's Thought

In the event that you have “teaching moments” that leave you berating yourself, be encouraged my friend. We don't have to stay stuck there, beating up on ourselves. We don't have to continue to be critical of ourselves, for not being perfect. We can take out a piece of paper, pen or pencil and examine each teaching moment. By examining each teaching moment we can decide to do some thing different in the future.

Through realizing that we can do some thing different, in the future; we can experience hope. Through realizing that we can do some thing different, in the future; we can be empowered by each teaching moment. Through processing each teaching moment, we can slowly begin to live our lives in a different way.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Once we start walking before long we will be able to look back and see how far we have come, because we did not give up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Creating Hope after Experiencing a Brain Injury

July 12, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In my experience I have found that there is a path that leads to a freedom. A freedom to be myself, to pursue my dream and to find fulfillment. The freedom that matures and is experienced as I grow in awareness, acceptance and action. When I realize that I am responsible for my life and well-being. What I have discovered through my experience is that I need to do the work to have serenity in my life.

Serenity is not going to show up with out my being an active participant in my life, instead of being a reactor to what happens in my life.

In my experience, I have found that I can not “stand idle” and experience hope in my life. I need to examine what may be interfering with what is leading me to be restless, irritable and discontent. On June 16, I launched a new web site to share what I discovered, in a methodical way; that helps me to experience serenity in my life. I would encourage you to visit and spend time reading articles from the Site Map of my new website.

“We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.” Jesse Owens

Below are links to my current 16 articles that I have written and published on [Create a Spark of Hope](#). The information presented in these articles have helped me to create hope in my life.

[Introducing Create a Spark of Hope Website](#)

[Creating a Healthy Relationship with Hope](#)

[Opening the Door to Hope](#)

[Moving through the Door of Hope](#)

[Challenges to Overcome — Facing and Confronting Denial](#)

[Betrayal — A Way Out](#)

[Has Drama Replaced Living for You?](#)

[Helping Children Create Hope in Their Lives](#)

[Creating Hope Beyond Generational Messages](#)

[Understanding and Overcoming Societal Bullying](#)

[Owning Our Reality — No Longer a Victim](#)

[How to Keep From Falling Back into a Victim Role](#)

[So How to Get Started — Training Camps and Winning in Life](#)

[How to Be Successful in a Training Camp Part 1](#)

[How to Be Successful in a Training Camp Part 2](#)

[Creating Hope One Ingredient at a Time](#)

[Celebrating Hope in Each Success](#)

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 1 a

January 31, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Introduction

I am writing this article series to encourage you to not give up, regardless of what life may look like to you now. The pieces of your circumstances, that may make little sense to you now; will become clear to you. What was previously thought to be meant for your harm, will turn out for your good. I share this from my experience, as what I previously thought was meant for my harm, turned out for my good. What I could not value at the time, became my preparation. What you may not be able to value now, is preparing you.

Preparing to empower your path and give you hope. Preparing you to realize your dreams and your destinies. Preparing you to realize that you no longer have to limit yourself, because of your limitations. Preparing you to follow your dreams and your destiny. Preparing to guide and direct your path. Preparing you to take advantage of your power to choose. Preparing you to understand and be yourself.

I have come to understand life as a jigsaw puzzle. As each puzzle piece is put into place, at the right time and in the right order; the puzzle takes form. Individually puzzle pieces make little sense, but together...

Before I get started with this article series I want to share some thing that I believe is very important. Pointing fingers in anyone's direction does no one any good. Pointing fingers only serves to transfer blame for what only we can change — ourselves. Pointing fingers only serves to keep the individual stuck and focused on the problem. Blaming perpetuates a feeling of helplessness. Pointing fingers serves to prolong a victim mindset. Blaming does nothing to empower or change the situation. Blaming does nothing to encourage not giving up. Blaming does not offer or give hope.

What I am about to share through this article series is part of my story. What I am going to share in this series is about me, not about anyone else. All parties involved, including myself; did the best job they knew had to do at the time. The best job they knew how to do with the information that was available to them at the time. I consider myself very fortunate to have gained the information that helped me to process and make peace with myself. Make peace with myself and in the process, make peace with family and friends. By doing so, I have learned how to trust the process, God and myself.

Growing up Pieces

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. The first puzzle piece that I would like to share with you involves my growing up pieces. I was born in May of 1957 in New Jersey. I grew up in the country in a small town of 10,000 residents. I had 2 step sisters, one 18 years older and the other 9 years older than myself. Five years after I was born, my brother was born. I do not remember a lot from my early years as a pup, beyond our family moving from one small town to another small town several miles away. The move happened when I was 7 or 8 years years of age. Instead of living in the smaller house, our new home was larger and sat on an acre of land with plenty of trees and area to play.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 1 b

January 31, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The yard, with its many trees offered both a wonderland and infinite number of leaves and falling sticks. Leaves to be raked and sticks to be picked up before the grass could be mowed and the leaves cut up by the mower. Looking back I now realize that my Dad was a perfectionist, who had high expectations for both himself, for me and for everyone. Although I tried hard to do a good job, many times I was told by my Dad that I did things in a “half-assed” way. His scolding and criticism motivated me all the more to attempt to do more to be more to be enough. His criticism and chiding, coupled with being emotionally distant, instilled anxiety in me. His criticism, withholding and unpredictability left me feeling emotionally abandoned.

No doubt that was the way that his Dad treated him when he was growing up too. In response, that is the way he learned to treat his son.

In addition to being told that I did things in a “half-assed” way, I found myself confused and anxious. My confusion and anxiety stemmed from the double messages that I received in the home. Some times I would “do” things right and other times I would be told that I did things wrong. When I did things “wrong”, or did not meet my Dad’s expectations he would criticize and berate me. The criticism and berating was accompanied with a “go-away” message. When I did things “right”, I found myself being given a “come-close” message. The “go-away / come close” messages left me confused and bewildered, with a fear of abandonment. In my fear of abandonment, I strove all the more make everything and everyone “**OK**” with me.

“OK”, so that I would not feel shamed and criticized for being me. “OK”, so that I could stop feeling like I was a mistake. “OK”, so that I would stop feeling unlovable. “OK”, so that I could stop feeling abandoned. “OK”, before I could hope to have a relationship with myself. What I learned through this conditioning was that I needed to gain my Dad’s approval and validation before I could feel secure as his son. What I learned from my interactions with my Dad was that I needed to be “perfect” to please him, to be approved by him, before I could hope to be OK with myself. What I learned from these interactions with my Dad, was that I needed to gain the approval from all of my interactions with people, before I could be OK with myself.

Finding Craig — Growing Up, continued... Part 2

January 31, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

As I shared in **Part 1** of this series, I spent quite a bit of time attempting to make other people **OK** with me by doing more, to be more in my attempt to be enough. I did so through attempting to live up to other people's expectations of me. I also attempted to do so through taking care of people emotionally so that they would not blame or shame me. I strove to do so all the more to avoid being criticized by literally everyone in my life. In my defense for not getting it "right" I thought I needed to constantly apologize. I did so by saying, "I am sorry". I said that I was sorry so many times that my 9th grade English teacher gave me an assignment to write, "I am sorry" 500 times. And so, at home; I wrote, "I am sorry" 500 times. I took the list of, "I am sorry", into to class the next day. I do not know what he did with the list, but the assignment did little to change my belief that I needed to apologize for not being enough.

The assignment did little to change anything, as I continued to believe that I deserved to be shamed, blamed and criticized. Shame, blamed and criticized for not living up to the "expectations". The expectation to make everyone and everything OK. At least, as I shared in Part 1 of this article; so that I could hope to feel safe and secure with myself.

Note: At the age of 10 I was in an automobile accident with my family. The accident resulted in my sustaining an open skull fracture, a severe brain injury with right frontal lobe damage and a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. I also fractured my left femur (thigh bone) on my Dad's bucket seat as I was thrown forward, upon impact; to the windshield. I remained in a coma for 3 weeks and in traction for 6-7 weeks before being placed in a full body (Spica) cast. After my external wounds healed and I was able to begin walking, talking, reading, writing and speaking in complete sentences the impact or my traumatic brain injury remained invisible. Because the impact was no longer considered, I joined in with the chorus of people who criticized me for not meeting expectations. What I did not know, at the time and for many years; was that I was I had an invisible disability. An invisible disability that would make reading people and situations more difficult. An invisible disability that would make me vulnerable.

The ongoing conditioning led me to believe that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake. Nevertheless, I strove all the more to gain the approval of virtually every one. I did so through people pleasing, approval seeking and attempting to mind-read. None of these strategies worked to satisfy and appease, but only reinforced my sense of inadequacy. My sense of inadequacy, coupled with my low self-esteem and poor self-worth left me believing that I deserved to be abused and bullied. Abused and bullied by the people who shamed, blamed and criticized me for not meeting expectations. In response I acquired an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. In my overdeveloped sense of responsibility, I set out each day in an attempt to meet everyone's expectations. In the process of attempting to meet everyone's expectations, I set unrealistic expectations for myself.

Although being able to meet "everyone's" expectations was clearly unrealistic, at the time; I believed that my very life depended upon my ability to meet those expectations. The belief that my life depended upon meeting expectations set me up to be bullied and abused directly and indirectly by other people. The belief also set me up to bullied and abused by myself. Bullied and abused by myself as I strove to meet, but found myself unable to meet many expectations. Bullied and abused, as I criticized and berated myself for not being able to do more, to do enough, to be enough.

But I am glad that I did not give up. More would be revealed to me in time.

Finding Craig — Learning to Walk Again Part 3

February 3, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Today I would like to share some thing that I have not in the nearly 9 years since I created Second Chance to Live. In previous articles I have shared that I taught myself how to walk after the car accident in which I fractured my skull and my left femur. What I did not share was the events that led up to my being able to walk again. So here are the events my friend. After completing traction for my fractured femur to fuse back together, the medical staff put me in a full body or Spica cast. The cast started at my neck and went all the way do to my left foot. On my right side of my body the cast went down below my right knee.

So I was essentially encased in the cast with openings for elimination purposes. I remained encased in the cast for approximately 5 months from mid September 1967 to January – February 1968. I remember after being in the cast for several weeks that the cast was rubbing and causing skin breakdown below my right knee. I remember that the decision was made to trim the cast back on my right side to eliminate the rubbing and skin irritation. I remember that after the cast was trimmed that I was transported home. I remained at home in the Spica cast for the next 5 months until X-rays proved that my left femur had healed enough for the cast to be removed. I remember the skin itching under the cast during those 5 months.

The result of my left leg and foot being encased in the cast prevented my left leg not growing in length as my right leg was during those 5 months. As a consequence, my left leg is shorter than my right leg. I remember that after the cast was removed from my body that I being taken to several physical therapy appointments. During these appointments I told the physical therapist that it hurt to walk. Apparently, from what the Dr.'s told my Mom; that they could not fix my femur properly because of my brain injury. As a result, my femur did not heal properly through my time in traction and in the Spica cast.

Apparently that was the reason I experienced pain trying to walk. My Mom took the seat out of a baby butler (see above) for me to practice walking. After telling my Mom many times that it hurt to stand and walk, she told me that I could either struggle to walk or drag myself around with out the use of my legs. She told me that out of being at her wit's end in trying to help me. She told me that it was my choice and mine alone. Thank you for Mom for telling me that at the time. My Mom told me recently that a short time after she told me that it was my choice, I began to struggle through the pain to walk. In late January or early February 1968 I start to learn how to walk again. I would pull myself up in the baby butler and put one foot in front of the other. Learning to walk again took time for various reasons.

Being encased in the Spica cast for 5-6 months had caused some muscle atrophy in my legs, so I needed to strengthen my legs. Because my left leg did not grow longer in the cast, my left leg was shorter than my right leg. Being that my left leg was shorter than my right leg, I had to work on my balance too. My Mom told me that I walked with a limp for a long time. With time my legs strengthened and my balance improved. With time I was able to begin to walk with less of a limp. With time I was able to jog without pain in my left leg where my femur had fractured. With time I was able to start to run. With time I was able to begin participating in sports in high school wrestling and track. I tried out for football, but thank God I was not selected to play on the team. Little did I know that if I had been selected to play on the team that things could have been compounded by head hits. Looking back I see how God was protecting me from further brain injury.

Finding Craig — My Academic Path Part 4 a

February 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. In today's article I would like to share more about my process and journey with you. My motivation in sharing the below detail is to encourage you to not give up on your course. Run your race.

Something that I have learned is that life is like a jigsaw puzzle. Individually the pieces seem to make little sense, but collectively form a vivid picture. Some thing else that I have learned, is that life many times can only be understood one puzzle piece at a time. Each puzzle piece reveals itself in hindsight after I have learned the lesson. Some times the meaning of each puzzle pieces has made little sense to me until many years after the lesson has been birthed. In this article I am going to share the puzzle pieces that became apparent to me through my pursuit and engagement in my academic studies. I am going to share my experiences with you — in detail — to encourage you to not give up on your learning process.

Let the pieces of your learning process birth new dreams. Let your journey in learning give you the tools to pursue your gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for you. Let them manifest in time. Living with an invisible disability, from a brain injury or some other condition; does not have to limit us. Only we can limit us, if we buy into our or some one esle's belief that we can't.

In my experience, I have come to realize that my life can better be understood as I examine inventories. Inventories from different time periods in my life and the activities that I engaged in during those time periods. By doing so I am able to better see and understand the different puzzle pieces have connected during my journey. In my experience, as I have examined time periods and activities; what previously made little sense have context. In previous parts of this inventory I have shared about my [growing up years](#), what happened [when I was 10](#) and learning to [walk again](#). The context and the time period of my life that I would like to share today is the educational pieces of my journey. So let me begin in context my living with an invisible disability. Following the accident and once I was transferred home from the hospital, my 5th grade teacher came to the house to tutor me.

I was fortunate to have not missed a grade because of the car accident that occurred on August 11, 1967. After being tutored at home during my 5th grade I was mainstreamed back into elementary school. I resumed attending classes in the 6th grade.

After completing the 6th grade, I entered junior high and then into the 9th grade to begin high school. I was considered a nerd during high school, but I really did not fit in any social groups. I had no idea how my traumatic brain injury was impacting my interactions, other than I was picked on and bullied. In the 8th grade, my parents took me to a judo school where I took classes for several months. In 10th grade I stood up to a bully and prevailed. As a result, no one continued to bully me. Nevertheless, I was teased and made fun of through out high school. I had one friend, who was also a nerd and shunned by the “freaks” and the “jocks”. These were the other 3 social groups that people identified with during high school, as portrayed by the classic movie, **The Breakfast Club**. I did not have a girlfriend or a “steady” to go with during high school, as all girls that may have been interested in me were discouraged.

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February 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Discouraged by peer pressure from dating me. Looking back on my non-existent dating life during high school, I see how God was doing for me what I could not do for myself. I now believe that I was being protected from what could and would have altered my path, process and journey in my life.

So, in my senior year of high school I started applying to colleges and universities. Because I had enjoyed spending time in nature and the outdoors, my Dad suggested that Geology would be a good major for me. I had no previous experience rocks or an interest with related topics, but my Dad thought that would be a good major for me. So I applied to the University of Arizona and selected geology as my major. The admissions depart received my application and sent me a letter telling me that I had been accepted to begin my studies at the University of Arizona. So after graduating with my senior class in August of 1975 I flew out to Arizona with my Mom and Dad to begin my university studies. After getting me settled in the dorm and on campus, my parents flew back home and I went through the process of registering for and then attending prerequisite classes in liberal studies.

One of these classes was Algebra, which I took and failed 3 times. Was not for trying, because I spent hours on hours during the semester, in summer school and working with a tutor, to no avail. In my sophomore year I took an introductory class in mineralogy, which also did not work out well for me. The writing on the wall was becoming more obvious to me. Math was not my forte and neither was my ability to comprehend the spatial relationships and physical properties of different kinds of minerals. With my awareness, I decided to change my major to physical education, being that I had an interest in physical fitness. So the second semester of my sophomore year I transferred majors. After my sophomore year at U of A, I made the decision to transfer to and begin taking classes at junior college near Tucson. After several semesters, I then decided to apply for the LPN program.

The LPN (licensed practical nursing) program, which I found required applying to and completing the nursing assistant program. After completing the nursing assistant program with high grades I found myself being placed on a list of people waiting to begin the LPN program. During this waiting period I took classes to become an emergency medical technician. I passed the class, but failed the practical test the 1st time. I reapplied, took the class over and passed the practical test on the 2nd attempt. I was then accepted into the LPN program. The LPN program involved taking classes and completing 6 practical rotations. Practical rotations working in different hospital settings. As with the nursing assistant program I did well in my class work during the LPN program, however unlike the nursing assistant program I ran into difficulties during several of my hospital rotations.

The result was my being asked to withdraw from the LPN. My being asked to leave the program was another disappointment, as I worked hard to succeed. Several months after being asked to leave the LPN program I traveled from Tucson, Arizona with members of a church to visit Rhema Bible college in Tulsa, Oklahoma. During my visit to Tulsa, OK I was able to visit Oral Roberts University. Although I had packed my bags to stay and live there in Tulsa, I decided to travel back to Tucson with the group. Several weeks later I made the decision to leave Tucson via a Greyhound Bus to stay with my parents and brother in El Paso, Texas until I decided whether to attend Rhema Bible College or Oral Roberts University. After arriving in El Paso and speaking with my parents, I decided to apply to attend ORU. I applied and was accepted to begin classes in August 1982.

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I declared my major in Theology / English Bible with a minor in Physical Education. Because I had completed required work and per-requisites at the University of Arizona and the junior college, many hours of course work transferred to ORU. As a result I was able to focus on completing course work in my declared major and minor. During my time at the university I “ran” into some difficulties which resulted in my parents being asked to travel from El Paso to Tulsa to meet with the dean of the program of Theology. I am not sure what was the result of this meeting, but I graduated in May of 1985. After graduation, I applied to and was accepted to begin attending Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS) in Wilmore, Kentucky the next fall. I later found out from one of my professors that my application had been approved, that I had been placed on probation, because of a letter from ORU.

Apparently, one of my professors at ORU, that I had asked for a letter of endorsement to accompany my application to ATS, had shared some concerns. Concerns that I knew nothing about as the professor at ORU had not shared them with me. Several months before I was to begin taking classes at ATS, I fell down a flight of stairs and broke my left foot. For the next month or so I stayed with my parents and then flew to Lexington, Kentucky to be picked up and taken to ATS. I began attending classes while on crutches. Classes seemed to go well, however had some difficulties with classmates. My difficulties were compounded completing what was called a J-term (during the month of January between semesters) when I worked as a student chaplain at a Baptist Hospital. The hospital chaplain gave me a bad evaluation, which resulted in my not passing the J-term class.

The result of not passing the J-term resulted in being asked to meet with the dean of students at Asbury Theological Seminary. The dean of students recommended and required me to attend counseling during the spring semester. At the end of the spring semester the dean asked me to meet with him. He told me that a committee would meet at the end of the summer and as part of that meeting they would decide whether I would be allowed to continue studying at the Seminary. So I waited to hear from him. Later that summer, while staying with my parents I received a call from the dean, who told me that I would not be able to continue taking classes at the seminary until I completed a year of counseling. I was also told that I needed to come to remove my belongings from the basement of the dorm in which I had been residing. So, I traveled from Tyler, Texas back to ATS.

The dean of students during the conversation telling me I was not welcome back told me that I could stay at the nearby grounds where camp meetings were held for 3 weeks. The camp grounds, which the seminary owned; and where revivals and summer camps were held by the Methodist churches.

During the 3 weeks I was allotted to stay at the campgrounds I found a place to move into and made the transition. During the next several months I worked in a car dealership and then began working in the cemetery business. Through a series of events, I applied to and was accepted to begin taking classes at the University of Kentucky in the graduate program of rehabilitation counseling. Class work went well and I got good grades, however again had difficulties in practical setting. During my practicum at a State Hospital I had difficulties writing plans and 6 weeks into the 7 week practicum the practicum supervisor told the dean of the graduate program. The result was that I met with the dean and was removed from the practicum. During the meeting he dean of the graduate program in rehabilitation program told me that he would give me another chance.

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He told me that if I did not pass the 2nd practicum that I would be terminated from the graduate program. Thankfully the supervisor of the 2nd practicum worked with me and I had a successful outcome. With this outcome, I was allowed to continue in the graduate program. And all seemed to be going well until the end of my internship. While attending classes in the graduate program at the University of Kentucky I worked on the weekends as a mental health tech at a 28 day residential program. A 28 day residential program for individuals with substance abuse and mental health challenges. I worked primarily on the weekends and was able to complete my internship working at the chemical dependency center I worked 16 hours on the weekend and made up the balance of the 40 hour a week internship requirement during the week.

During the internship I had some difficulties which resulted in receiving a poor evaluation for my internship from the manager of the 28 day residential program. As a result, the dean of the graduate program told me that he did not know if he would allow me to graduate. That I would have to wait until an hour before graduation. So I dressed for graduation and showed up at the pre-graduation coffee reception. I showed up not knowing whether or not the dean would allow me to graduate. After arriving at the coffee, I waited for the dean to arrive to hear his decision. Thankfully he said he would allow me to graduate with the other students and receive my masters degree in rehabilitation counseling. When I heard that he was going to allow me to graduate, I called my Mom. During our conversation she told me the results of the test that were completed when I was 11 years of age.

The results from the 2 EEG's and the battery of cognitive and psycho / social testing that I had been given to determine the extent of damage done to my brain. Damage done to my brain from the open skull fracture, the right frontal lobe damage and severe brain bruise. The results from the tests that showed I was not expected to succeed academically beyond high school. She told me that "you proved them wrong". And she was right.

Many Gifts

Not understanding the impact of my invisible disability. Not understanding that it was not my fault, nor anyone else's fault. Not my or anyone else's fault for the difficulties that I experienced along the way. I just did not know and other people had no idea. This lack of knowing, once my external wounds healed and I looked normal. The lack of understanding how my life would be impacted by my open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damage and severe brain bruise. The lack of knowing how to best navigate through life with an invisible disability. The lack of realizing how much of a gift I had been given. The realization of the gift that I had been given to be able to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. The gift to be able to encourage people living with invisible disabilities to not give up on their process, their journeys, a loving God or themselves.

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February 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The gift to be able to share what I learned in knowing how to be aware and navigate through life while living with an invisible disability. The gift to be able to encourage, motivate and empower people living with invisible disabilities to realize that they could dream again. The gift to be able to realize that I could actively participate in the creation of hope in my life, by staying committed to my course. By continuing to run my race. The gift that I could encourage people living with brain injuries to realize they could also participate in the creation of hope in their lives. The gift to realize that more would be revealed in time. The gift to be able to not give up on hopes or dreams. The gift to be able to move forward with our lives. The gift to realize that we could enhance our lives, by growing in acceptance. The gift to realize that we can fulfill our destinies, by getting into action. The gift to realize that I could make other choices, than stay stuck.

Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness Part 5 a

February 26, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

My motivation in writing this series is to share my experience living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability. My hope is that you will not give up on your process of living with a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability, as more will be revealed to you in time. That has been my experience living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability during the past 48 and a half years. More has been revealed to me and I have seen how the dots of my experience have connected for me. May you also be encouraged to stick with your process.

In **Part 1** I spoke about my growing up experience. In **Part 2** I spoke about core beliefs that I held about myself for many years. In **Part 3** I spoke about how I re-learned how to walk. In **Part 4** I spoke about my process of trying to find where I “fit” in life. In **Part 5**; I am going to share what led up to my being able to take the steps to accept what I discovered I was powerless to change. The impact of living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

As I shared in **Part 4** of this series, my **first awareness** was almost like an after thought. Like an addendum to an article, that seemed to have little more than an acknowledgment of a piece of information. So when my Mom told me the results of the 2 EEG’s and the other testing done in 1968 there were no “light bulbs” of awareness or acceptance. No, “now I understand what had been impacting my life for all those years.” Just an acknowledgment that, as she said to me; I had proved them wrong. By being able to succeed beyond high school academically, despite the test results.

As an after thought, I continued to march on with my life as though this new information had little impact or made little difference, one way or the other. Nevertheless, I continued to have difficulties socially and vocationally. Shortly before graduation, from my masters program in rehabilitation; I received word that I had passed the exam to earn my credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor. Having passed the exam to earn my national credentials, I was hired by an insurance company. The position, in worker’s compensation; resulted in my being fired approximately 10 months later.

As shared in [Part 4](#) of this series, there were ongoing signs that indicated that “something was up”. Nevertheless, because I had internalized these difficulties with my inability to get things right; I strove all the more. In the process, I continued to berate myself for not being able to get things right.

After being fired from the insurance company, I investigated working with the department of vocational rehabilitation there in Kentucky. Through my research, I discovered that I could get a job as a rehabilitation counselor with the state, but would be making in the high \$13,000 a year range. With this information, I looked for other jobs and then decided to pack up my Honda and move to Florida. My reasoning was that Florida would be a fertile location, in which my national credentials would be highly respected and sought after in the state. What I discovered, after moving; was the opposite.

When I arrived in Florida I attended a church. I met a woman who was looking for a counselor to work in her outpatient chemical dependency office. After a short interview, she hired me. So on my first work day, after meeting with a new client and his family; and suggesting the whole family needed help I found myself fired. Apparently the family called their insurance company, who called and told my boss that the family would not be returning to the office, if I was still working in the office. So the woman who had hired me, fired me 4 hours in my first day on the job. I was amazed by the events.

Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness Part 5 b

February 26, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Being asked, “can I see you in my office” by employers to be told I was fired I had experienced many times, but this was a first. What made the above experience different was that I had never been fired in 4 hours on my first day on the job, for doing my job.

Following this new experience, I felt a bit “sucker punched”. In the next several weeks I attempted to find a job with another insurance company. What I found was that the state of Florida was using CRRN — Certified Rehabilitation Registered Nurses — to do the job of CRC — Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Although it was good for insurance companies for RN’s to handle both the return to maximum medical improve and the return to work status of workers, the decision negated the need for CRC’s. Consequently, obtaining such employment as a CRC was slim to none, but more none.

Realizing that I would not be able to get on with an insurance company, I decided to apply to work with the department of vocational rehabilitation there in St. Petersburg, Florida. After applying I was hired to work as a rehabilitation counselor. After having some difficulties on the job, I shared with my supervisor that I had experienced a traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. She shared the information with the manager and I was made a client, while being a counselor; of the department of vocational rehabilitation. Several months later I was terminated, but remained a client.

During my extended probation as a counselor, before being terminated; I underwent an EEG and a Neuro Psyche evaluation. The results of the EEG and the Neuro Psyche Evaluation confirmed the results of the EEG’s and Neuro Psyche evaluation done in 1968. The results showed there was damage done to my brain and that I had indeed succeeded far beyond all reasonable expectations. Upon reading the report and then sharing the results of the tests with my Dad and family, my dad told me, “The Dr. did not know what he was talking about in the report”. The results baffled me too given that...

how could some one obtain an undergraduate degree (be it is 10 years) and a graduate degree (be it in 3 1/2 years) be impacted by a brain injury. How could some one who obtained an undergraduate and graduate degree not be able to overcome a brain injury.

Nevertheless, I continued on with the recommendations and suggestions made by the department of vocational rehabilitation in Florida. I continued to be a client of DVR, until a job placement did not work out and I was terminated as a client. After being terminated from the program, I worked in several non professional and professional jobs from which I was terminated. I continued to remain in denial, believing that if I just tried harder that my life would not be impacted by what the test results had shown through the EEG’s and Neuro Psyche Exam had shown in 1968 and in 1992-1993.

I remember being angry at being identified as traumatic brain injury survivor. I remember not wanting to be identified with other brain injury survivors. But my anger did not change the reality that my life was being impeded by the impact of a brain injury.

After being terminated from the DVR program I applied for SSDI and was denied. A year later I re-applied for SSDI with the Social Security Administration and I was again denied because I was making more than \$500 a month. After my unemployment insurance ran out, I constructed a resume and a cover letter and sent those to companies in North Carolina. I did so because I heard that North Carolina was interested in hiring individuals possessing national credentials, which I had maintained through continuing education units while working with the DVR in Florida.

Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness Part 5 c

February 26, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

After sending my resume and cover letter to 14 companies in North Carolina, I heard back from an insurance company. The insurance company hired me so I loaded up my Honda Civic and relocated from St. Petersburg, FL to Charlotte, NC in June 1996.

I began the job with the insurance company in July 1996 and worked hard to do well and fulfill the requirements of the job. Nevertheless, after 4 months my supervisor asked to meet with me and he told that they would no longer need my services. Now in North Carolina and after being fired, once again; I attempted to find employment in professional and non professional jobs. Being unsuccessful, I decided to begin receiving services through the department of vocational rehabilitation here in North Carolina. I also decided to submit my 3rd application with the SSA administration.

After applying for services with the department of vocational rehabilitation, my counselor told me that I needed to get a part-time job to receive rent assistance. I got a job at a local grocery store in their seafood department and then was demoted to working as a “bagger”. My hours working as a “bagger” were significantly cut, which was a way to let me go. Several months later I received the results of the evaluation process with the department of vocational rehabilitation. I was told that the results showed that I would be unemployable. Soon after receiving this news I declared disabled.

Both of these decisions came in mid to late 1998 which were both a relief to me. They were both a relief to me and left me with questions. A relief because I could now create a system that would eliminate the ongoing economic insecurity that I experience for many years of my life. Left me with questions because I was still facing my denial as well as my families denial. As a result, I continued to internalize the notion that there was some thing wrong with me. Something wrong with me, because I was unable to not be impacted by what I had a difficult time understanding my circumstances.

I continued to blame myself for not being able to prove that I was not a mistake. I continued to blame myself until I reached a point — a spiritual and emotional bottom. A bottom that revealed to me that I could no longer deny. A reality that my life had and was being impacted by some thing that occurred in 1967. in A reality that I was and am powerless to change. A reality that I could no longer deny or defend to keep from feeling like a mistake. A reality that I needed to stop punishing myself. A reality that I no longer needed to overcome to be alright with myself.

A reality that did I no longer needed to struggle to change. A reality that I could learn to adapt to in my life. A reality in which I could learn how to excel. A reality in which I could create a good life for myself. A reality in which I could follow my dreams and live my destiny. A reality in which I could have hope. A reality in which I could find meaning and purpose. A reality in which I could be of service in ways that would work for me. A reality in which I could own my identity. A reality in which I could frame and see my experience in a new way. A reality in which a brain injury and invisible disability could be seen as a gift, not as a curse.

Finding Craig — Empowering My Life Part 6 a

February 27, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In Part 6 of this series I would like to share some of the lessons that have helped me through my process and on my journey. These lessons have evolved out of my recovery process in seeking solutions to matters discussed in Parts 1-5 of this series. These lessons have not come overnight. Individually they have not provided “silver bullets”, “magic potions” or “quick solutions”. Instead each solution has helped me to connect the “dots” of my experience and provide hope for my journey.

As shared in **Parts 1 and 2** I grew up believing that I was responsible for other people’s feelings, needs and wants. As a consequence of not being able to meet many expectations, I believed that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake. Through my recovery process I discovered that there were 3 rules that I needed to break in order to heal emotionally and spiritually. I needed to break the 3 rules, **Don’t talk, Don’t Trust and Don’t Feel**. To do so, I needed to become aware of why I was feeling like I was a mistake and where I ended and other people began as they related to me.

See my articles: [Don’t Talk, Don’t Trust, and Don’t Feel](#), [The Three Rules Revisited—Consequences, Whose Shame are You Carrying? Displaced Sadness](#)

In my experience, I had to reach a point in my life that denying my reality was more painful than my need to deny my reality in an attempt to prove that there was nothing wrong with me. In my experience, I found that I had to grieve my reality through the process of moving through the 5 stages of grieving – Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. I needed to grieve my reality so that I could begin to accept my reality. What I also discovered was that as I grew in my acceptance of my reality, I grew in awareness. My ongoing awareness helped me to take a different action.

Below is a list of actions that my resolving and accepting my reality brought about in my life. What I share below is a work in progress for me. I have not arrived, but I am aware. Although brief, the bullets give me solutions to living life on life’s terms. The solutions have been birthed out of my struggle and commitment to my recovery process. As shared above, the solutions did not come over night. The lessons that brought about these awareness’ and solutions came through hard work, a commitment to not giving up and a trust in the process, a loving God and myself.

- So that I could pursue excellence, instead of being driven by perfectionism.
- So that I could do the footwork and let go of the outcomes of my footwork.
- So that I could begin to trust the process, a loving God and myself.
- So that I could see that my circumstances are a way to build me up, not to keep me down.
- So that I could see that I am not my traumatic brain injury or my invisible disability.
- So that I could see that disappointments and disillusionment that I experienced for many years as an important parts in my process — to move me from one piece of the puzzle to another and in the direction of my destiny.

Finding Craig — Empowering My Life Part 6 b

February 27, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

- So I could find ways to use what I could do through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me for people who would want what I had to give.
- So that I could accept my inability to do some things because of my deficits and limitations and stop berating myself for my inability to do those things.
- So that I could live and explore outside of the box that societal stigmatization sought to keep me in through dismissing, discounting, patronizing, minimization and marginalization.
- So that I could begin to love, accept and celebrate who I am as an individual who is living with residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain.
- So that I could stop fighting against myself, while defending the denial system that kept me believing that I was bad and defective because of the residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain injury.
- So that I could break free from the denial system that kept me feeling like a mistake – because I was unable to not be affected by the residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain injury.
- So that I would know when I was being bullied.
- So that I could be able to distinguish between whether a social group was good for me or not good for me. If I was being bullied by the group.
- So that I could accept the things I can not change, change the things I can, have the wisdom to know the difference and then be at peace with that difference.
- So that I could make peace with a loving God and myself.
- So that I could stop being the identified patient – for more information, please read my 2 part article: [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient — Part 1](#), [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient — Part 2](#)
- So that I could begin to see life is a process, a journey not a destination.
- So that I could begin to realize that all I could do is the footwork and then trust a loving God with the outcomes.
- So that I could realize that my job is to learn “how to” from various ingredients and then combine what “I learned” together to bake various cakes.
- So that I could begin to realize that here is no such thing as failure, only an opportunity to learn.
- So that I could see what I did not understand as switches on the railroad of life – that help to redirect my life to keep me moving in the direction of my destiny.

Finding Craig — Empowering My Life Part 6 c

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- So that I could begin to realize that what occurs in my life is meant to set me up, not set me back.
- So that I could begin to realize that the process (what I am learning) is more important than the destination (where I think I should end up).
- So that I could stop living for the “when” in life, so that I could begin to live in “now” in life.
- So that I could begin to see that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but they are meant to build me up.
- So that I could learn from the lesson of the caterpillar and the butterfly. Struggle is essential to be strong enough to fly.
- So that I could learn from the Elephants riddle. Achieving goals, one bite at a time.
- So that I would keep stepping up to the plate and not give up trying: Home runs, strike outs (Babe Ruth) and light bulbs (Thomas Edison)
- So that I could begin to see achieving goals is like gathering ingredients and baking cakes
- So that I could begin to realize that multicolored threads (many times jumbled) being used to create a beautiful tapestry (my life).
- So that I could understand the parable of the “cracked pots”
- So that I could understand the power of identification, to avoid the comparison trap.
- So that I could share with traumatic brain injury survivors that there is hope. Suicide is a permanent solution for a temporary problem. Don’t give up!!!
- So that I could begin to realize that it is not as important what happened or happens to me, as what I do with what happened or happens to me.
- So that I could begin to realize that there is no such thing as a happy victim.
- So that I could begin living beyond the box that a societal stigmatization seeks to place me in through minimization and marginalization.
- So that I could begin to see disappointment, discouragement and disillusionment as an opportunity.
- So that I could begin to comprehend the principle of progress, not perfection.
- So that I could realize that my dreams and my destiny was not out of my reach because of my traumatic brain injury and invisible disability

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- So that I could learn how to trust my judgment instead of defaulting to other people's judgment.
- So that I could learn how to harness my adversity, instead of feeling defeated by my adversity.
- So that I could allow my experiences teach me lessons that prepare me for opportunities, that provide experiences that teach me lessons, that prepare me for more opportunities. I believe that collectively, my lessons, experiences and opportunities are all pieces of my puzzle that are leading me in the direction of my destiny.
- So that I could make peace with my past, so that my past would no longer spoil my present.
- So that I could begin to realize that all I could do is the footwork and then trust the outcomes to a loving God.
- So that I could begin to realize that with all learning there is a learning curve.
- So that I could begin to accept that I don't have to have or know the big picture to have peace in my life.
- So that I could begin to realize that the pieces of my experience will come together at the right time and in the right order.
- So that I could trust that the "dots" will connect forward.

Finding Craig — My Physical Recovery Process Part 7 a

March 2, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In today's part of the series I would like to share with you what helped me to advance in my physical recovery. In my experience, my physical recovery began when I got involved in sports and I don't mean watching them. As I mentioned in [Part 3](#) of this series, I taught myself how to walk again following the car accident, brain injury and after being taken out of a full body or Spica cast.

Because my left leg and foot were fixed in the cast for 4-5 month, my left leg did not grow longer during that period of time. As a result, my left leg was shorter than my right leg once the Spica cast was removed after my left femur had healed adequately. My Mom told me that I walked with a limp for a long time. With time my left leg grew longer, however to this day my left leg is about 1/4 — 1/2 inch shorter than my right leg.

As a result of being bullied, my parents enrolled me to begin taking judo. Judo was my introduction into martial arts. I took classes for several months at the judo school and then stopped attending classes for a reason. I can't remember. In my freshman year in high school I joined the wrestling team and continued through my sophomore year. In my junior year I tried out for the track team. Although I made both the wrestling and track teams, I remained on the JV (junior varsity) squads. In my sophomore year, during lunch break in the area where students "hung out" when not in classes; I had my fill with being bullied. After being punched in the face by one bully, I did a double leg take down, pivoted and proceeded to pummel him.

After being pulled off of the back of the bully, both he and I were sent to the principles office. I do not remember what was the outcome of the visit to the principles office, but I do remember from then on I was left alone by the bullies. From that point in high school I realized that I could stand up to bullies. During high school I worked out with weights to improve my strength and abilities in wrestling and track. I also spent many hours after school and on the weekends working in the acre yard our house sat on. There were an abundance of large trees on our property, that produced an endless supply of leaves and falling branches. Branches that needed to be picked up before the grass could be cut and the leaves cut up by the lawn mower.

I also dug ditches, transferred leaves from one compost pile to the other, planted evergreen trees, helped my Dad build rock walls. A large project that I worked on with my Dad was digging many post holes to put up a pine slat fence around the perimeter of our newly constructed in ground pool.

Although the work was hard, long and my Dad was demanding I am thankful for the work ethic that I developed during those years. Although my Dad would many times tell me that I did things in a "half-assed" way, the times that I worked hard and did a good job, he praised me. I believe that the work ethic that I developed through working and completing projects my Dad set, and expected of me; set the stage for me to not give up. I remember my Dad telling me, "You may hate me now, but in the future you will thank me for it." He was right. I am thankful for the work ethic that he instilled in me. Thank you Dad. Looking back, as explained in **Parts 1-6**, I realize the work ethic I developed during those years kept me from giving up on life.

Finding Craig — My Physical Recovery Process Part 7 b

March 2, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

remember during my earlier years in college that I continued to be bullied. I remember distinctly that around the age of 20, I made the decision that I no longer wanted to be bullied. I believe this decision helped me to stick up for myself several more times. In the process of sticking up for myself I continued to train with weights and grew in confidence. I also no longer presented myself as a victim. Because I was committed to getting a degree and a good job — see [Part 4](#) of the series — I did not have money or time to explore martial arts. My time and money were focused on my struggle to fight my way out of the proverbial “brown paper bag” that living with the unknown conundrum of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability.

Although I was not able to continue to train in any formal martial art setting (dojo) or under the instruction of a martial arts instructor (Sensei) I continued to have a fascination with the martial arts. When I was studying for my masters degree in rehabilitation counseling I attended several Shaolin Kung fu classes and after being deemed unemployable and declared disabled I took a semester of Aikido at a junior college, here in Charlotte. And then while training at a 24 hour Fitness, I was introduced western boxing, Brazilian jujitsu and several contact martial arts. In the process of my watching and asking questions I found my martial art, muayThai kickboxing. It was at that 24 hour fitness where I started practicing Thai kicks.

Through a series of events I was told I could no longer work out there by management, which was a gift to me. Several months later the owner closed the gym without giving any of the members notice. A professional that I was working with at the time told me about a program that the YMCA offered to help individuals like myself. Individuals living on a fixed income for various reasons. The program offsets the monthly fee according to the individuals monthly income. When I heard of this news, I went to and applied for the program. I was approved and have been working out at the YMCA since that time. If you have a YMCA in your area and are living on a fixed or low-income ask the YMCA if they have a similar program.

Shortly after beginning to work out at the YMCA, I was introduced to a fellow martial artist. He had trained in Thailand and had been a student of the martial arts for over 30 years at the time. At the time, he was a 5th degree black belt. After speaking with him, he connected me with an instructor (Sensei) of a local martial art academy. After meeting with Sensei, he kindly allowed me to start training at his school without charging me. I had truly been blessed. I began training at the school in May 2000. What I would learn, through training at the school; was that my Sensei's, Instructor had originally trained under Bruce Lee. The kindness of my friend introducing me to my Sensei and the kindness of my Sensei opened a new world to me.

Finding Craig — My Physical Recovery Process Part 7 c

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As time unfolded and through attending regular classes I learned how to execute proper technique and build upon those techniques. After eight years training at the school I was given an opportunity participate in an 6 1/2 hour test to determine whether Sensei would allow me enter into a 10 month black belt cycle in preparation to test for my black belt. I joined 15 other individuals in this 6 1/2 hour test to enter the black belt cycle. To read what was required to fulfill the requirements of the test to be considered to enter the 10 month preparation to test for my black belt, click on this link: [Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury– Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams! Part 3 of 3](#). Three weeks after the test, I met with Sensei.

He gave me the results of the test and told me that I had passed and would be allowed to enter the 10 month black belt cycle testing period to qualify to enter a 2 day black belt exam. I was stoked to be able to begin the black belt cycle and did so with the other candidates in January 2009. In early February 2009 something terrible went wrong. During one of the physical conditioning classes, while running laps around the mats, I started to have pain in my right knee that was followed by the knee “locking up” or being hard to bend. When this occurred I tried to continue running, but could not continue to run. So I made the decision to leave the school and go home. The next day, I set up an appointment to see a Dr. to have my knee looked at.

The next day my right knee continued to “lock up”, which made it difficult to walk, much less run. Now I was confronted by the possibility that I would not be able to continue with the black belt cycle. All my time, training and dedication during the previous 8 years came into question. I had hit another proverbial wall, despite my hard work and determination. The next day I was fortunate to able to see a Dr.. The Dr. diagnosed a tendon bruise and referred me to an orthopedist. He sent me for an MRI. I had hit a proverbial wall that did not seem surmountable, even after overcoming a hospital stay of 16 days with orbital cellulitis in August 2008. [Second Chance to Live — My Presence has been my Absence Part 1](#).

After meeting with the orthopedist to discuss the results of the MRI, I learned that I had 2 meniscus tears. A medial meniscus tear and a the anterior hood of the lateral meniscus tear. The orthopedist suggested that I have surgery to repair the menisci. I decided to get a second opinion. I got a second opinion. Thankfully, while speaking with a friend at the YMCA he told me that he had similar meniscus tears. He also told me that after a 3rd opinion he was told that if the surgery was completed, to repair both tears; that his knee may become unstable. Thankfully I received this information and after consulting with family and another professional I made a hard decision. I realized that I needed to accept what I could not change to get better.

The hard decision that I made was to bow out of the black belt cycle, so as to not have long-term ACL or PCL ligament damage. I began attending physical therapy appointments and then decided to begin rehabbing my knee on my own. I walked the warm pool at the YMCA 60 minutes 3-4 times a week — backward, forward, then forward and backward to strengthen my knee. I also participated in some light weights and riding the in door bike at 0 resistance. After 9 months of setting out on my recovery program, to strengthen my right knee around the torn meniscus; I regained full function of my right knee. Although I regained full function in my right knee, I made the decision to not not put my knee in jeopardy by returning to the school.

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Instead, I made the decision to begin training on my own, at the Y using the heavy bags that I had advocated to be a part of the YMCA's amenities. I resumed my training in different martial art disciplines over 6 years ago and have continued to train 4-5 times a week. My goal has been to sharpen the skills that I learned while training under my Sensei's instruction and to develop my own skills and style. My own style of martial arts, combining skills that I learned from Sensei and skills that I taught myself. In 2013 a friend of mine video taped progress that I had made through continuing to train on my own. Another friend video taped my continued progress to enhance my physical recovery process in August 2014 and in August of 2015.

I uploaded these short demonstrations to my You Tube channel and would invite you to watch them. You may do so by clicking on the below highlighted links. Through engaging in repetitive mirrored movements I continue to increase my ability to use both sides of my brain and my body. In the process I have improved my balance and muscle coordination, as well as my hand-eye coordination, concentration, agility and body awareness. Another benefit of my training has been an increase in my physical and mental conditioning. And what I have discovered is that as I have trained my brain and body I have increased my ability to use these benefits. Use these benefits to enhance other skills and skill sets to enhance my quality of life.

[Demonstration 2013](#)

[Demonstration 2014](#)

[Demonstration 2015](#)

I also play online solitaire, which serves to enhance my hand-eye coordination, concentration and focus. Playing online solitaire increases my visual and mental acuity. Playing online solitaire enhances my awareness and increases my response time to visual and external stimuli. Playing online solitaire increases my hand speed and accuracy of movement. Playing online solitaire, consequently; improves my physical recovery process.

Finding Craig — Making Sense of Brain Injury Part 8 a

March 9, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

First of all let me say, you and I are not our brain injuries. We are learning how to live and navigate through life with our brain injuries. We are learning to make sense of what is invisible. Making sense of our brain injuries gives us the ability to love and accept ourselves. Love and accept ourselves when other people can't or won't. Making sense of our brain injuries helps you and I to move forward with our lives through owning, accepting and getting into action. Making sense of our brain injuries opens the door to hope and solutions. Making sense of our brain injuries serves to empower you and I to realize that we have choices. Making sense of our brain injuries serves to set you and I free from ignorance, stereotypes and stigmatization. Making sense of our brain injuries serves to remind us that we can dream again and that we do not have to limit ourselves.

In each of the 7 Parts of this series I share from time periods in my process and journey living with a brain injury and an invisible disability. As shared in Part 2 of this article, I sustained an open skull fracture, a severe traumatic brain injury and a fractured left femur in 1967 when I was 10 years old.

To read each of the first 7 Parts of this article series, you may click on the following links: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#) and [Part 7](#)

Below are several lessons that I learned through my process of recovery. The lessons that I learned helped me to make sense of my traumatic brain injury. Not only did these lessons help me to make sense of my brain injury, but they gave me hope. Gaining hope helped me to realize that I could make different choices. Choices that would serve to empower my life. May what I learned also help you as you make sense of living with your brain injury. May what I learned also encourage you to not give up. May what I learned also help you to realize that you can make different choices. Choices that will serve to empower your life. Choices that will serve to give you hope. Choices that will serve to help you realize you can create hope in your life.

What I discovered, was that by not giving up my perspective changed. As my perspective changed, so did my ability to make sense of my brain injury. If you are struggling to make sense of your brain injury, may what I learned through my recovery process bring about shifts in your perspective. May these shifts in your perspective help you to experience life living with a brain injury.

Don't give up! Don't give up on yourself or your journey. With time what happened to you will take on new meaning. What you thought was meant for your harm, will be used for your good. What you thought was setting you back, was setting you up. What you saw as gauntlets to be endured, were preparing you to succeed. What you thoughts were heartaches, were teaching you compassion. What you thought was needless pain, was preparing you to be a wounded healer. What you thought were dark clouds, were helping you to see silver linings. What you saw as closed doors, were helping you to see ones opening. What you thought was keeping you isolated, was setting you apart. What you saw as isolation, was giving you time to prepare.

Finding Craig — Making Sense of Brain Injury Part 8 b

March 9, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

What you thought was unnecessary struggle, was making you stronger. What you thought was wasted, was redeemed. What you thought was poor timing, turned out to be right on time. What you thought was being withheld from you, was being done for you. What you thought was unanswered prayer, was keeping you from harm. What you saw as adversity, was opening the eyes of your heart. What you thought would kill you, gave you new meaning and purpose. What you thought was being done to you, was being done for you. What you thought was a learning disability, was teaching you how to learn. What you thought saw as rejection, was revealing true friends. What you saw as a disability, was in the process revealing a new ability.

Circumstances that you thought were meant to keep you down, were being used to build you up. What you thought were disappointments, were pointing you in a different direction. What you thought were lost dreams, were taking on new forms. What you thought was inability, was teaching you new ability. What you thought you could not do, you learned to do in a different way. What discouraged you, became a way to encourage others.

In Summary

Although I struggled through my growing up years for the reasons I spoke about in **Part 1** and **Part 2**, I gained tremendous insights. Although I sustained a fractured skull and a traumatic brain injury, I taught myself how to walk and kept moving as I spoken about in **Part 3**. Although I was not expected to succeed beyond high school, I kept learning. Although it took me 10 years and 4 different majors, I obtained my undergraduate degree. Although I struggled in seminary and was met with challenges in graduate school, as spoken about in **Part 4**; I graduated with my masters degree.

Although I struggled to understand the impact of the traumatic brain injury, as spoken about in **Part 5**; I learned how to navigate independently through life with an invisible disability. Although I struggled to accept myself I am grateful that my struggle motivated me to grieve my reality. Although I experienced pain through the process of grieving my reality, I am grateful for what I learned about myself, as spoken about in **Part 6**. I am grateful I grew in self-acceptance and got into action. I am grateful I continued to work on my physical recovery process, as spoken about in **Part 7**.

I am grateful that although I was deemed unemployable and declared disabled, as spoken about in **Part 5**. I am grateful that I did not quit, but kept searching for ways to use what I had to give despite being labeled, stereotyped and stigmatized. I am grateful that I did not give up on my hopes and dreams in the process of being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted. I am grateful that I did not give up on my process, a loving God or myself, but learned to trust. I am grateful that I did not wait to have my worth and value validated. I am grateful I answered the call that never came.

Finding Craig — Making Sense of Brain Injury Part 8 c

March 9, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Conclusion

If you have not started to follow your hopes and your dreams, let me be the one to encourage you to start. Search for a way (s) to use your passion (s) through your gifts, talents and abilities, in ways that will work for you. You can start now. You don't have to wait for some one to call you forward.

Answer the call that is in your heart. Follow your dreams. You no longer have to limit yourself. Keep moving forward. Take action. Trust that more will be revealed to you. Trust that the pieces of your experience will come together in the right time and order. Trust that you will succeed by not giving up.

Information

In the event that you are not aware, I created [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 6, 2007, at the encouragement of a friend. To read more about the back story of Second Chance to Live, please click on these 2 links: [Back Story 1](#) and [Back Story 2](#). In the event that you would like to read more about my process and my journey over the past 9 years, you may click on these links: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#), [Part 7](#), [Part 8](#) and [Part 9](#). In the event that I can answer any questions, please send those questions to me. All questions are good questions and welcomed my friend.

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets Part

1

August 11, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

During the past 17 or so years I have trained pretty consistently in various martial arts. I have engaged in countless repetitions and drills in muay Thai Kickboxing, Western Boxing, components of Wing Chun, Kali and Jeet Kune Do. During the past 22 months I have trained with endless repetitions in modern arnis using single and double rattan sticks. In each of these martial arts I have worked diligently to mirror both my dominant side of my body with my non dominant side of my body. By doing so, I have developed new motor and fine motor skills.

What I discovered in the past year or so was that I had been engaging in the process of neuroplasticity — creating new neural pathways and engaging in brain reorganization — through my training in various martial arts over the past 16 or 17 years.

As explained in MedicineNet.com, I had been using the principle of concept of neuroplasticity:

“Neuroplasticity allows the neurons (nerve cells) in the brain to compensate for injury and disease and to adjust their activities in response to new situations or to changes in their environment. Brain reorganization takes place by mechanisms such as “axonal sprouting” in which undamaged axons grow new nerve endings to reconnect neurons whose links were injured or severed. Undamaged axons can also sprout nerve endings and connect with other undamaged nerve cells, forming new neural pathways to accomplish a needed function.”

Recently I wrote and published an article, [Living Life on Life's Terms and Small Successes](#) in which I spoke to life as a process and a journey, not a destination. As I embrace life — as a process and a journey — I am able to live life on life's terms. As I live life on life's terms, I am able to celebrate the progress that I make through small successes. These small successes have been gained through working on each part of a desired skill. These small successes have been gained through a endless repetitions.

By breaking the skill down into individual parts, I have been able to enjoy the process, instead of judging my individual efforts. By working on individual parts of the skill, I have been able to celebrate the small successes, instead of focusing on the destination (having the skill). As I combine individual parts (small successes) I learn the desired skill. As I combine learned skills, I am able to combine skills into a series of learned skill sets. As I combine these skill sets, I create new neural pathways and in the process, I reorganize my brain.

As I have been able to combine a series of small successes — becoming proficient in specific drills — I have been able to learn how to execute a series of skill sets in each martial art. These small successes (parts) of my drilling and training, have not only improved my abilities as a martial artist, but have also given me the ability to apply the hand-eye coordination, agility, motor and fine motor skills, speed, precision and focus to other areas of my life.

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets Part 2

August 11, 2014 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

What I discovered is that my drilling, training and mirroring of skills and skill sets — on the non-dominant side of my body — has improved the quality of my life that I experience in other areas of my life. My encouragement to you my friend would be, start slow, but start. Learn a new skill and skill set through a series of small successes. By doing so you will improve the quality of your life. By doing so you can move beyond a diagnosis or prognosis. By doing so you will move beyond the confines of any “box”.

I share the above information with you for this reason. Applying the principle and concept of neuroplasticity may help to improve the quality of life of the individuals whom you serve. Through persistence and tenacity those individuals may find, as I have, that they are able to accomplish learn / relearn skills. Skills and abilities that may have previously seemed out of reach to them. Skills and abilities that they may have lost due to a stroke or other cognitive changes. Skills and abilities that may have seemed to be out of their grasp. Skills and abilities that may help them to have experience “awakenings”.

Exercise:

What ever you are able to do with your dominant side of your body, start doing – mirroring – the same ability with your non dominant side of your body. Start out slowly, but be persistent in your commitment. Work on one part (drill) of the skill at a time. As you become comfortable with that particular part of the skill, move onto the next part of the skill. By combining parts of the skill (small successes) you will find that you have learned or relearned a new skill. As you master that skill, begin working on parts of another skill.

Combine those parts (small successes) into learning that skill. As you continue in that process, you will be able to combine each skills into a skill set. As I have found, by doing so you will be able to learn or relearn new skills sets. In the process, you will create new neural pathways and brain reorganization. In the process you will improve your quality of l your life through small successes.

Riddle:

“How do you eat an elephant?”, one man said to the other. The man asked, “Tell me the answer”. One bite at a time. What you see as an elephant (skill or ability) may seem overwhelming. My encouragement to you my friend — as I need to remember too — would be that you work on consuming the elephant, one part at a time. By doing so, your elephant will be reduced (through small successes) to a new or relearned skill., because you kept “chewing”.

As you listen to, watch or read my articles and questions come to mind, please send those questions to mind. All questions are good questions. In the event that you would like to leave a comment, I would love to hear from you. To do so, please use the below contact form. I will respond to your comments and questions.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Have a great day.

Craig

Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1

June 15, 2015 by Second Chance to Live

In yesterday's article [Training Camps and Winning in Life](#), I spoke about the basics that make a successful training camp. In the article I shared that by applying the basics — hard work, commitment, determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity and courage — before long we will be able to look back and see how far we have come in our progress, because we did not give up.



In today's articles I would like to explore the meaning of several of the words or concepts that go into making a training camp successful. To gain a greater understanding of the words and concepts, I will do some research; and share what I discover. I will then share my perspective and provide a link to an article that I have written, that speaks to the word or the concept.

Hard work or Work-ethic

“Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds.” Gordon B. Hinckley

Hard work for me means being diligent, to accomplish a task or a goal that is set before me; with focus. Hard work involves sticking with a project or a goal to achieve a desired outcome.

For me, hard work does not mean running a sprint, but involves running in a marathon; which requires consistent and ongoing effort.

article link:

[A Word of Encouragement – Keep Swinging at the Fences](#)

Commitment

“a willingness to give your time and energy to something that you believe in, or a promise or firm decision to do something” [Cambridge Dictionaries online](#)

For me commitment involves loyalty, first to myself; to stick with a goal, regardless...

Commitment communicates to me to remain undeterred from what I set out to accomplish.

Although the way that I set out to accomplish some thing may change, my commitment teaches me that I can find a way that will work for me to be able to accomplish my goal.

Article link:

[When Circumstances Change Our Plans](#)

Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2

June 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Determination

“is a positive [emotion](#) that involves persevering towards a difficult [goal](#) in spite of obstacles.^{[1][2]} Determination occurs prior to goal attainment and serves to motivate behavior that will help achieve one’s goal.” [Wikipedia](#)

Determination helps me to focus on what I want to accomplish, in spite of obstacles and setbacks.

Obstacles become a sign in the road that help me to realize that adjustments need to be made to accomplish my desired goal (s).

Determination teaches me to not give up in spite of apparent obstacles and setbacks, because I know that more will be revealed in time.

“I will prepare and some day my chance will come.” Abraham Lincoln

Article link:

[Experiencing Adversity, Failures, Setbacks and Not Giving Up!](#)

Drive

“There are three major components to motivation: activation, persistence, and intensity. *Activation* involves the decision to initiate a behavior... *Persistence* is the continued effort toward a goal even though obstacles may exist... Finally, *intensity* can be seen in the concentration and vigor that goes into pursuing a goal.” [About Education — What is Motivation](#)

Motivation can either be external or internal. Being externally driven will only last until the threat is removed. Being internally motivated or driven, on the other hand; is sustainable because of the individual’s internal desire to achieve the skill, skill set or goal.

Drive encourages me to stick with the process and keep learning from my circumstances, my experiences and my opportunities.

Article link:

[Don’t Give Up — Your Life Matters!](#)

Read **Part 2** of this article by clicking on this link: [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2](#)

This is the 2nd Part of my article, Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp. To read Part 1 of the article, you may click on this link: [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1](#). In Part 1 I spoke about several of the basic concepts leading to a successful training camp: hard work or work ethic, commitment, determination and drive.

Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 3

June 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In **Part 2** of this article, I will speak to the remaining basic concepts that lead to a successful training camp: discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity and courage. As with Part 1 of this article, I will do some research and share what I discover. I will then share my perspective of the word or concept and provide a link to an article that I have written that speaks to the word or concept.

Discipline

“training to act in accordance with rules; drill, activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill, the rigor or training effect of experience, adversity” [Dictionary.com](#)

“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.” Jim Rohn

For me, discipline means that I keep working on my craft, tweaking and taking away; adding and making the decision to follow through to condition myself to achieving an end.

article link

[Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets](#)

Fortitude

“**Fortitude** meaning [courage](#) or bravery is the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.” [Wikipedia](#)

“Fortitude is the marshal of thought, the armor of the will, and the fort of reason.” Francis Bacon

For me fortitude means that I commit to pursuing my dreams and my destiny, my vision and mission in the face of being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

Fortitude means that I remain true to myself, regardless of whether anyone else “gets it” or understand me. Fortitude means that I stay committed to my goals, whatever they may be at the time.

To thine own self be true.

article link

[Having the Courage to be Me](#)

Persistence

“the quality that allows someone to continue doing something or trying to do something even though it is difficult or opposed by other people” [Merriam-Webster](#)

“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work though difficult problems.” Gever Tulley

For me persistence is the decision to get up more times than I fall down. Persistence for me means that I don’t give up regardless...Giving up simply is not an option.

Persistence means believing in myself.

article link

[Answering the Call that Never Came](#)

Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 4

June 15, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Tenacity

“an unwillingness to yield or give up, being dogged, stubbornly, persevering and steadfast”

[Wiktionary](#)

“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.” Albert Einstein

Tenacity keeps me moving toward what I want to accomplish in my life. Tenacity means that I keep looking for ways to win in life. Tenacity means that I do give myself no for an answer.

Tenacity means that I trust the process, a loving God and myself. Tenacity means that I keep moving forward.

article link

[Detailed About Page](#)

Courage

“The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear, or vicissitudes with self-possession, confidence, and resolution; bravery.” [The Free Dictionary](#)

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.” Steve Jobs

Courage to me means I stay committed to the process, the footwork and the journey. Courage helps me to remember that I do not have to do things perfectly. Courage reminds me that I can pursue excellence, instead of perfection. Courage reminds me that will all learning, there is a learning curve. Courage reminds me to stay committed to my mission and vision.

Courage gives me hope.

article link

[More than a Survivor](#)

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure, it is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone. And as we let our own light to shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same, as we are liberated from our own fear. Our presence automatically liberates others. Sir, I just want to say thank you. You saved my life.” From the movie, Coach Carter, quote attributed to Marianne Williamson

Freedom to Realize Choice in Brain Injury Part 1

February 23, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. Thank you for making the decision to stop by to visit. Several days ago I wrote the article, [You're Not Crazy — You have an Invisible Disability](#). In that article, I spoke about the realization that I came to by experiencing enough pain in my life that motivated me to grieve my reality. The reality that I was living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability. The reality of which I was powerless to change. The reality of which, was not for my attempting to overcome and disprove. See my article [Finding Craig — My Academic Pursuits](#). The reality of which family and friends still wanted or needed to believe.

In the past day, I received several comments and observations from readers of **You're Not Crazy — You have an Invisible Disability**. For many years I was led to believe that, “if I just...” then “I would not...” and I “could get...” then “I would be...”. The “just, not, get, be” kept me focused on what other people thought I “should be” in life. Vicariously, people wanted me to “be” so that they would not have to feel or make changes in their lives. Maintaining their need to deny my reality, did not make them wrong or bad, it just made them powerless to change. With the realization of my being powerless to change these individuals or their need to deny my reality, I gained a new freedom. A freedom to change the things that I could in myself.

The freedom to realize that, no matter how many times I phrased or rephrased my reality I could not change their minds. The freedom to accept my powerless over ignorance, arrogance or the willingness to understand. The freedom to realize that, regardless of whether anyone grasps my reality, I am the only one who – with the help and guidance of a loving God — can create a good and lasting life for myself. The freedom to realize that I am not responsible, nor do I have to carry anyone else's guilt because of my reality. The freedom to realize that, I no longer have to feel like a square peg in a world of round holes. A freedom to create my own unique hole. The freedom to realize that, I could fill that hole in ways that would work for me.

The freedom to realize, that I am the only one who can reach a threshold of pain to motivate me to make changes in my life.

The freedom to realize that, other people also need to reach their own threshold of pain to make changes in their lives.

When I become sick and tired of being sick and tired, about being sick and tired I become willing to make changes.

The same reality pertains to other people. When they become sick and tired, of being sick and tired about being sick and tired.

Freedom to Realize Choice in Brain Injury Part 2

February 23, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The freedom to realize that, I no longer have to should on myself — should've, would've, could've. Instead, I am free to learn.

The freedom to realize that, everyone is doing the best that they know how to do, just for today.

The freedom to realize that, I too am doing the best that I know how to do, just for today.

The freedom to realize that, by surrendering and admitting that I need help is not a sign of weakness.

The freedom to realize that, surrendering and admitting that I need help, I am opening the door to possibilities.

The freedom to realize that, I don't have to recover more than one day at a time. More will be revealed to me in time.

The freedom to realize that, I don't have to be drawn into another person's denial. I can live in my reality and succeed.

The freedom to realize that, I am not responsible for how other people choose to feel about my reality.

The freedom to realize that, that it is better to understand than to be understood.

The freedom to realize that, I can love and accept myself, although other people may choose not to love and accept me.

The freedom to realize that, whether people choose to love and accept me in my reality is about them and not about me.

The freedom to realize that, it is not my responsibility to convince anyone of anything concerning my reality.

The freedom to realize that, whether other people choose to understand my reality, that is their responsibility.

The freedom to realize that, I only get one life to live and how I choose to live my life is my responsibility.

The freedom to realize that, I am not a victim, unless I choose to be a victim.

The freedom to realize that, life is for living, not merely surviving.

The freedom to realize that, I can create hope in my life every day.

The freedom to realize that, I can choose to not give up on my process, a loving God and myself.

The freedom to realize that, more will be revealed to me with time.

The freedom to realize that, I have a purpose and a reason to still be here.

Why I Needed to Challenge My Brain Injury Awareness Part 1

September 21, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Several days ago I wrote and published, [Enough with Brain Injury Awareness](#) and yesterday I published [Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better?](#). While speaking with someone whom I respect earlier today, he helped me to see something that I believe needs to be clarified. In [Enough with Brain Injury Awareness](#) and [Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better?](#) I spoke about the issue of denial. In this article I would like to make a distinction. I am making this distinction to further clarify that I am not referring to denial in terms of a personality disorder, as described by Wikipedia “wrecked by success”; experiences “victory through defeat”; gratified by personal misfortunes, failures, humiliations, and ordeals; eschews best interests; chooses to be victimized, ruined, disgraced.”

Although there are individuals, who find themselves stuck or encouraged to remain in denial, I am not referring to this type or designation of denial in either [Enough with Brain Injury Awareness](#) or [Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better?](#). In both of my above articles surrounding brain injury awareness, my focus in sharing what I did in those articles was from a recovery approach that encourages holistic healing — mind, body and spirit — in the individual. To encourage those individuals who may be having a difficult time, as I did; moving from **beyond** being aware, to being able to accept and move forward to create a good life for themselves. In my experience, I remained in denial to the significance of the impact of my traumatic brain injury because I did not know that I could do anything otherwise. In my experience, I remained in denial because I had no idea how to “connect the dots” concerning the impact of my traumatic brain injury, how to accept my deficits and limitations and how to take a different course of action to enhance my life as an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury. Awareness, in and of itself; left me out in the cold with little hope.

“Brain injury awareness only made me AWARE, but did little to show me how I could move forward with my life as an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

In my experience, I found that my brain injury awareness only reinforced what the medical model of treatment offered and wanted me to believe about myself, which offered little hope. Little hope beyond “awareness” which resulted in being labeled, stereotyped, stigmatized and led to believe that I needed to welcome the “box” that such awareness expected me to embrace and accept. Not only was I led to believe that I needed to remain in the “box” of the expectations purported by the medical model and the brain injury industry, but that my identity as an individual was now tied to the diagnosis, label, stereotype and stigmatization. The medical model also led me to believe what I could hope for was based on their findings and results that their studies and agendas had validated. The medical model of treatment and the brain injury industry subsequently offered little hope beyond what they led me to believe about myself. What I discovered through confronting the awareness provided by the medical model and the brain injury industry was that my worth, value and identity was not limited by the denial inherent within the medical model and the brain injury industry’s studies and findings. The hope that I discovered through confronting “the awareness” that I was led to believe about myself, helped me to realize that I was not my brain injury. The hope that helped me to realize that “the awareness” that the medical model of treatment was selling was not my identity as a tbi survivor.

Why I Needed to Challenge My Brain Injury Awareness Part 2

September 21, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

What the hope helped me to realize was that I did not have to play by the “rules” of “the awareness” that the medical model of treatment and the brain industry led me to believe that I needed to play by to go along to get along. That is why I needed to face the denial, perpetrated by the identity created by my inability to change what I could not accept. By doing so, I found that I was able to move from being bitter — because of the way my life had been impacted by my traumatic brain injury — to becoming better in life because of the impact of my traumatic brain injury. Through moving from being aware — through a grieving process — to being able to accept what I could not change, I was able to get into action. I was able to get into action to create my own identity, beyond the identity of a diagnosis, a label, a stereotype and a stigmatization. Through moving from being aware, by challenging the identity given to me by a medical model and the brain injury industry and by accepting how my life had been changed because of the impact of my traumatic brain injury I was able to get into action. Action that helped me escape from the “box” and identity given to me by ” the awareness”.

People can not give us what they themselves do not possess, but unscrupulous people can use what they don't possess to exploit vulnerable people such as people living with the impact of traumatic and acquired brain injuries for their own gain.

In the process of challenging my brain injury awareness, my denial, the identity sold to me by the medical model of treatment and the brain injury industry, by accepting my deficits and limitation and through taking a different course of action I have been able to move from being bitter to being better. Through taking action to move beyond the designed “box” meant to contain me, I have learned how to use my passion to encourage, motivate, empower and share hope through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me, for people who want what I have to bring to the table of life.

I would like to get your help my friend. Could you please share your personal experience with me as how your life got better through moving from being aware to taking a different course of action? Your insights and experience would be greatly appreciated my friend.

How have you been able to move from being bitter in life after you experienced your traumatic or acquired brain injury?

What has helped you to become better in life because of your traumatic or acquired brain injury?

What solutions have you found that have helped create a good life for yourself?

To share your experience with me, you may do so through a comment or confidentially by using my email address: secondchancetolive1@yahoo.com. I look forward to hearing and learning from you my friend.

Brain Injury Recovery, Contributing Factors and Stealing Time Part 1

October 11, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Yesterday I received a question from a reader and a friend of [Second Chance to Live](#) that helped me to realize that I needed to write this article. Her question helped me to realize that I needed to further explain what I consider to be essential in the recovery process for an individual living with a brain injury. I believe that to recover from the impact of a brain injury, the individual needs to examine how various factors impacted their lives prior to sustaining their brain injury. Through examining how these factors impacted the individual prior to sustaining their brain injuries, further insight can be gained as to how these contributing factors may be impacting the individuals recovery process following a brain injury.

In my experience, I discovered that needed to examine how these contributing factors were impacting my ability to be at peace with myself. Prior to addressing and examining these contributing factors my recovery process was like the game of “Whack a Mole” at the country fair. In my attempt to recover I found myself being distracted by one mole after another mole. I would work on getting one factor under control, while another mole would indiscriminately pop up. In my attempts to manage one mole, I was distracted and frustrated by yet another mole. In my experience, I continued to be frustrated by these various moles until I realized that I needed to address and examine each one of these moles, as they impacted my life and my brain injury recovery process. Through examining each of these moles or factors, I discovered that each factor impacted my brain injury recovery process.

What I discovered was that as I began to address and examine each one of these moles, as they pertained to my own experience; my brain injury recovery process gained time and took on new a life. What I discovered was that as I began to address and examine each one of the moles, I was able to understand how each of these moles affected and impacted my life and recovery process. Further and ongoing awareness, acceptance and action of these contributing factors helped me to break free from denial systems. Through growing in awareness, acceptance and the ability to take action, I was able to stop beating up on myself for what was out of my control. And, as I was able to stop beating up on myself for what I could not control; I discovered what I could change in order to enhance my life, which in turn; gave me a new freedom to discover how I could make my life work for me.

Some thing to Consider about Contributing Factors

In addition to your brain injury, in the event that you grew up in a dysfunctional home, before or after you sustained your brain injury; these are moles that need to be addressed and examined. In the event that you grew up with either one or both of your parents or grand parents being addicted to drugs or alcohol, you have moles that need to be addressed and examined. In the event that you struggled with mental illness or your own addiction to self-medicate through drugs or alcohol, prior to your brain injury, you have moles that need to be addressed and examined. In the event that you struggled with codependency prior to your brain injury, you have moles that need to be addressed and examined. The above moles do not make you or I bad, wrong or defective individuals. They are just moles that need to be taken in account, as we pursue the process of our brain injury recovery.

Brain Injury Recovery, Contributing Factors and Stealing Time Part 2

October 11, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In my experience and through my recovery process; I came to realize that apart from examining and addressing each of these moles, as they pertained to my experience; my time and energy would have continued to be diverted away from what I could change through my continued and ongoing brain injury process. As you take the time to address and examine contributing factors, as they pertain to your experience; you too may find that time and energy, once stolen from you; is restored to empower you to focus on what you can change to enhance your ongoing brain injury recovery process. In the process of time and energy being restored, you too may find that your continued and ongoing brain injury recovery will take on a new life. What was once considered to be unattainable, you will attain through restored time and energy in your continued and ongoing brain injury recovery process.

Through my own process of addressing and examining moles I have written articles that you may find to be helpful in addressing and examining contributing factors or “moles” that may be diverting your time and energy away from creating a good life for yourself. To discover what I has helped me to address contributing factors and “moles”, please click on this link to read from my articles: [Second Chance to Live articles on Recovery](#).

For individuals whose language is not English, I have created a tool to that will translate **Second Chance to Live** into a variety of languages, as represented below. Once you click on the language that you would like to translate Second Chance to Live, click on this link [Site Map of Articles](#) in my tabs. By then hovering over **Site Map of Articles**, another window will open showing **Libraries** and **Categories**. Click on the **Categories** tab and that will open another window with a list of the represented categories. Scroll down to the **Recovery Category** and click on that tab, which will open a list of my articles on Recovery. Once the list of my articles on Recovery has opened, scroll down to and click on the desired article title. That will open the article for you.

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Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better? Part 1

September 18, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Several days ago I wrote an article, [Enough with Brain Injury Awareness](#). In that article I shared that brain injury awareness is good, however that moving beyond being aware for the “believer” — one who acknowledges and realize that their life has been impacted by a brain injury — is essential to creating a good life. Awareness, in and of itself; can leave the individual angry and stuck if that awareness does not lead the individual to accept what that awareness has revealed to them. That was my case for years after I became aware that I had experienced a traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. With out getting to a place of acceptance the “mental ascent” or “awareness of my traumatic brain injury” seemed irrelevant, because I had not grasped the significance of my awareness because I bought into denial. Both my denial and the denial of other people, who wanted or needed me to remain in denial; for whatever reason. What I discovered through my process was that I needed to grieve my awareness to be able to move from being bitter to better in my life. I needed to grieve my awareness, to come out of isolation.

“In my experience, I needed to move from a place of mental assent to being able to own my awareness through grieving my awareness (reality) before I could move beyond being bitter to becoming better in life. In my experience, I needed to move from a mental assent of my awareness to an acceptance of my awareness to be able to move from being bitter to being better to be able to create a good life for myself through taking action.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Last night I watched a movie that illustrated moving from bitter to better through becoming aware, grieving the awareness (moving from bitter to better) to being able to create a good life for the character. The movie, **Groundhog Day**; with Bill Murray. If you have not seen this movie “Murray plays Phil Connors, an arrogant Pittsburgh TV weatherman who, during an assignment covering the annual Groundhog Day event in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, finds himself in a time loop, repeating the same day again and again. After indulging in hedonism and committing suicide numerous times, he begins to re-examine his life and priorities.” Wikipedia. In the movie, we see that Bill Murray’s character, Phil Connors; is not a happy person to begin with in life. As the movie continues we see that Phil Connors appears to be bitter and angry as he relates to his co-workers and the town’s people of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania in his role as a news anchor in the movie. He also appears to be all alone in his self-absorption.

Initially, Bill Murray’s character seems to be dumb founded and in denial to what is occurring, as he wakes up each day to the same song and announcement on his clock radio. This denial continues until he realizes that the same events are occurring day after day a phenomenon in which he finds himself powerless to change. With this awareness he initially becomes increasingly angry at the similar events that are occurring every day, which leads to him to realize that there does not appear to be consequences for his behavior. As a result, he begins to exploit the vulnerabilities of the small town atmosphere of the town in which he finds himself stuck and unable to leave each day. He does this through taking a money bag out of an armored truck, using his acquired knowledge of people and events by taking of advantage a town’s woman and then of Rita, his coworker played by Allie MacDowell as well as some of the other towns’ people. In his exasperation and desperation, Phil then attempts to commit suicide in many ways on different days, only to wake up the next morning at 6:00 am with the same song playing on the clock radio.

Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better? Part 2

September 18, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

As the movie continues, he then uses information gained through asking questions of the television crew and the towns people to continue to exploit the information for his own gain.

After this behavior goes on for many days, with repeated slaps from Rita (television crew member) played by Allie MacDowell; Phil begins to have spiritual awakenings. He realizes that each day never changes and begins to recognize that being angry at the events that he can not change (through his mistreating of others), attempting to bargain his way out of the situation (through manipulating, exploiting and taking advantage of both his fellow crew members and town's people) and by being depressed (resulting in multiple suicide attempts and failures) does not work, that Phil arrives at a place of acceptance. The movie's plot reveals that once Phil arrives at a place of accepting what he can not change, that he begins to use what he has been given (events and circumstances) that he can not change; in ways to empower and enhance both his, his crew's and the town's people lives. As the movie continues we see how Phil's behavior toward both himself and other people changes from being exploitative and manipulative to being genuine.

As we see in this movie, Bill Murray's character; Phil Connors could have remained trapped by the awareness of his being stuck in one day. He could have continued to be angry at his set of circumstances. In his anger and frustration, Phil; could have continued to exploit and take advantage of his fellow television crew members and the town's people. He could have stayed focused on being depressed over the things that he could not change. Instead, Phil reached a point in his experience where his awareness became an acceptance of what he could not change, so that he could begin to enrich both his life and the lives' of his television crew and the town's people. And so he did, by learning to ice sculpt, play the piano and go about helping various town's people to enhance their lives and well-beings. Although the movie's plot is fictional, what is shown to have been learned by Phil can be a benefit to all of us.

Lessons Gained

As illustrated in the movie, **Groundhog Day** and through the character of Phil Connors as played by Bill Murray, awareness in and of itself can lead the individual to becoming bitter in life. Instead of being empowered by the awareness through the process of reaching a place of acceptance, awareness can leave the individual feeling like they are a victim of their awareness. Awareness, in and of itself; can then leave the individual believing and feeling helpless over what can not be changed. On the other hand, awareness; through the grieving process — moving beyond denial through anger, bargaining and depression to a point of acceptance can lead the individual living with a brain injury to be empowered to take a different course of action. A course of action, as Phil Connors took once he arrived at a place of acceptance for what could not be change. A course of action that helped Phil to choose to take a different course of action to create a good life for himself.

Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better? Part 3

September 18, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Choices that would empower, enhance and give him the ability to be of service to the people who were part of his life. As with Phil, we can choose to use our place of awareness to move us through the grieving process of what we can not change; so that we can change the things that we can by taking action through acceptance. Action that can lead us to create a good life for ourselves instead of being caught in a “time loop” by mere awareness. Acceptance and action that will enrich and empower us to be victors in life, instead of reinforcing the notion that we are victims of a traumatic brain injury of other kind of brain injury. Action that will result in our lives becoming better. And as with Bill Murray’s character, Phil Connors; our transition from being bitter to better will occur through a series of awareness’ — as we transitioned through being angry by trying to change the things we can’t (bargaining) and surrendering to what we can’t change (acceptance) — so that we can learn how to celebrate our lives as we use our gifts, talent and abilities in ways that work for us (Action). By doing so, both our lives and other people’s lives will be enriched.

Through making the transition through the grieving process — Denial, Anger, Depression, Bargaining — I was able to get to a place of Acceptance. Acceptance that gave me the courage to see my life change; by taking the action to move from being bitter to better in life through using my awareness of being impacted by a brain injury to discovering how I could use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me.”

Please let me know if I can be of service to you, your group, organization, association or in another capacity. You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live. As you read my articles and watch my video presentations and question come to mind please send those questions to me. All questions are good questions. I look forward to hearing from you. Copyright 2007-2015.

Living with Limitations and NOT Giving UP on Ourselves Part 1

August 20, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

At the end of April 2007 I wrote an article that I would like to speak to in this article. The article, [Following your bliss...regardless.](#)

In life, events, circumstances and disappointments may redirect our experience. In an instant — like a switch on a railroad — life events can set us in the opposite direction of our hopes and dreams. In the process our hopes, dreams, and aspirations may be dashed. We may have lost limbs or suffered permanent brain damage. Our damaged bodies may subsequently limit our abilities. Consequently, we may be sad, angry or even bitter with life. But that does not have to be the end of the story. I want to share something with you that revolutionized my world. I am more than a survivor.

Please read my article [Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset.](#)

Who I am on the inside matters more than who I am on the outside. My body may be broken and battered by an injury. I may not be as smart as I used to be before my disability. And I may be discouraged at times, but that does not change my passion. I need to remember this reality. I am not my disability, my limitations or my deficits. My passion resides within my being and is not dependent upon the shape of my body or my mind. Because my passions lie at the core of my being I can learn how to channel my creative energy even thou I may have a disability, deficits or limitations.

My passion provides the mechanism that empowers my gifts, talents and abilities. As I follow, develop and learn to channel my passions, the fruit of my purpose becomes apparent. My passions are channeled through my gifts, talents and abilities. My gifts, talents and abilities echo my passions. My passions subsequently point me in the direction of my destiny. In the process I experience my purpose. In the process I fulfill God's will for my life — one day at a time. My encouragement to you my friend is that you do not let anyone lead you to believe that your set of circumstances count you out.

Please read my article [Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own Race](#)

Although I have limitations because I sustained a traumatic brain injury I am not limited. Although you may have limitations because of your disability, you are not limited. Regardless, of how you or I came to be disabled we do not have to give up on our passions. We can learn how to channel those passions in ways that work for us. We can learn to experience life more abundantly. We no longer need to buy in to the notion that our circumstance are meant to keep us down. Instead we can learn to use our circumstances to build us up and in the process empower our dreams.

Living with Limitations and NOT Giving UP on Ourselves Part 2

August 20, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

We can learn to use our set of circumstances to enhance both our lives and the lives of individuals who touch our lives.

Today's Thought

Be encouraged my friend. You are a gift to your world. Our traumatic brain injury / disability is not meant for our harm. In reality what we have been given is a gift. What we thought was meant for our harm will be used for our good. Your disability will direct your life — like the switch on the railroad of life — in the direction of your destinies. Don't let anyone tell you or lead you to believe that you are limited. You can learn how to use your passions in ways that will enhance both your life and the lives of individuals who come into your world. More will be revealed to you in time.

Follow your passions. Follow your bliss. Take the time to breathe because you will learn how to channel your passions in ways that work for you. Do not give up on yourself or on your journey. You are on the right path. Be encouraged my friend. You will find your way. Only believe. And if you have a hard time believing, believe because I believe. You can trust the process, a loving God and yourself. More will be revealed to us. The pieces of the puzzle will come together at the right time and in the right order. What may be hidden or unclear to us now, will take on new meaning.

DON'T Give up On Yourself.

Brain Injury and Overcoming Learning Disabilities Part 1

March 12, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

A week ago I introduced an article [Improving Balance and Coordination](#). In that article I shared a 3 minute video presentation. In the video presentation I encouraged individuals reading the article to start a program to improve their balance and coordination. In my experience, I have used a program using repetitive mirrored movements on both sides of my body. By doing so, I have used both sides of my brain. By using both sides of my brain and body my balance and coordination has improved.

I have used repetitive mirrored movements on both sides of my body to help me overcome a learning disability. Because I have a difficulty learning and remembering sequences of information, what comes easily for others takes a lot longer for me. Knowing this about myself, I know that in order to become more proficient in my abilities I need to put in a lot more work. Consequently, as I put in time and repetition into learning sequences of information I develop the muscle memory, which makes me more proficient.

Over the years I have used different martial art disciplines to develop muscle memory on both sides of my body. I have used muay Thai (the art of 8 limbs) to develop skills using large muscle groups on both and left sides of my body. Both sides of my body using my hands, arms, elbows, legs and feet. I have used western boxing to work specifically on my hand and eye coordination. I have trained using single and double rattan sticks over the course of the past 3 years to work on developing fine motor skills, as well as agility on my feet. I have used other martial art disciplines.

Yesterday, a friend kindly captured how I have learned how to use both sides of my brain and body. I asked him to capture my use of my brain and body through the skills that I have been working on for the past 18 years. I have not arrived at all I am working to accomplish, but I have made huge strides. I am glad that I stuck with the process and did not give up when I was not making specific gains. The time and commitment that I have put into working on sequences of information — through repetitive mirrored movements — has helped me to accomplish what I never dreamed possible.

I will be 59 years old in a month and a half. I share this bit of trivia with you to encourage you to start and keep moving forward, regardless of your age. Don't put limits on yourself and don't let anyone else put limits on you. We succeed by not giving up.

Brain Injury and Overcoming Learning Disabilities Part 2

March 12, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Encouragement

Several years ago I had no idea of what I could accomplish through running my own race and staying committed to my own course. If you have not already started a program, I would encourage you to start today. As in my case, I developed a program and added on to the program over time. So don't be discouraged if you think your progress is slow. It seemed slow for me too. By staying committed to and adding to my program, I made consistent gains. Using repetitive mirrored movements has improved my muscle memory, which has helped overcome my learning disability.

My encouragement to you my friend is to run your own race and stay committed to your own course. You do not have to compete with anyone. Over time you will be amazed. You will see yourself accomplishing things you thought were out of your reach. You will experience abilities that you never dreamed possible. Your hard work and dedication will pay off for you. Your ability to remember those sequences of information will improve as you use both sides of your brain and your body. You will see consistent gains, as you engage both sides of your brain and body; by not giving up.

Through engaging both sides of our brain and body, through repetitive mirrored movement; we create hope in our lives.

To watch the 2:26 minute presentation, made earlier today; click on following picture.



Brain Injury and Self-Advocacy Part 1

March 18, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. You are always welcome here. As I shared on my [About Page](#), I lived with the unknown impact of an open skull fracture, a brain injury and an invisible disability for 39 years. This lack of awareness turned out to be both a blessing and a curse to me in my ongoing recovery process. Although I could not see it at the time, I now realize that both my blessings and curses taught me lessons about self-advocacy.

Both the blessings and the curses inspired me to make adjustments. Self-advocacy motivated me to make these adjustments. Self-advocacy inspired me to not give up. Self-advocacy empowered my ability to look for solutions. Self-advocacy encouraged me to keep looking for ways that would work for me. Self-advocacy taught me that I could create hope in my life. Self-advocacy revealed to me that what I thought were curses, were in reality; gifts in disguise.

Below I would like to share several of the blessings, what I deemed to be curses at the time and what I did to advocate for myself. I share these with you to encourage you to not give up on yourself. Keep looking for solutions. Keep looking for ways that will work for you. Keep creating hope in your life.

A blessing to me, in that I did not give up; when I faced challenges in my life. A curse because I internalized the difficulties that I experienced, as I blamed myself as others blamed me, as shared in [Finding Craig — Growing Up Continued Part 2](#). A blessing in that I kept looking academically and vocationally for ways to use my gifts, talents and abilities, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Academic Path Part 4](#). A curse because I could not find a fit vocationally from what I had learned, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness Part 5](#). A blessing because of what I learned through my disappointment, discouragement and disillusionment, as shared in [Finding Craig — Empowering my Life Part 6](#).

A curse for having to move through the pain to re-learn how to walk again, as shared in [Finding Craig — Learning to Walk Again Part 3](#). A blessing because circumstances motivated me to continue to train and develop physically, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Physical Recovery Process Part 7](#). A blessing in that my struggle, to pursue self-advocacy over the past 48 years; has helped me to make sense of my brain injury, as shared in [Finding Craig — Making Sense of Brain Injury Part 8](#). A blessing because what I learned empowered me to not give up. A blessing to realize that I could be my own advocate and stand up for myself. A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I no longer had to feel helpless.

Brain Injury and Self-Advocacy Part 2

March 18, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I could take steps to empower my life. I could take steps to empower my life, although I had been deemed unemployable and declared disabled. A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I could begin to look at my circumstances in a different way. A way that would empower my process, instead of feeling defeated by them. By being my own advocate, I began to realize that I could learn the lessons my circumstances taught me. I could use them to create hope in my life. Through being my own advocate, I could work to develop my mind, body and spirit to enhance my life. Through being my own advocate, I realized that I no longer had to feel helpless because of my brain injury.

Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up. Our circumstances teach us lessons that prepare us for opportunities. Those opportunities teach us more lessons that prepare us for more opportunities. Collectively circumstances, lessons and opportunities lead and guide us. They lead and guide us to our dreams and our destinies.

Benefits of Self-Advocacy

I share the above with you to encourage you to realize, like I have in my life; that we can make a difference in our lives. By owning the reality that we can make a difference in our lives, we take a huge step forward in self-advocacy. By being believing that we can make a difference in our lives, we empower our ability to realize that we are no longer helpless. Brain injury awareness provides the door that we can step through to empower our lives. Self-advocacy frees us from a sense of helplessness and dependency. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we do not have to limit ourselves because of a medical model of recovery. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we no longer have to limit ourselves because of a stereotype or societal stigmatization.

No longer are we trapped by a feeling of helplessness. Instead, self-advocacy helps us to realize a new zest for living. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can walk through a door to a whole new way of living. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that our lives have not ended because of a brain injury, but our lives have just begun. Self-advocacy helps us to realize living with brain injuries now offers new possibilities. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can have a profound impact on our and other people's lives. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that living with a brain injury is about a process and a journey, not a destination. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can have an active part in pursuing our dreams and living our destinies.

Self-advocacy reveals to us that life no longer needs to look like it did before our brain injuries. Self-advocacy helps us to wake up from being in denial so that we can get on with our lives. Self-advocacy inspires us to get into action, so that we can create a good life for ourselves. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can create and experience hope. Self-advocacy give us the creative capacity to experience what we never dreamed possible. Self-advocacy empowers our ability to excel in life, in spite of what we may have been told. Self-advocacy helps us to find a way, when we are told there is no way. Self-advocacy inspires us to find and live in our truth and stop believing lies. Self-advocacy helps us achieve our dreams, one step at a time.

Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery Part 1

January 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Yesterday was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. A day to celebrate the life of a man who brought about change. Change that echoed the decision of Rosa Parks to no longer sit in the back of the bus. The back of the bus that practically and metaphorically represents a dis empowering of the individual.

Rosa Parks decision to be heard came with a price, however her “declaration” made a profound statement. Rosa, like the work of Martin Luther King Jr. echoed the sentiments of many demanding equal rights. The ability to be heard and included.

Since his death, on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee; Dr. King’s message of equality and inclusion continues to be shouted from the “house tops”. Continues to be stated and made clear through the ripples of his message.

In **April of 2013** I was asked to conduct a workshop at the [Embracing Life and Living Well after Brain Injury Conference](#) in Seattle, Washington. During my stay at the conference I heard one of the organizers say that the Brain Injury Conference for survivors was separate from the portion of the Brain Injury Conference for the professional community. The professional community serving the brain injury community.

In **October 2013** I was asked to give a keynote presentation at the [2013 Southwest Conference on Disability](#) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During my keynote presentation I stated that the professional community could benefit from what we, who are living with brain injuries; have learned navigating life with brain injuries. Working together, we could create and bring about an enriched program of recovery for individuals living with brain injuries and invisible disabilities. A program of recovery based on what has worked for us. A program of recovery that would breed hope.

In **March of 2014** I wrote an article, [Beyond Brain Injury Awareness Month — Why Are Brain Injury Survivors Told to Sit in the Back of the Bus?](#). In this article I asked, “Why are brain injury survivors, in practice; are being told to sit at the back of he bus”. I also asked, “Why are brain injury survivors not being brought to the “table” to provide practical input?”. In **Beyond Brain Injury Awareness Month — Why Are Brain Injury Survivors Told to Sit in the Back of the Bus?** I went on to ask 5 additional questions:

Can some one in the professional community— trusted to empower and give hope to brain injury survivors – please tell me.

“Why, in practice; Are Brain Injury Survivors being told to Sit In the Back Of the Bus?”

Can some one in the professional community please tell me.

“Why are beacons of hope and agents of empowerment dismissed, discounted, discredited, minimized and marginalized by the professional community?”

Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery Part 2

January 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Can anyone in the professional community please tell me.

“Why the “brain injury industry” seeks to divide and separate us from individuals working with in the professional community?”

Can anyone in the professional community please tell me.

“Why are why are brain injury survivors told that we are the “experts”, yet not listened to, valued or heard?”

Can some one in the professional community please tell me.

“Why are professionals in the “brain injury industry” communicating — by their behavior — to brain injury survivors that our “voice” does not matter?”

Since writing, Beyond Brain Injury Awareness Month — Why Are Brain Injury Survivors Told to Sit in the Back of the Bus? I have yet to gain a response from anyone with in the professional community.

In November 2014 I wrote an article, [Why are Brain Injury Professionals Not Listening to Brain Injury Survivors?](#)

In that article, I shared several points. It is hard to exactly know why my attempts to enhance brain injury recovery have been, in effect; trivialized by the “professional community”. What I can’t understand. Why professionals with in the “brain injury industry” in effect minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount what people like myself bring to the “table” to enhance brain injury recovery.

Per my experience, approaching **Second Chance to Live's 9th year anniversary**, I have also had a similar experiences. Being ignored when ever I have freely sought to be of service to both brain injury associations and brain injury alliances in all 50 states. I have also found my efforts to provide encouragement, empowerment and hope disregarded by organizations, rehabilitation centers, providers of brain injury services and support groups with in those systems.

I am not sure why this is the case, as what I am offering is without charge or cost to them through [Second Chance to Live](#), [Create a Spark of Hope](#) and my **Second Chance to Live 5 e Books** and my **Create a Spark of Hope e Book** [How to Create Hope](#).

This does not make sense to me, as what I offer through my websites and e Books is tested and proven.

In **April of 2015** I was invited to attend the **12th Annual NABIS Conference on Brain Injury** by Mr. David Seaton. Thank you Mr. Seaton for the opportunity to attend the conference. The experience and the opportunity was an honor for me. In follow-up to the conference I wrote this article, [Second Chance to Live and the North American Brain Injury Society 2015 Conference on Brain Injury](#).

Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery Part 3

January 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In the article I shared:

“As an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability I noticed some thing as I listened to the speakers and interacted with individuals attending the conference. There were not many brain injury survivors in attendance at the conference. Actually, I only met one. Patty Foster. Patty Foster, who attended the conference with Deana Adams PH.D, LPC-S. The absence of other brain injury survivors puzzled me.

What mystified me was, why there were not more brain injury survivors included in the **12th Annual North American Brain Injury Society Conference**. What mystified me was, why brain injury survivors were not included to be an integral part of the conference. What mystified me was that the conference committee clearly was not interested in the benefit that brain injury survivors could offer to the Ph. D's, MD's, JD.'s and other providers attending the conference.

As I thought about the lack of inclusion of brain injury survivors at the conference, several realities dawned on me. Those individuals planning and those attending the conference intentionally excluded brain injury survivors. By realizing this disparity, what became apparent was that those who planned the conference and those attending clearly do not see brain injury survivors with equality. What also became apparent, by intentionally excluding brain injury survivors from the conference; the “brain injury industry” had little respect for brain injury survivors.

I am not sure why there is a lack of respect and a lack of inclusion by the “brain injury industry”? Can anyone that is part of the “brain injury industry tell me?

What mystified me, was the lack of equal representation of survivors to enhance brain injury recovery for “professionals” attending the conference. There was no apparent interest in having brain injury survivors share what helped them to overcome obstacles. What mystified me was that the **North American Brain Injury Society Conference** could have enhanced brain injury recovery by including brain injury survivors.

Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery Part 4

January 19, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Epilogue

What did not make sense at the time, has since become apparent. I will use a metaphor to illustrate.

As when families and guests get together for parties and holiday meals, children are often made to sit at the kids table. To sit at the adult table with the adult's, becomes a right of passage. Being a brain injury survivor can be likened to being made to sit at the kid's table. Being a professional can be likened to sitting at the adult or grown up table. But, unlike with children who eventually have the right of passage to sit at the grown up table; brain injury survivors have no right of passage.

Brain injury survivors are subsequently led to believe that they do not deserve to be, sit or be a part of the discussion at the grown up table. Brain injury survivors are subsequently led to believe that they do not have right to be listened to or valued. Such a message conveys a huge injustice.

For those professionals – who are a part of the “brain injury industry” reading this article, such messages are very disconcerting. Such messages convey an inability of brain injury survivors to contribute to one's life apart from professional intervention. Such a message creates dependencies, limits and undermines hope.

But, I have a solution

Why not have more brain injury survivors attend brain injury conferences held by professionals. In my estimation, having brain injury survivors attend and be among the speakers / presenters at these conferences would greatly enhance the learning experience of professionals in attendance.

Invite and provide the financial ability for individuals living with brain injuries to attend your conferences. Give us the dignity to sit at the “grown up” table and be a part of the brain injury recovery discussion.

Let's work together. Include brain injury survivors to improve the quality of life for individuals living with the impact of a traumatic or other brain injuries. Invite us to come to the front of the bus, to be a part of the discussion. Invite people living with brain injuries to your conferences and let us share what has worked for us. What has worked for us, as individuals living with brain injuries. What has worked for us, to empower our ability to overcome many obstacles.

You say that you want to help improve the lives of brain injury survivors. With all due respect, to that I would say; “Put your money where your mouth is to enhance the brain injury recovery process”.

Please No More Rhetoric

Let us create win / win outcomes together.

Overcoming Adversity and Setbacks

February 8, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. For those individuals who do not know me, my name is Craig J. Phillips. I am a survivor of a severe traumatic brain injury, resulting from an open skull fracture; in an automobile accident in 1967 when I was 10 years old. Although I was not expected to live the night of the accident, nor succeed beyond high school academically, I went on to obtain my undergraduate degree in 10 years and my graduate degree in 3 1/2 years. You see, once my external wounds healed the impact of my traumatic brain injury remained hidden for many, many years.

After many, many years of struggling, to fit academically and vocationally; I was deemed to be unemployable by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and declared disabled by the Social Security Administration. But, I did not give up. In my interest to still be of service and I created **2 websites, 2 You Tube Channels** and have written **6 e Books**. My motivation for creating my websites, you tube channels and e Books has been to encourage, motivate and empower individuals facing adversity and addressing setbacks. To encourage them to keep moving forward. To not give up on their process, a loving God or themselves. To stay committed to their course. To keep running their race. To trust the process. To trust a loving God. To trust themselves, through the process.

To trust that the adversity and setbacks that they may be facing, is going to be used for their good and not for their harm. To trust that more will be revealed in time. To trust that the pieces of the puzzle are going to come together at the right time and in the right order. To trust that the dots will connect forward for them. To trust that what may not make sense now, will bring clarity.

In my desire to be of service, I have included links to my websites, you tube channels and e Books below. All are offered without a fee or charge. Please share these links with anyone who may be experiencing adversity or facing setbacks in their lives. If you are working within an organizations that is seeking to serve individuals who are facing adversity and setback (s), please share the below links with them. In the event that you would like to add each link to your website's list of useful resources, you have my permission. If there is any other way that I can be of service to you, please let me know.

I look forward to being of service.

[Brain Injury Recovery — 5 Free eBooks](#)

[Second Chance to Live You Tube Channel](#)

[Create a Spark of Hope website](#)

[Create a Spark of Hope – It's Never too Late to Create Hope eBook](#)