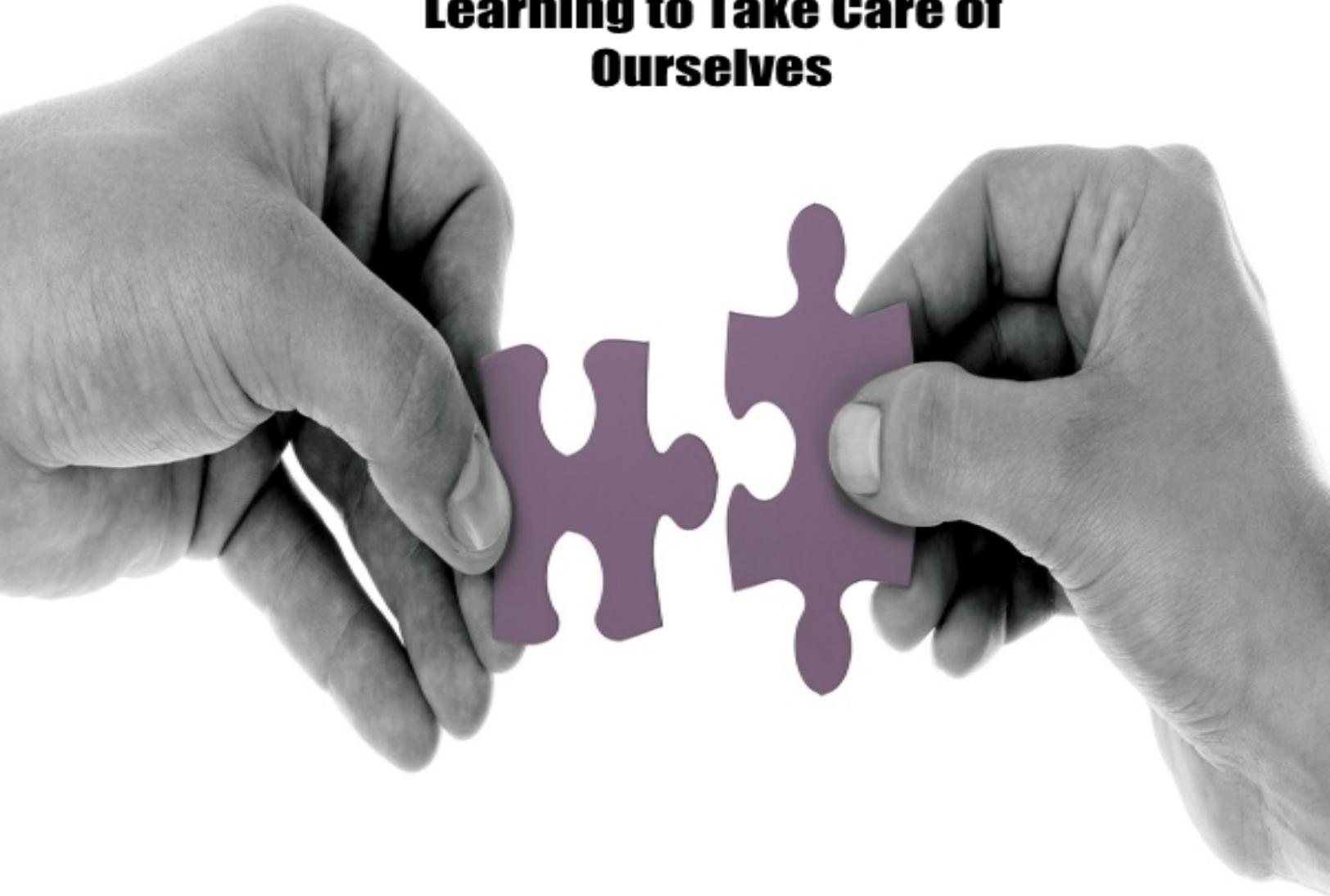


**Living with a Brain Injury
And
Learning to Take Care of
Ourselves**



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

Introduction

Living with a brain injury can leave us baffled and confused. What adds to the confusion is that once our external wounds have healed, we look “normal”. What was once familiar, no longer seems to make sense to us. In our attempts to adapt, we may find ourselves denying what we can not understand. In the process, we may find ourselves being blamed for what is out of our control. In our confusion, we may find that our judgment is challenged and questioned.

We may subsequently begin to question our judgment. In the process we may have a difficult time trusting. Trusting both ourselves and other people. As our ability to trust crumbles we may begin to question hope and life itself. In the process, we may find that we experience a sense of alienation. Alienation from both other people and from ourselves. In our sense of alienation, we may find ourselves shrinking back into the shadows of isolation.

Isolating may feel like a warm blanket that keeps us safe from stereotypes and stigmatization. But isolation only serves to keep us from experiencing what life has to offer to us. As an individual who has lived with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability for the past 49 years, I have experienced all of which and what I have shared above. With my awareness, I came to realize that I needed to do something different in my life, to be able to get different results in my life.

The Good News

I believe, and has been my experience, that there is a tremendous power in being able to identify with the experiences of other people. Other people who have had similar experiences, struggles and adversities. In my experience, I have found that as I identify with other people I find the freedom to come out of the shadows of isolation. I find, as I identify with other people, that the snare (s) of alienation is broken and in the process I find the courage to be my authentic self.

In my experience, this process of finding the courage to be my authentic self – not someone I think other people want me to be – has been likened to putting pieces of a puzzle together. In this e Book, as well as in my 7 other e Books I share other puzzle pieces that have helped me and continue to help me to be my authentic self. I would invite you to read through the articles in this e Book and let me know if you can identify with me. I look forward to hearing from you, as we live our lives with brain injuries.

To read my other 7 e Books – which like this one is free to download – you may click on this link: [**Second Chance to Live — 7 e Books — Free for Download**](#)

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So...Where Do I Fit Following my Brain Injury

April 12, 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. Yesterday I received a comment to an article that I recently wrote and published, [Creating after Brain Injury](#). As I thought about the comment some thoughts came to mind. Following a brain injury many of us ask the question. **“So...Where do I fit?”** Below I would like to share what helped me to answer that question for myself: **So...Where Do I Fit Following My Brain Injury?**

Here is part of the comment I received, “.... I can grow where my feet are planted” – what a concept!”

In an article that I wrote and published on December 5, 2015 [Brain Injury and What Might Have Been](#) I spoke to the question of **“Why?”** For individuals who experience traumatic or acquired brain injuries the question of **“why?”** travels in the wake of the circumstances that led to our tbi or abi. Many times **“why?”** unknowingly becomes an “under tow” for the brain injury survivor once their external wounds have healed. **“Why”** becomes the “under tow” that keeps us gasping for air as the waves of reason “pull us under”, time after time.

The “under tow” of “why?” gives way to a denial system that leads us to believe “its” all up in our head and that we need to snap out of “it”. When we find that we are unable to snap out of “it” denial becomes an adversary that mocks us for not being more. Denial then unconsciously sets us off on pilgrimage to prove that we are not impacted by what we can not accept about ourselves. Denial thus serves to keep us stuck. But thank God we don’t have to stay stuck.

Once the external wounds from my open skull fracture healed and my skull filled out the impact of my traumatic brain injury became invisible. For many years I unknowingly tried to fight my way out of a “proverbial brown paper bag”. Because denial remained the skewed “coping mechanism” for what was evident, but could not be defined; I found myself floundering. Floundering because I attempted to grow where I was not meant to grow.

But there was good news to come. Through much pain and toil I reached a point in my life where I could no longer deny what could not be changed. With my pain and toil came the catalyst that broke me free from the skewed “coping mechanism” of denial.

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

As my awareness and acceptance of my reality grew, so did the realization that I could indeed be empowered with in my reality. With this realization came a new freedom. A freedom to make different choices. Choices that would help me to grow where my feet were planted. In my e Book, [Moving Forward Following a Brain injury](#) I share information that helped me to act on these different choices. Choices that served to empower my life. Choices that helped me to answer the question, **“So...Where Do I Fit Following My Brain Injury?”**.

For many years I found myself feeling like a square peg in a world of round holes. My denial fostered the belief that there was some thing wrong with me by being a square peg. On February 4, 2011 I wrote an article, [Feeling like a Square Peg in a World of Round Holes](#). In the article I shared that by owning myself as square peg, in a world of round holes; I could stop struggling to fit in. By doing so, I could begin to accept myself as an individual.

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

Through accepting my reality and moving forward following my brain injury, I began to realize that I could stop comparing my lot in life to other people’s lots in life. I began to realize that I could stop focusing on what I could not build and start focusing on what I could build on my lot. Through accepting my reality and moving forward following my brain injury I began to realize that I could indeed build something beautiful on my lot in life. Through moving forward following my brain injury, I began to realize that I could indeed grow where my feet are planted. Through moving forward following my brain injury I began to realize that I could build on a firm foundation. A foundation that would reveal to me where I fit following my brain injury. A foundation that would bring clarity. A foundation that would reveal answers.

The answers and the clarity did not come “over night” but became clear to me with time. I share that the answer took time for me, so that if the answer (s) does not come to you “over night” that you will not be discouraged. Hang in there and keep searching. Don’t give up! The answer (s) and the clarity will come to you. You will find where you fit following your brain injury. You will learn to build some thing beautiful on your lot in life. Be encouraged my friend. More will be revealed to you and to me with and in time.

So...Where Do I Fit Following my Brain Injury Page 3

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

Affirmation

I can grow where my feet were planted. “Planted” in the realm of my circumstances by learning to accept who I am as square pegs. I don’t have to be like anyone else to prosper. I can learn to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. I can give to the people who want what I have to give. I don’t have to be anyone but myself. I can learn to how to grow where I am planted by accepting my “lot in life”. I don’t have to convince anyone. I can go about my business and let people believe what they want or need to believe. I can build some thing beautiful on my lot in life and be satisfied in the process.

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs, ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who are alive.” Howard Thurman

“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 cannot hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.” Maria Robinson

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” Henry David Thoreau

You're Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability

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 with out 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 Page 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.

Whose Life am I My Living?

April 26, 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. Several years ago I wrote an article, [Painting your Portrait {aka}This is Not a Dress Rehearsal](#). In that article I spoke about how life happens and how we respond to what happens impacts how life happens. If I am focusing on what happened I stay stuck. If I look at what happened and make the decision to learn from what happened I make an empowering choice. I make the choice to learn and grow from what happened in my life. By making that choice I move from feeling helpless to experiencing empowerment.

I move from the belief system that leads me to believe I am a victim to realizing that I can live my life as an empowered individual.

Recently, I wrote an article, [Are you Living Your Truth?](#). In that article I spoke to the need to understand the “TRUTH” that we are living. I spoke to that need because without being clear, I may unknowingly be living a “LIE”. In that article I listed several questions that helped me. I will list those questions below. In the event that questioning whether you are living your truth, answer them and you will gain clarity too. In my experience I found myself attempting to live in the TRUTH that other people expected of me for a very long time. Their intentions were good, but the results for me did not work out. In my experience, I had to reach a point in time when I had enough pain. Enough pain that helped me to realize that to continue in that truth would result in my becoming bankrupt. Bankrupt in my body, mind and spirit.

“Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.” Henry David Thoreau

I am grateful for the pain that I experienced in my life. For that pain was the motivator that helped me to seek out my truth. The truth that would lead me to answer the question, “**Whose Life am I Living?**” The truth that would break me free from a life of quiet desperation. The truth that helped me to break free from the cocoon like a butterfly. The truth that helped me to realize that I had other choices. The truth that helped me to realize that my life was and is of tremendous value. The truth that helped me to move in the direction of my dreams, by creating hope in my life. The truth that helped me to accept other people’s truth and live in my own truth. The truth that helped me to follow my dreams and sing the song that is in me.

Whose Life am I My Living? Page 2

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

Questions that helped me to answer the question, “Whose Life am I Living”.

1. Am I waiting for some one to define my truth?
2. Am I waiting for some one to tell me what to do?
3. Have I been living some one else’s truth?
4. Is that truth working for me?
5. Is that truth leaving me frustrated with my life?
6. Does that truth leave me feeling out-of-place; like a fish out of water?
7. If there was nothing “holding me back” what would I love to do with my life?
8. What is my truth and how can I live my truth?
9. Have I looked for a way(s) to live my truth?
10. What is keeping me from pursuing my truth?
11. How can I use my truth to live my life and follow my dreams?
12. Am I committed to finding ways to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that will work for me?
13. How can I use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that will work for me?
14. How can I use my gifts, talents and abilities to live my truth?

Are You Living Your Truth?

April 25, 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. Over the past 2 days I wrote a **2 part** article, [What is, “Second Chance to Live”?](#). The 2 images that I used were puzzles with the caption, **Finding What Works Best For You**. Through my process and for many years I attempted to fit into a truth that other people wanted me to own.

In essence, I attempted to use what other people were leading me to believe would work for me. After many years of attempting to fit into that “**TRUTH**”, for me; I found myself frustrated and bewildered. So I tried all the harder until I began to realize that as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability I could not fit into someone else’s “**TRUTH**” for me.

With this realization I became aware that although that was “**TRUTH**” for other people, it was a “**LIE**” for me. The truth worked for other people, but did not work for me. Realizing that the truth did not work for me, helped me to be aware. My awareness helped me to stop beating up on myself for not being able to own “their truth” for me. My awareness helped me to find a freedom. A freedom to realize that although I could not own their truth, I could find and own my truth.

Not that “it” was a lie, but “it” was not my truth. The “TRUTH”, being that I could learn how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. The truth that I could own for myself.

With the realization I began to understand the difference between what was the truth and what was a lie for me. What worked for other people was the truth for them, but not truth for me. With my awareness, I began to understand that I needed to find my own truth. I also began to understand that no one could define my truth for me — what would work best for me. What I also began to understand was that I was the only one who could create with my truth. What I discovered was that only I could discover and live my truth. And this discovery takes time.

Time, Effort, Trial and Error, Persistence and Tenacity. Time, Effort, Trial and Error, Persistence and Tenacity before I could own, create and live my “**TRUTH**”.

As you read this article you may be asking yourself, “Am I living my Truth?”. Several questions that I needed to ask myself to answer, “Am I living my Truth?” are below. These questions also may help you to answer the question, “Am I living my truth?”.

Are You Living Your Truth? Page 2

April 25, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Truth, in the context of these questions; is how we use what we are able to do now, in ways that work for us.

1. Am I waiting for some one to define my truth?
2. Am I waiting for some one to tell me what to do?
3. Have I been living some one else's truth?
4. Is that truth working for me?
5. Is that truth leaving me frustrated with my life?
6. Does that truth leave me feeling out-of-place; like a fish out of water?
7. If there was nothing "holding me back" what would I love to do with my life?
8. What is my truth and how can I live my truth?
9. Have I looked for a way(s) to live my truth?
10. What is keeping me from pursuing my truth?
11. How can I use my truth to live my life and follow my dreams?
12. How can I use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that will work for me?
13. Am I committed to finding ways to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me?
14. How can I use my gifts, talents and abilities to live my truth?

For many years I had no idea that I was living a lie. Not that their truth was a lie, but that their truth was a lie for me. I am glad that I reached a point in my life. A point in my life when I realized I was struggling, unsuccessfully; to make work what was not meant to work for me. Trying to make another persons truth work for me. In the event that you also find yourself asking the question, "Am I living my truth?", I would encourage you to sit down and answer the questions I asked myself. And as you answer the questions, answer them as though nothing is holding you back.

As though nothing is holding you back from living your "TRUTH".

Brain Injury — Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment

April 29, 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 the past several articles, “[Are You Living Your Truth?](#)” and “[Whose Life am I Living?](#)” I spoke to the need to find, own and live our truth. Apart from finding, owning and living our truth we may find ourselves living someone else’s life. In the process we may find that we have been living our lives in quiet desperation:

As a consequence, at the end of our lives; we may find that we never sang our song.

“Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.” Henry David Thoreau

But thank God we can live our destinies outside the “box” of Employment. We can learn how to sing our song.

For many years I had no idea what song resided in me because I was led to believe that my destiny had to be sung in a certain way. In searching for my destiny, I took many interest inventories, intelligence tests, personality tests and other tests. I took these tests at colleges and universities in my attempt to find my song. The information was helpful, but was only information. With the results from these varied tests, I tried different courses of study and vocational paths. I obtained a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling in my desire to help people with disabilities identify jobs that would be in line with their interests and skills. Jobs in which they could have success.

I worked as a certified rehabilitation counselor as a masters level rehabilitation counselor with several insurance companies and with the department of vocational rehabilitation. In both of these positions, I assisted individuals with work-related injuries and various kinds of disabilities in their search of suitable employment.

I was terminated from those positions and eventually became a client of the department of vocational rehabilitation in Florida and then in North Carolina. The end result from these 2 DVR evaluations was that I was deemed to be unemployable. After 3 applications I was declared disabled by the Social Security Administration. The end result from being deemed unemployable and declared disabled was that no one had an answer for me. An answer that would help me to find, own and live my truth. My educational pursuits in geology, physical education, nursing, emergency medical technology, theology, recreation, and rehabilitation counseling seemed to be for naught. Seemed to be for naught because I was unable to maintain employment using what I had learned.

“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 — Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Page 2

April 29, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Based on the reality, that I was deemed unemployable and declared disabled; I could not use traditional employment to own, express and live my truth. I needed to find another way. Although my educational pursuits appeared to be for naught, based on being deemed unemployable and declared disabled; I am glad I did not give up on finding my truth. My encouragement to you is that you do not give up on finding your truth. Use what you have learned along the way to fuel your vision. Look within yourself to determine what is your primary motivator. What do you like to do with your time and how can you use what you enjoy to enhance both your life and the lives of people in your world. My search revealed that I had a strong desire to encourage people to not give up.

Because I was conditioned to believe that my hope could only be found in the “box” (traditional employment), I thought that I had run out of options. I thought that my destiny was out of reach. But thank God that I did not give up. With time through turning over many proverbial “rocks” my path became more clear to me. My search and determination to find my path revealed that my truth and destiny was waiting for me outside the “box”. By continuing to look, the door opened for me.

Realization

I share the above with you for this reason. People and society, as a whole, conditioned me; to believe that they held the answers. Because I believed they held the answers, for me; I pursued those answers for many years. In my pursuit of those answers through testing, interest inventories, intelligence tests, personality tests and other tests; as well as my educational and vocational pursuits the answers I found the answers did not come for me. What I had hoped for did not come to pass. The puzzle pieces did not appear and I became discouraged. But I am glad that I did not give up. What I discovered, through time and by not giving up; was that the answers that I had searched for did not factor in the impact of my brain injury and my invisible disability. Although I was led to believe that I would do well through the testing and educational pursuits, I found otherwise. *What I found was that I kept “stubbing” my life on the walls of matters that were out of my control.*

Brain Injury — Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Page 3

April 29, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Who knew? I certainly did not, nor did others around me. But I am glad that I became aware. In my awareness, I realized that I needed to find my own way. A way in which I could share what I had learned through the process of navigating through life for many years. A way to encourage individuals with similar life experiences to seek out and own their truth's. A way to encourage individuals to live their destinies beyond the “box”. A way to encourage individuals with similar life experiences to not give up on their processes, a loving God or themselves. A way to encourage individuals with similar life experiences to not give up because more will be revealed.

I share the above with you to encourage you — in the event that you have found yourself unemployable and disabled — to not give up. The process may take time, as the process took for me. But by not giving up and through diligence your search, you will “strike gold”. By not giving up, you will find and own your truth. The truth in how to express your gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that will work for you. And as I have found, the expression of your truth may not take the form given to you by other people or society as a whole. No worries. There is a different way. A way that is uniquely suited for you my friend. A way that will set you apart, to meet a unique need. A way that is fashioned for you to meet, by the grace of a loving God. A way that will set people free. Free beyond the confines of a “box”. A way that will inspire the lives that your life touches. A way that will create ripples of hope. A way that will empower you to live your dreams. A way that will help you to live and fulfill your destiny, beyond your hope and imagination.

Be encouraged my friend. More will be revealed to you and to me, in time.

Brain Injury Recovery — Dependence or Independence?

May 16, 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. On January 19, 2016, Dr. Martin Luther King Day; I wrote and published the article, [Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery](#). The lack of inclusion of individuals living with brain injuries by professionals in the brain injury industry promotes and perpetuates dependence upon them, instead of independence from them. In the article I spoke about the disparity of equality and inclusion of brain injury survivors by professionals. Professionals working with in the “industry” of brain injury recovery. In May 2013 I was asked to conduct a workshop at a brain injury conference in Seattle, Washington.

During my attendance at the conference I had several enlightening conversations. One of these conversations revealed that brain injury conferences are set up to have a day for brain injury survivors and a day for professionals. The events of the days are separated. Another conversation revealed that to be on the board of the brain injury association one needed to donate \$20,000 to the association. As I reflected on these conversations some concerns came to mind. What was behind brain injury conferences and brain injury associations? Dependence or Independence?

What was behind brain injury conferences and brain injury associations? Dependence or Independence?

As I thought about the distinction – a day or so for survivors and a day or so for professionals – I wondered why the brain injury conference did not join survivors with professionals. The second conversation raised concerns. Why was there a large amount of money required to be a member of the board of a brain injury association. As I thought about both conversations the matter of inclusion and exclusion became apparent to me. I wondered if it was true that brain injury conferences and brain injury associations were more about making money than helping brain injury survivors?

In March 2015 I was invited to attend the North American Brain Injury Society Conference in San Antonio, Texas. I was very fortunate to have had my plane ticket, hotel, food and a \$650 conference fee paid for, so that I could attend the conference. The man who brought me to and paid for my attending the conference told me that I would be able to see how the brain injury industry worked. The experience was indeed eye-opening to me. During my attendance at the conference I noticed some thing that puzzled me. There were not many brain injury survivors in attendance. Actually, I only met one other brain injury survivor and she accompanied one of the providers. The provider told me that the survivor inspired her to do her Ph.D work.

Brain Injury Recovery — Dependence or Independence? Page 2

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During my time at the conference I met many MD.'s, Ph.D's, JD's and a host of brain injury industry providers. After arriving home from the conference, I reflected upon the absence of brain injury survivors. Plenty of professional and providers, but the absence of survivors. What became apparent to me was the absence of brain injury survivors. A lack of inclusion or a voice by brain injury survivors during the conference. What this led me to believe was that brain injury survivors had not been included in the planning of the conference or the conference program. The absence of brain injury survivor's did not make sense to me. Why would brain injury survivors not be included in the planning or program, as the brain injury conference was about people living with brain injuries.

The absence did not make sense to me, as who could speak with more credibility than people living with brain injuries. I am not quite sure what the motivation of planners were in not including people living with brain injuries at the conference? It may have been that the exorbitant cost of attending the conference. It may have been that the planners and the conference committee did not consider viable the contribution of people living with brain injuries. That brain injury survivors do not have anything worthwhile to contribute. I am not sure why people living with brain injuries are subsequently led to believe that their voice (s) do not count? I am not sure why professional working in the brain injury industry say that we are the experts, but do not seek to not listen and include us in the discussion.

“Whatever the motivation for not including brain injury survivors in the planning, participation and presentation at the conference, the end result was disenfranchisement. Disenfranchisement from the process and the discussion to provide excellent service provision for brain injury survivors. A disenfranchisement of those working with in the brain injury industry. MD.'s, Ph. D.'s, JD's and service providers. Professionals who could benefit from the voices of individuals living with brain injuries. A disenfranchisement from having a voice that needs to be heard.

A disenfranchisement due to a lack of interest to include the voice of brain injury survivors at professional conferences. A disenfranchisement for not including brain injury survivors to present in the program format of professional brain injury conferences. As a result of the lack of inclusion at these professional brain injury conferences brain injury survivors feel exploited. Like cattle to be bought and sold on the open market, having no choice or say so in the matter.

Brain Injury Recovery — Dependence or Independence? Page 3

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A disenfranchisement that results in a system that seems to promote ongoing dependencies. Dependencies that slowly drain financial resources. Dependencies on a prescribed agendas. Dependencies upon providers through MD's, Ph. D's, JD.'s, other professionals and services. Dependencies upon symptom treatment. Dependencies upon drug regimen's and treatment modalities. Dependencies upon programs, that do not produce long-term solutions. Dependencies upon paying fees to receive services. Dependencies upon compliance to continue to receive services.

Dependencies that do not encourage and empower lasting hope.

Recently, I was speaking with a friend. He made a profound statement, **“There is no money in independence”**. As I thought about his statement I realized there is also no money in encouraging self-efficacy or self-advocacy. But then I realized, there was a better way.

Something to Consider

Consequently, as I spoke about in my article, **Equality, Inclusion and Brain Injury Recovery**; for many years African-American individuals were told to sit at the back of the bus. African-American individuals were led to believe that they were inferior. Such behavior continued until one day a woman by the name of Rosa Parks said no more. She took a bold move and sat in the front of the bus. What she decided to do changed things forever. In my estimation, brain injury survivors have been told to sit in the back of the bus for too long. By being told to sit in the back of the bus survivors voices have been ignored.

Like Rosa Park's action to move to the front of the bus was heard, brain injury survivors need to take their seat at the front of the bus. The brain injury industry say's that we are the experts, but in practice minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount our voice. The brain injury industry says that “it is about us, with us”, but in reality the brain injury industry makes, “it about us, without us”. To professionals reading this article and for conference committees, “make it about us, with us”. Include our “voice” in your planning and at your upcoming conferences.

Brain Injury Recovery — Dependence or Independence? Page 4

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Brain injury survivors are being told that “it is about us, with us”, but in reality the brain injury industry makes, “it about us, without us”. To professionals reading this article, “make it about us, with us”. Let us, together; encourage self-efficacy and self-advocacy

We have the Power to Encourage Long Term Solutions

Involve brain injury survivors in the planning and preparation of your brain injury professional conferences. Have brain injury survivors present and lead workshops at your professional brain injury conferences. Because many individuals who are living with brain injuries are living on fixed incomes, pay for their expenses to attend your conferences. Involve brain injury survivors in your service provision. Invest in individuals living with brain injuries, instead of only using brain injury survivors to promote your agenda(s) and pad your bottom line (s). We are worth your investment, as we pay your salaries.

Invest in the lives of brain injury survivors, beyond your programs. Give brain injury survivors the dignity and respect that you want from us. We are more than a paycheck to you. Make it about us, with us” by including our voice (s) at your conferences. No longer keep us at the back of the bus. Invite us to sit in the front of the bus. Invite us to join the conversation. Embrace our value, significance and what we can bring to the discussion. What **WE** can accomplish, as you seek to succeed; through your practice (s) and service provision (s).

Together We Can Encourage and Empower Lasting Hope”

Trust, Learning to Be and Being at Peace with God

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

In July of 2007 I wrote an article to share what helped me to learn how to trust, learn how to be and learn how to be at peace with God. Through my experience, I discovered that as I learned to trust, to be myself and to be at peace with God I gained a new outlook on life. Through my experience, I discovered that as I learned how to trust, how to be myself and how to be at peace with God I found hope.

My outlook on life changed by learning how to trust, how to be and how to be at peace with God. My perspective shifted as I began to realize that what I was unable to do for myself was being done for me. My hope increased as I began to realize I could trust the process, a loving God and myself.

I do not trust, be or have peace with God perfectly. The information that I share in this article helped me to begin the process. Learning to believe, to be and to be at peace with God helped me. Trusting, learning to be and being at peace with God helped me to realize that my circumstances were not being done to me. Instead, I discovered that my circumstances occurred for me. My realization helped me to see that my circumstances were not something to be endured. My realization helped me to see my circumstances as something to be welcomed. Welcomed as guides, messengers, and gifts to lead and direct my steps.

Guides, messengers, and gifts are given to teach me what I needed to know to empower my process and journey.

Hope

In the event that you struggle with being able to trust, be yourself or be at peace with God I would invite you to read **Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust**. What I learned in my process and journey may help you. If you hit a “road block” or have a question as you read, watch or listen to my article; please send those “roadblocks” or questions to me. All “road blocks” can be identified with and all questions are good questions. As you read, watch / listen to the article and my experience helps you, please let me know. I would love to hear from you.

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

My suggestion is that you read / watch / listen to each part in order. The reason I make this suggestion is that each part of the article builds on the previous part or parts of the article.

In the event you know anyone who could benefit from the content of this article, please share the article series with them. Thank you.

Article Series:

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust —Part 1**](#)

[**Peace with God and Learning to Trust —Part 2**](#)

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust — Part 3**](#)

Video Presentation of the Article Series

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust Video Presentation Part 1**](#)

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust Video Presentation Part 2**](#)

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust Video Presentation Part 3**](#)

[**Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust Video Presentation Part 4**](#)

Running Your Race and Winning in Life

June 21, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Running and Winning my Race in Life does not Happen Over Night. Running and Winning my Race in Life Happens Over Time. Running and Winning my Race in Life Happens by Not Giving Up!

In my experience, I have found that awareness gives me the ability to accept what I can not change. Acceptance gives me the ability to take a different course of action. Action that can help me to be an actor, instead of a reactor in my life. By acting, instead of reacting to my circumstances; I am given the gift to be able to make different choices — in the moment. Through realizing that I have different choices I am able to work to get different results in my life. Realizing that I have the option of making different choices in life, I am able to get different results in life. I am able to win my race.

Realizing that I have the option of making different choices in life, I am able to get different results in life. Through making different choices I realize I no longer have to “freeze” in my steps. Through making different choices and getting different results I am able to run my race. I am able to run my race, no matter how slow I think I am; and still win my race.

By realizing that I can get different results, I am given the ability to create hope in my life, a little at a time. As I create hope in my life, I take steps to move in the direction of fulfilling my dreams and my destiny, a little at a time. Not overnight, but over time. And as the last line in the fable of the tortoise and the hare says, “Slow and steady wins the race”. As I stay committed to my race — a little at a time — something wonderful will happen. Before long I will be able to look back and see how far I have come in my race, through not giving up.

Through realizing that we can make different choices, we can get different results. By realizing that we can get different results we can create hope in our lives. By creating hope in our lives we can move in the direction of fulfilling our dreams and our destinies. Through staying committed to our race, our course, our process and our journey we will pass our own finish line. Winning our race in life may not happen over night, but it will happen over time. No matter how slow we may think we are moving, by not giving up; we will win our race and cross our finish line.

Winning our race may not happen over night, but winning our race will happen over time. No matter how slow we may think we are moving we will win our race. We will win our race in life and cross our finish line, by not giving up.

Using Our Struggle to Empower Our Process

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

From 1977 to 1982 I watched the TV series, [The Incredible Hulk](#). The plot of the series involved a fugitive scientist, presumed dead travels across America under assumed names. Under extreme anger and stress (inner struggle) David Banner turns into the Hulk, using his strength and power to enhance people's lives.

In thinking about the transformation that David Banner makes into the incredible hulk several questions came to mind.

How can I use my inner struggle to empower my process?

How can I use my stress, anger and frustration to enhance my life and well being?

How can I use my anger, stress and frustration to empower my relationships?

How can I use anger, stress and frustration to bring good into my life?

How can I use my inner struggle to develop inner strength?

I would be interested in hearing how you use your anger, stress and frustration. How you use your inner struggle to empower your process? How you use your inner struggle to empower your life and your relationships? How you use your inner struggle to bring good into your life?

Brain Injury — Who is Defining You?

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

Following a brain injury, the individual may find themselves identified by the “event”. The “event” that is given a diagnosis. The diagnosis of a brain injury. Once a diagnosis has been given to the “event”, the individual may find themselves identified with a “label” that is connected to the “event”.

Once a diagnosis has been given to the “event” the individual may unconsciously begin defining themselves. Defining themselves with the “event” of their brain injury. The “event” that then is reinforced by a “label”.

The individual may then find themselves discriminated by a societal stereotype and stigmatization because of the event. Such discrimination manifests through patronizing, minimization, marginalization, dismissing and discounting. Such discrimination can lead to the individual doubting themselves.

But the good news is that we no longer have to allow the “event” to define who we are in this life We can stand free of any label, diagnosis, stereotype, and stigmatization. We no longer have to be intimidated by behaviors or by individuals. We no longer have to feel like victims because of an “event”.

We no longer have to doubt ourselves. We can have an active role in defining who we are in this life. We can choose how we show up in our life.

I have friends who remind me that I am empowered to define who I am as an individual apart from the “event” of my brain injury. Friends who remind me that I have choices. Friends who remind me that I no longer have to limit myself because of an “event”. Friends that remind me that I can stand free of a label, a stereotype, and a stigmatization and create a good life for myself.

As I have friends who remind me, let me remind you. You are empowered to define who you are apart from the “event” of your brain injury. Let me remind you that you have choices. Let me remind you that you no longer have to limit yourself because of an “event”. Let me remind you that you can stand free of a label, a stereotype, and a stigmatization to create a good life for yourself.

Brain Injury — Who is Defining You? Page 2

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

Several questions that have helped me live to define who I am apart from the “event” of my brain injury:

Are you defining yourself as an individual by the “event” of your brain injury?

Do you have people in your life who are leading you to believe that you are the “event” of your brain injury?

Do you have individuals, who by their behavior patronize, minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount who you are as an individual?

Do you feel limited because of those individuals or their behavior?

What could you do differently that would help you to realize that you are much more than the “event” of your brain injury?

Who is defining what you can do with your life?

How could you look at your circumstances in a different way?

If you were not limited by limitations, what would you be doing with your life?

With your limitations, how could you create what you would like to be doing; without limitations?

What steps can you take today to empower who you are as an individual, not as an individual living with a brain injury?

If I can help you to sort through the answers to these questions, please let me know.

Perfectionism, Learning, and Brain Injury

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

How do you learn best? How is your learning helping you to live your dreams? Whose shame are you carrying?

In our western culture, the “microwave” mindset prevails. If we can not have it, do it or be it “now” there is something wrong with us. For many years I bought into this way of thinking because of what I had been led to believe. That I should be able to do “it”, “have it” or “be it” perfectly and with little time or effort. In response, what became apparent to me was that perfectionism was driving me. I also found that I was driven to be perfect out of fear. What I began to realize was that my drive to be perfect had been getting in the way. In the way of my learning process and my ability to succeed in life.

In response, I found myself driven by the “ism” of “perfectionism” out of a fear of abandonment. An abandonment, from other people and even myself. What I discovered was that my need to be perfect was getting in my way. In the way of my learning process and my ability to succeed in life. Succeeding in my life, in ways that would work for me. In ways, that would equip me to follow my dreams and fulfill my destiny.

In ways that would help me to follow peace in my learning.

What I Discovered

Driven by perfectionism , I attempted to prove my worth and value to keep people from going away. You see I was led to believe that my worth and value came from outside of me. In the process, I developed habits of approval seeking, people pleasing and mind reading. Perfectionism drove me through the conditioned belief that because I did not meet expectations, I was a mistake.

Through my recovery process, I discovered something that I had been doing to myself for many years. I had been “shoulding” on myself for many years. I had been “shoulding” on myself by being driven by the notion that I: **Should Have Already Mastered Everything**. With this ongoing awareness, I discovered that I had been shaming myself, for not honoring my learning process.

With my ongoing awareness, I discovered that I had been shaming myself, for not honoring my learning process. For not honoring how I learned and how fast I learned.

Perfectionism, Learning, and Brain Injury Page 2

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With my awareness, I discovered that I had been allowing myself to be shamed by other people for several reasons. I found that I had been attempting to learn in ways that did not work for me. I also realized that I had been allowing other people to shame me because I was not giving myself enough time to learn. With this awareness, my life and learning process began to change.

A New Freedom

With my awareness, I began to experience a new freedom. A freedom to learn in ways that would work best for me. A freedom to learn at my own pace. A freedom to do things in ways that would work for me. A freedom to run my own race. A freedom to stop buying into the notion that I should have already mastered everything. A freedom to stop feeling like a mistake. A freedom to stop being undermined a fear of failure. A freedom to create. A freedom to reach my goals and dreams in ways that work for me. A freedom to not give up when other people told me I had no chance. A freedom to keep “tweaking” and making adjustments. A freedom to stumble and rise again, without abandoning myself for how I learn. A freedom to be at peace with myself.

What Helped Me

Through my recovery process, I discovered that shame kept me stuck for many years. I discovered that shame is a “being wound”. Shame is different than guilt, in that, with guilt; you can make an amends. Shame, on the other hand, debilitating shame; gives no option of relief. With my awareness, I began to realize that I needed to examine shame and the impact of shame on my life. Several years ago I wrote an article to share what I discovered that helped me to understand shame and how shame impacted my life.

Below is a link to the article and a video presentation of the article. The article, **Whose Shame are you Carrying?** In the event that you struggle with feeling like a mistake, I would invite you to click on the below links. The information may help you also to find a new freedom. A freedom to learn in ways that work for you. A freedom to learn at your own rate and pace. A freedom to follow your dreams. A freedom to stop feeling like a mistake. A freedom from a fear of failure. A freedom to create.

A freedom from abandoning yourself. A freedom to be at peace with yourself.

[Whose Shame are you Carrying?](#)

[Living with a Brain Injury — Whose Shame are You Carrying? Video Presentation](#)

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

Brain Injury, Defying the Odds and Winning in Life

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

As an individual living with a brain injury, we may feel helpless. In feeling helpless we may focus on our brain injuries. As a result, we may find ourselves distracted, not realizing that we have tremendous power. The power to choose. The power to create. The power to defy the odds.

The Power to move beyond the box of our limitations.

The Power to start defying the odds.

The Power to start winning in life.

The Power to realize that slow and steady wins the race.

The power to create a good life for ourselves. The power to move beyond the “when’s” and “if’s” in our recovery process. The power to stop waiting for things outside of us to change. The power to get busy. The power to explore how to use our gifts, talents and abilities to defy the odds.

“Everyone is trying to accomplish something big, not realizing that life is made up of the little things.” Frank A. Clark

“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.” Maria Robinson

“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.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

The Good News

The good news is that we can work a little at a time to improve the quality of our lives. The good news is that, as we keep moving forward; we will see ourselves accomplishing what we never dreamed possible. Little by little we will be able to accomplish what “they” told us we could not do. Little by little, we see ourselves defying the odds.

Little by little we will see ourselves achieving our dreams.

A Plan to Defy the Odds and Win in Life

Below are several questions that have helped me. Helped me to accomplish things, little by little; that I never dreamed possible. Helped me, little by little; to defy the odds. Helped me to begin to win in life despite a diagnosis, a label, a stereotype and a societal stigmatization.

Brain Injury, Defying the Odds and Winning in Life Page 2

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My encouragement to you would be to sit down with a piece of paper and a pen / pencil and answer these questions for yourself. By answering these questions you can develop a plan that will help you little by little to accomplish what you never dreamed possible. Help you little by little to defy the odds.

Help you and I to win in life despite a diagnosis, a label, a stereotype or a societal stigmatization.

What little steps can you take, today; to start defying the odds?

What can you do empower yourself as an individual living with a brain injury?

How can you grow and develop your mind as an individual living with a brain injury?

What can you do to improve your physical abilities on both sides of your body?

How can you enhance your spiritual growth, and your connection with a loving God and yourself?

What can you do to enhance your ability to trust the process, yourself and a loving God?

What little steps can you take to improve the quality of your life as an individual living with a brain injury?

A Strategy to Accomplish your Dreams, Defy the Odds and Win in Life

Several years ago I wrote a 2 part article series. I then created a 2 part video presentation of the series for individuals, who like myself learn better through watching and listening. What I share in the article and video presentation series helped and continues to help me to accomplish what I never dreamed possible. What helped and continues to help me to defy the odds and win in life.

The strategies that I share in the article and video presentation series have helped and continue to help me in my process — a little at a time.

Please let me know if the strategies in the article / video presentation series help you in your process. Thank you.

Click on the below links and they will open to you, either on Second Chance to Live or on You Tube.

[**Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1**](#)

[**Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2**](#)

[**Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1 Video Presentation**](#)

[**Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2 Video Presentation**](#)

Brain Injury, Damaged “Filters”, Stress and Taking Care of Myself

August 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Are you living with the impact of a brain injury? Are impulses getting in your way? Do you beat up on yourself? Do you respect your limits? Are you taking care of yourself? Would you like to take back your power? Would you like to live your life in a different way? These are questions I have asked of myself.

In August 1967, when I was 10 years old; I was in a motor vehicle accident with my family. In the accident, I sustained an open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. I remained in a coma for 3 weeks. I also sustained a fractured left femur, remained in traction for 7 weeks and then in a Spica or body cast for 5 months. Once my external wounds healed, the impact of damage done to my brain became invisible. Because I looked normal, although I walked with a limp for a long time; the impact to my brain at the time of the accident was no longer a consideration. Because I learned how to walk, talk, read, write, and speak in complete sentences the impact of the injury to my brain injury became invisible.

Because there was little information known about brain injuries at the time, and I looked normal; I was essentially on my own. I had no idea how the damage to my brain affected my life and well-being. I had no idea that I could take a different course of action. I had no idea that I had a choice. I had no idea that I could experience different outcomes. I had no idea that I could respect my limits. I had no idea that I could take back my power. I had no idea that I could or how to take care of myself. I had no idea how stress led to my feeling overwhelmed. I had no idea how stress increased my susceptibility to overreacting. I had no idea that I could change.

After many years of struggling to make sense of the walls I kept bumping into vocationally, I was made the client of the department of vocational rehabilitation. During my 1st of 2 experiences as a client of DVR, I became aware of the impact of damage to my right frontal lobe. I learned that the right frontal lobe contains “filters” that monitor impulse control. Once these “filters” have been damaged, behavior(s) once closely monitored by the filters now have ‘holes’ or ‘gaps’ in them. The “holes” or “gaps” in the filters allow once monitored impulse control to “seep” through the once undamaged “filters”. Because of the damage to the “filters” monitoring impulses and reactions, once “controlled” or disciplined behavior; now become unpredictable. Because of the damage to the “filters” in my right frontal lobe once small responses to people, places, and things became huge reactions to people, places, and things. But I am glad that I became aware.

Brain Injury, Damaged “Filters”, Stress and Taking Care of Myself Page 2

August 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I am glad that I discovered that I could take a different course of action to get different results in my life.

Once I became aware of the “holes” or “gaps” in the filters of my right frontal lobe, I found hope. I began to realize that I could stop reacting to people, places and things in my life. I began to realize that I could monitor and look for patterns in how I related to people, places, and things. I began to realize that by making peace with my past I could begin to keep the focus on myself, instead of continuing to blame anyone, including myself. I began to realize that by monitoring my impulse to react to people, places and things that I could empower my life, well-being, and my relationships. I began to realize that instead of projecting my irritability, restlessness, and discontent onto other people I could take responsibility for my reactions. I began to realize that I could stop taking responsibility for other people’s irritability, restlessness, and discontent. I began to realize that I could become an actor, instead of a reactor to people, places, and things by monitoring my “filters”.

I began to realize that I could become an actor, instead of a reactor to people, places, and things by monitoring my “filters”.

I began to realize that I could stop taking responsibility for other people’s irritability, restlessness, and discontent. Through taking responsibility for my “triggers” under stress and by monitoring how I responded to people, places, and things I found a new freedom. A freedom to manage the stress that I experienced because of the damage to the “filters” in my right frontal lobe. A freedom to own my irritability, restlessness, and discontentment. With my ongoing freedom, I began to realize that I could create a good life for myself. A good life for myself despite being susceptible to being overwhelmed by stress at times. I began to realize that I could stop beating up on myself for my susceptibility to overreact to people, places, and things at times. I began to realize that I could take care of myself in difficult situations by learning from how I handled each stressful situation.

I began to realize that it was not other people’s responsibility to understand how my life was impacted. I began to realize that I no longer needed anyone else’s permission to be able to accept myself as an individual living with damage done to the “filters” in my right frontal lobe. I began to realize that I could take responsibility for my reaction to stress. I began to realize that I could be my own advocate by monitoring my reactions to people, places, and things. I began to realize that I could take care of myself in stressful situations.

Click on this link for more information: [**Living with a brain injury — Overwhelmed and Over Reacting — Taking Back my Power**](#)

Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned?

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

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. Recently I received a comment and a question. As an individual living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability, I have asked the question many times. The question I received was, “Why do I feel so misunderstood and shunned?”. In my experience and through many struggles the answer to the question became apparent to me. If you have asked this question too, I would invite you to read on to find out what became apparent to me.

What became apparent to me helped me to have peace in my life when misunderstood and shunned.

What became apparent to me helped me to grow in self-acceptance, despite being misunderstood and shunned.

What became apparent to me helped me to let go of the people who misunderstand and shun me.

What became apparent to me helped me to move across the bridge called hope and create a good life for myself.

Realization

In my experience and through my own recovery process, I came to realize two realities. The first reality is that many people do not want or do not know how to process their feelings. The second reality that helped me to begin to have more peace in my life was that many people either do not know how to or do not want to change. To face the reality that our lives have been forever changed because of our brain injury may be too painful. Too painful for them to accept. Because accepting our reality may be too painful, individuals may stay in and defend their denial. Defending their denial for what they do not want to accept is not our fault. Secondly, because of the lack of acceptance, they may justify the way they treat us.

Defending their denial for what they do not want to accept is not our fault. Justifying the way they treat us, because of their lack of acceptance; is not our fault.

Awareness

In my experience and for many years (once I began to come out of my own denial) I attempted to get family members and friends to understand and accept my reality. I tried to explain to them in many different ways that I was not “fudging” or “making excuses”. I tried to convince them otherwise, but the more I tried the more I felt frustrated. What was conveyed to me was, that if I just tried harder *then*

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I would not be affected by my brain injury. But the reality was that I had tried “every which way” that I could to not be impacted or affected because of my brain injury. My trying to convince them of my reality created ongoing conflicts. Conflicts in them because of what they could not accept and conflict in me for feeling that there was something wrong with me.

Conflicts in me for not being able to not be impacted by a brain injury. Conflicts in me that would leave me frustrated. Conflicts in me that left me a sense of shame. A sense of shame for not being able to overcome the impact of my brain injury and my invisible disability.

Awakening

After much toil and cycles through the mentioned conflicts, I had a spiritual awakening. A realization that I needed to do something different. A realization that I needed to do something to be able to accept myself. A realization that what I was trying to change was not changing my reality. When I reached a point when I could no longer deny and defend my reality, I made some life changing choices. I began to grieve my reality. Grieving my reality helped me to get to a place of acceptance. Acceptance provided the “bridge” to taking a different course of action.

Through my grieving process, I discovered that as I was able to face, confront and address my own denial I had more peace in my life. What I discovered through confronting my own lack of acceptance, I was able to let go of the struggle. The struggle that convinced me that I needed to get “them” to understand and accept what I could not change. What I also discovered was that I needed to let go. I needed to let go of what other people wanted or need me to believe “about” me so that I could get on with my life. What I discovered was that I alone needed to accept my reality.

Can't Afford to Wait for People to Catch Up

What I discovered was that I needed to and need to let go of what other people think of me. What I discovered was that I needed to walk down a road that only I could travel. I also began to realize that in order to create a good life for myself I could no longer wait for people to walk over the “bridge” of acceptance. I began to realize that in order for me to create a good life for myself I could not wait for people to catch up. Catch up in their ability to understand and to accept me in my reality. I also began to realize that although people needed me to be “different” I could be myself.

I could not afford to wait for people to catch up with their ability to accept me in my reality. I needed to move on and learn how to be effective in my reality.

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I began to realize that being misunderstood and shunned was the “way” in which “they” coped with what they could not accept. I began to realize that I needed to let the people who misunderstood and shunned me go. I needed to let them go so that I could grow in my own acceptance. The acceptance of who I am and what I could do living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. What I could do in ways that would work for me. Several years ago I wrote an article and made a video presentation of the article. Below are links to the article and the video presentation. The article illustrates how valuable we are, with what makes us different in the midst of being misunderstood and shunned. You are of much value, because of your reality.

[**Living with a Disability and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer**](#)

[**Living with a disability and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Video Presentation**](#)

Acceptance

In my experience, as I began to realize that I could not wait for people to “catch up” to me in their acceptance, I found a new freedom. I began to realize that I was walking down a road less traveled. A road that was leading to fulfilling my dreams. A road that was leading to my destiny. A road across other “bridges” of acceptance, yet to be discovered. Bridges of acceptance that would give me more peace in my life. Bridges that would help me to accept that people are where they are on their own journeys. The people who misunderstand and shun me, for whatever reason.

During the past 9 1 /2 years, as I have grown to accept both myself and where other people are on their journeys I have continued to make peace with being misunderstood and shunned. As I have found more peace, being misunderstood and shunned has had less impact upon me. Several days ago I updated my about page to share what has helped me to be at peace with being misunderstood and shunned. In my updated about page, I share what helped and continues to help me to move forward with my life. I would invite you to click on the following link: [**Updated About Page**](#).

Hope

My experience *may* help you to let go of the people who misunderstand and shun you. My experience may help you to find more peace in your life when people misunderstand and shun you. My experience may help you to not feel less alone. My experience may encourage and inspire you to walk down a road less traveled and over “bridges” of acceptance. Bridges of acceptance yet to be revealed. As you read my about page and what I share helps you, please let me know. Thank you. I would love to hear from you.

To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility

June 16, 2009 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. I have been thinking about a very powerful principle. Humility. I have found that this principle — when applied — helps me to step out of my limitations into the abundance of possibilities. Discouragement is disbanded as an illusion of lack. The conceivable becomes attainable while apprehension is traded for hope.

Progress rather than perfection becomes a way of life. The bondage of needing to be perfect is replaced with the pursuit of excellence. Limitation replaced with a powerful principle. The Principle: Humility. The principle gives me hope.

The voice of inadequacy is replaced with the voice of enough. I no longer have to be right to feel secure. I am free to say, “I don’t know”. I am made strong when I am weak. I am free to take risks because I realize that I can not fail. I am able to laugh at myself because I know that I am learning. I am able to let go of outcomes because I know that I will get what I need. I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I do not have to know the big picture.

The principle that I am referring to is humility. Through my process, I have learned a very valuable lesson. Humility is not humiliation.

Humility promotes and empowers the individual through meekness. Humility sets the individual free to accept themselves — because the individual knows that they do not have to prove their worth or value. Humility regales the individual with hope because the individual knows that possibilities exist. Humility encourages learning because the individual realizes that they do not have to already know everything. Humility encourages sets the stage for learning curves.

Series additionally offered in Video Presentation Format

To offer the information to individuals who learn through watching and listening, I have created a video presentation of **Part 1** and **Part 2**. Click on the below link to watch and listen to the article

[**To Live Beyond Limitations through Humility Part 1 and Part 2 Video Presentation**](#)

[**To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 3 and Part 4 Video Presentation**](#)

To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 2

June 17, 2009 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Through my process, I have learned a very valuable lesson. Humility is not humiliation. Humility opens the door to hope.

Humility breeds and brings about security because the individual knows that they can trust the process, a loving God and themselves. Humility encourages the individual to let go of that which is out of their control and trust the process. Humility motivates the individual to ask for help because the individual realizes that they do not have to lean on their own understanding or resources.

Humility empowers hope — through trust — because the individual knows that more will be revealed.

Humility seeks to set the individual free because the individual knows that they can practice easy does it. Humility motivates the individual to take risks because there is no threat of reprisal. Humility encourages the individual to succeed, while at the same time cheer leading their efforts. Humility celebrates the individual as a work in progress. Humility teaches the individual to stay in the moment, to enjoy the process, to do the footwork and to let go of the outcomes.

Humility reinforces self-esteem, self-respect, and self-worth. Humility does not seek justification. Humility does not disparage, minimize or marginalize. Humility does not condescend. Humility is free of contempt. Humility is patient and kind. Humility champions and supports the individual. Humility readies the individual for service. Humility empowers with wisdom. Humility gently reveals power through change.

Humility teaches the individual that they are on a journey. Humility teaches the individual that on that journey, the process is more important than the destination. Humility teaches the individual that — sometimes with seeming serendipity — they are being led in the direction of their destiny.

To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 3

June 17, 2009 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Humility is different than humiliation. Humiliation scorns the individual. Humiliation's motive is to control and limit. Humiliation undermines self-esteem, self-respect and self-value. Humiliation stymies creative expression. Humiliation demands justification. Humiliation seeks to disparage, minimize and marginalize the individual — at their very core. Humiliation promotes fear and insecurity. Humiliation undermines enthusiasm and motivation. Humiliation promotes fear. Humiliation cripples initiative. Humiliation squashes hope.

Prior to understanding the difference between humility and humiliation I berated myself on a daily basis. I believed that I was the problem and thus deserved to be victimized and humiliated by life and the people in my world. Consequently, I felt trapped by the voice of criticism and the clamoring of shame. My efforts to be enough were constantly chided as inadequate. Consequently, I developed insecurity, low self-esteem, and low self-worth. I did not believe that I made mistakes, but that I was a mistake.

At the core of my being, humiliation chided me as inadequate and unlovable. My attempts to quiet the voice of humiliation — shame and criticism — only seemed to reinforce the impact that humiliation had upon my life. Unrealistic expectations kept me anxious and depressed. Humiliation reinforced the belief that I could not do enough to be enough. Humiliation inhibited my being through intimidation. Humiliation demanded that I be perfect. Humiliation hindered my ability to find peace. Peace with other people and peace with myself.

To Live Beyond Limitations through Humility Part 4

June 19, 2009 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Humiliation, rather than humility subsequently reinforced my sense of shame and feelings of inadequacy. Humiliation distorted my perceptions and held me captive to the belief that who I was and what I had to contribute in life did not matter. Because of my distorted perceptions — prior to understanding the distinction between humility and humiliation — I could not take the risk to be humble. I had to keep hyper vigilant. I had to be on guard.

With time and through my recovery process I came to understand that humility validates and heralds my best efforts as good enough for today. Because I have learned how to trust the process — rather than trying to control the process — humility has been able to encourage me to do the footwork and then let go of the outcomes.

Through maintaining humility, I am able to revel in what I am experiencing in the now — without a fear of reprisal. As I let go of my need to justify, answer and defend who I am — I am able to be. As I am able to be I am free to create without the threat of being criticized or shamed for my efforts. Consequently, I am able to focus on excellence — instead of striving to be perfect — with each new day.

In the pursuit of excellence, I no longer need to listen to the voice of humiliation or be humiliated by my efforts. Consequently, I can rest through my efforts and live beyond my limitations because I do not have to focus on my limitations. Humility allows me to accept who I am, where I am at today. Humility allows me to learn from my experience — rather than judging my experiences. Humility empowers my perspective and motivates me to learn from my circumstances.

Humility gives me the freedom to be who I am, where I am... Humility releases me to live beyond my limitations because I do not have to depend on my own resources. Humility teaches me to stay in the moment. Humility helps me to find my center. Humility teaches me to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

Brain Injury, Activities of Daily Living, Repetitive Mirrored Movements and Creating the Possible

August 24, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Following a brain injury, the individual is faced with having to learn or re-learn skills. Once familiar skills may take more time to accomplish. Because of this increased time, the individual may find themselves becoming frustrated with themselves and other people. Frustrated with family and friends who may expect that they “should” be able to accomplish what was once simple without hesitation.

Such frustration with ourselves and other people may undermine our confidence in our ability to recover. But let me share some good news with you. You will succeed in mastering those skills by not giving up!

In today’s article, I would like to share something with you that has helped and continues to help me in my recovery process. Some 18 years ago I started a program to improve my ability to use both sides of my body. Several years later the term neuroplasticity was introduced as a way to create new nerve connections (neural pathways) and brain reorganization. Little did I know that I had been using this principle to improve and increase my activities of daily living.

Neuroplasticity, using repetitive mirrored movements (on both my right and left sides of my body) has given me the ability to accomplished skills and activities that I never dreamed possible. Using repetitive mirrored movements has given me the ability to improve and increase my activities of daily living.

Following my brain injury, I gained a slight tremor in my left hand. Repetitive mirrored movements, on both sides of my body, has given me the ability to overcome my tremor. Repetitive mirrored movements on both sides of my body have given me the ability to perform skills and abilities using my left hand. Repetitive mirrored movements on both sides of my body have improved and increased my ability to perform activities of daily living. Activities, such as; that require my ability to use the fingers in my left hand to grasp and hold.

Activities that I was and am able to learn through a bazillion repetitive mirrored movements on both sides of my body.

Brain Injury, Activities of Daily Living, Repetitive Mirrored Movements and Creating the Possible Page 2

August 24, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Activities that gave me the ability to perform and execute skill and abilities using my left hand, elbow, leg, knee, and foot. Using my left, hand, elbow, knee and foot, in coordination; with my right hand, elbow, leg, knee, and foot. Activities that increased my ability to use both my dominant and none dominant sides of my body to accomplish other activities of daily living.

Gross and Fine Motor Skills

As my gross and fine motor skills have improved, so has my body's ability to perform skills and activities using the non-dominant side of my body.

As my muscle memory, gross and fine motor skills have improved on the left side of my body I have been able to create the possible and hope in my life.

I have been able to create the possible and hope in my life by increasing my overall balance, coordination, body awareness, agility, hand-eye coordination, focus, speed and reaction time.

Neuroplasticity Definition

According to MedicineNet.com definition, "**neuroplasticity** is the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. 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."

My Application

Watch a 1 minute and 50-second demonstration of my using repetitive mirrored movements to increase my brain's ability to communicate with both sides of my body by clicking: [HERE](#)

Skills I use to Train my Brain through Repetitive Mirrored Movement

Martial arts and western boxing have helped me to work on specific muscle memory drills to fine tune coordinated movements through repetition. In my training and drilling, I have spent countless hours and endless repetitions to develop and hone specific technique using hands (jab, cross, uppercut, hooks and overhand punches) with both my right and left leads.

Brain Injury, Activities of Daily Living, Repetitive Mirrored Movements and Creating the Possible Page 3

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I also drill elbow strikes, knees and thai kicks with both my right and left leads bazillion time. I work on wing chun centerline strikes on both sides (leads) as well as jeet Kune do blocks, trapping, and strikes. Recently, I resumed my training in modern arnis / kali — with single and double sticks — to work on / develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, muscle memory and agility. My goal is to be equally agile on both sides of my body.

In all my training I spend time executing drills and skills to activate muscles, ligaments and joints to develop muscle memory, coordination, and agility. I spend extra time drilling my non-dominant side of my body, by mirroring my dominate side. Through time and repetition, I have found that I have been able to create the possible and hope in my life.

In my opinion, training using weapons is not about the weapon itself – although the weapon is a tool – but about the movement incorporated using the weapon. Since I resumed training— using single and double sticks – I have noticed that my fine muscle memory, hand-eye coordination, agility, and speed have all increased in my non-dominant and dominant body leads.

Today's thought

I share the above with you to encourage you to engage in activities – whatever activities that you enjoy and have fun doing — to develop muscle memory, coordination, and agility. By doing things that you enjoy you will create fun for yourself. In the process of creating fun for yourself, time and repetition will be seen as an opportunity to work on and develop muscle memory, coordination and agility. Through time and repetition, you will find that you create what you may have never dreamed possible. By staying committed to your process, you will create hope.

So, please do not give up on yourself.

Through time, commitment and patience with yourself, your activities of daily living will improve and increase.

For more information on learning / re-learning skills, click on this link to read: [Activities of Daily Living](#). For more information on learning / relearning through a *video presentation*, click on this link: [Activities of Daily Living](#)

“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 traveled; because we did not give up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Good News Following a Brain Injury

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

The good news is that sustaining a brain injury does not have to be an ending, but instead a new beginning. The good news is that we can start from now and create a new ending. The good news is that we can take steps to reshape our lives. The good news is that we can empower our dreams following a brain injury. The good news is that we can experience our dreams following a brain injury. So don't give up on your dreams my friend.

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.” Maria Robinson

Although I could not go back and start a new beginning, I discovered that I could examine how areas of my life had been impacted by my brain injury. I discovered that by examining each of these areas I found hope. I found hope because I began to realize that I could live my life in ways that would work for me. I found hope because I began to realize that I could learn how to use my gifts, talents, and abilities.

I found hope when I began to realize that I could learn to use my gifts, talents, and abilities in a way that would work for me. I found hope as I began to realize that I could use my gifts, talents, and abilities in a way that would empower my dreams. I found hope when I began to realize that I could take steps to experience my dreams.

A Guide to Empowering and Experiencing Your Dreams Following a Brain Injury

In my experience, I discovered that in order to follow my dreams, I needed to grow in awareness. As I grew in awareness, so did my acceptance. As I grew in acceptance of my reality, I began to realize that I had choices. Choices that gave me the ability to take action to reshape my life. The ability to take the action, a little bit at a time; to empower my dreams. The action that gave me the ability to experience my dreams. The action that gave me the ability to start to make a new ending. Below are links to article categories. In each article category, there is a list of articles that contain information. Information that has and continues to help me to empower and experience my dreams following my brain injury. To read more about my process and journey, click: [Here](#).

Good News Following a Brain Injury Part 2

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

Please be patient with yourself in this process. The process takes time, sometimes very slowly. I have been on this path, for now, a little over 49 years and I am still learning and growing in my recovery process.

The recovery process just takes what it takes and that is good enough. So be gentle with yourself my friend.

Invitation

I would invite you to click on each of the categories. Once the category has opened scroll down the list of article titles. Click on the article title that interests you. By clicking on the title, the article will open for you. In the event that the article does not open, please let me know and I will fix the link. Thank you. As you read the articles and watch the video presentations within each category and questions come to mind, please send those questions to me. All questions are good questions and welcomed. I look forward to hearing from you.

[**Category Brain Injury Recovery An Ongoing Process — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Celebrating Success Following a Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category-Creating Hope after Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Finding and Knowing Peace after Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Finding Purpose after a Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Fulfilling Dreams after Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category My Journey Living with a Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Overcoming Bullying after Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Peer Support after Brain Injury — We are Not Alone — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Relationships Following a Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

[**Category Self-Acceptance after a Brain Injury — List of Articles**](#)

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Today, I would like to share something with you that I learned through my recovery process. What I learned helped me to break free from the shackles of limitation, despite living with limitations. What I learned gave me the stamina to pursue my dreams, despite being discouraged by “well-meaning” individuals. What I learned helped me to find a way, when no one else could show me the way. What I learned helped me to find freedom. What I learned helped me to stop giving people the power.

What I learned helped me to stop giving people the power, to “turn off” my creativity.

What I learned helped me to access once depleted sources of energy. What I learned helped me open the door to having a relationship with myself, despite being misunderstood and shunned. What I learned helped me to trust the process, a loving God and myself. What I learned helped me to realize that possibilities exist, if I look for them. What I learned helped me to realize that I could actively be involved in the process of creating hope in my life.

What I learned helped me to stop believing that I was a mistake because of my deficits and limitations. What I learned helped me to stop “turning off” my creativity.

Realization

When a brain injury occurs everyone’s life changes. Changes in the individual living with the impact of a brain injury, as well as, changes in family and friends. Over time each of the parties involved, experience a myriad of feelings. In the event that these feelings are not owned and processed, by each individual; these uncomfortable feelings may be blamed on the individual living with a brain injury. The individual living with the impact of the brain injury may, in turn, blame themselves. Blame themselves, for not being able to do and be like they were before their brain injury occurred.

As feelings of blame for not being able to do or be more are internalized, the individual may believe that they don’t just make mistakes, but that they are a mistake. As they continue to be blamed, they may feel a sense of shame (which may be unconscious). Such a sense of shame can lead the brain injury survivor to believe their lives no longer matter. As shame is internalized through ongoing external (from other people) and internal (from themselves) blame, the individual may feel helpless. Helplessness may keep them focused on what they can not accomplish with their lives.

In response to a diagnosis, having a brain injury, the individual may find themselves labeled. Being labeled brings a stereotype. A stereotype brings about a societal stigmatization. The impact of the stigmatization results in the individual being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted. Such a label, a stereotype, and stigmatization keeps the individual focused on their deficits and limitations.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 2

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Suffering in Silence

The individual, living with the impact of a brain injury, is left to suffer in silence because of a stereotype and a stigmatization. They are left to suffer in silence out of a fear of being blamed and shamed for their deficits and limitations. Because of a fear of being blamed and shamed for their deficits and limitations, individuals living with the impact of a brain injury may deny the impact of their brain injury. Because of a fear of being blamed and shamed for their deficits and limitations, individuals living with the impact of brain injuries may isolate themselves from other people.

Because of a fear of being blamed and shamed for their deficits and limitations, individuals living with the impact of brain injuries may live their lives in quiet desperation — not realizing that they have the power to create.

Because of the fear of being blamed and shamed for their deficits and limitations, individuals living with the impact of brain injuries may live their lives in quiet desperation. Live their lives in quiet desperation, because they do not realize that they possess the power to create. Create with their lives in ways that work for them. Individuals living with the impact of a brain injury may also find themselves frozen by a fear of failure. Frozen by a fear of failure for not being able to meet and fulfill the expectations. Expectations, given to them by their parents. Expectations resulting in a sense of shame.

The individual living with the impact of a brain injury may find themselves experiencing increased frustration and anxiety. Increased frustration and anxiety, for not being able to meet the expectations.

As the bar of expectation moves, so does the level of frustration and anxiety. Such anxiety and frustration can further undermine the individual's willingness and ambition to take risks. Nevertheless, in an attempt to gain and maintain the approval of parents, the individual may find themselves striving all the more to meet the expectation(s) of the parent(s). In the process of attempting to gain the parent(s), approval and validation the individual living with the impact of a brain injury may find that their time and internal resources of energy have been drained and depleted.

As shared in **Part 1** of this article, the individual living with the impact of a brain injury may, in turn, blame themselves for not being able to do more, to be more to be enough to meet expectations. With time and as the individual continues to blame themselves for not doing more, to be more, to be enough the individual living a brain injury may develop a sense of shame for not being enough.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 3

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

What I Discovered through my Recovery Process

Through my recovery process, I discovered that there is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is different from shame, in that, with guilt you can make an amends for wrongs done. Shame, on the other hand, is a being wound. Shame leaves us feeling and believing that we don't just make mistakes, but that we are a mistake. Shame keeps us striving in an attempt to do more, to be more, to be enough. To do more to be enough to prove that we are lovable. Shame leads the individual to believe that without validation from other people, our worth and value does not matter.

Freedom

As I grow in freedom, I have more peace in my life. As I experience more peace in my life, I am able to create hope. As I create hope in my life, I am able to take a different course of action. As I take a different course of action, I am able to realize that I have choices. As I realize that I have different choices, I am able to realize that I can have an active role in my life. As I am able to have an active role in my life, I am able to experience freedom. As I experience freedom, I am able to do the footwork while letting go of the outcomes.

As I experience freedom, I am able to do the footwork while letting go of the outcomes. As I let go of the outcomes I am able to recognize the pieces of the puzzle that make up my life. As I able to recognize the pieces of the puzzle that make up my life, I am able to see them as they fall into places. As I am able to see them falling into place, I understand perfect timing. As I understand perfect timing I grow in trust.

As I am able to let go of the outcomes I grow in my ability to trust. I grow in my ability to the process and a loving God. As I grow in my ability to trust the process and a loving God, I am able to learn from my circumstances, experiences and opportunities. As I learn from my circumstances, experiences, and opportunities, I grow in my creative capacity. As I grow in my creative capacity, I expand my capacity to experience my life. As I expand my capacity to experience life, I enhance my well-being. As I enhance my well-being, I am free to be myself.

I am able to learn from my circumstances, experiences and opportunities. As I learn from my circumstances, experiences, and opportunities, I grow in my capacity to create. As I grow in my capacity to create, I realize my ability to use my gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for me. As I realize my ability to us my gifts, talents, and abilities, I am given the gift to hope and freedom in my life.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 4

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Awareness

Acceptance helps me to realize that I can do things differently. By doing things differently, I am able to use my creative capacity to create hope and bring about freedom in my life. As parents did the best they knew how to do, given the information they had to work with parenting, so am I doing the best I can with the information I have in living my life. Living life is about learning. I can not know until I am ready and “it” just takes what it takes to grow in my ability to know. In my experience, I have found the “knowing” and “understanding” just takes time.

In my experience, knowing and understanding typically comes about because of pain. When I get sick and tired of being sick and tired I become willing. When I have enough pain, I become willing to learn from my pain and to look for solutions. I become willing to learn.

In my experience, I have also found that pointing fingers in anyone’s direction do no one any good. Keeping the focus on me gives me the opportunity to experience a new freedom. A freedom that I never knew existed. Looking at and examining how the family of origin issues impacts living is not about blaming anyone. Examining these issues and how they impact our lives is about awareness. And as I grow in awareness, I am able to stop reacting in ways that no longer serve to me. As I grow in awareness, I grow in acceptance and am able to find freedom in my present.

How Family of Origin Issues Can Keep the Brain Injury Survivor Stuck

When parents do not know how to process and resolve their own sense of shame, they inadvertently make their children carry their shame. When children grow up carrying their parent or parents shame they acquire and overdeveloped sense of responsibility. Instead of learning to practice healthy self-care, the child grows up believing that they are responsible for taking care of the needs of the parent. The child’s time and energy are focused on not displeasing the parent to avoid being blamed and shamed. Shame and blame then become tools to keep the child focused on the parent.

The threat of emotional or physical abandonment (or withholding) can then be used to control and manipulate the child. The threat of emotional and physical abandonment then serves to keep the child striving to keep the parent from going away. When the double message of “come close, go away” are added to the interaction, between the parent and the child; the child’s self-esteem and self-worth are given a mixed message. The mixed message communicates to the child that they need their parent(s) approval and validation to feel safe and secure and avoid feelings of shame

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 5

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The fear of emotional or physical abandonment fueled by a sense of shame then serves to condition the child to anticipate the needs of the parent or parents. Over time, the child is conditioned to anticipate the needs of the parent(s) through people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading. Although people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading continue to be used in a defense of being blamed and shamed, the child continues to feel insecure. In their insecurity, the child strives all the more to gain the approval and validation of their parent(s), so as to not feel like a mistake.

Such conditioning can lead the child to believe that unless they gain their parent(s) approval and validation that their lives simply do not matter. In the event that the individual sustains a brain injury, matters become complicated, because of what they are powerless to change. Once external wounds have healed, the individual living with that brain injury may feel an increased level of frustration and anxiety. Frustration for not being able to meet expectations and anxiety for not being able to keep the parents, family members, and friends from going away and abandoning them.

In October 2008 I wrote a **2 Part** article that I would invite you to read. Here is a link to the 2 Part article: [How to Move Forward — Make Peace with the Past](#). I also created a **2 Part video presentation** of the article that can be watched on YouTube. Links to the 2 part video presentation are included with the article.

The Power of Acceptance

The beauty of living is that we can make a decision to change our behavior at any time. The process of behavior modification usually begins with an awareness that is followed by acceptance and results in action. Awareness provides the opportunity to address whatever is not in our best interest or in the best interest of the people we love. Acceptance acts like a balm to soften the walls of our resistance and bring us to a place of action.

Growing in awareness, acceptance, and action helps us to realize that we are not our brain injuries, as some may want us to believe. Growing in awareness, acceptance, and action gives us the ability to realize that we do not have to be controlled by shame, blame, scapegoating or abandonment. Growing in awareness, acceptance, and action gives us the ability to create, instead of striving to keep people from “going away”.

Growing in awareness, acceptance, and action gives us the ability to experience a freedom. To experience a new freedom that we never knew existed. Growing in awareness, acceptance, and action gives us the ability to create and experience hope in our lives. Growing in awareness, acceptance, and

action gives us the ability to live our dreams. Live our dreams in the present. Live our dreams as individuals who have been impacted by brain injuries and in many cases, invisible disabilities.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 6

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Awareness

Through my recovery process, I discovered that I needed to examine how shame played a role in my life. In the early 1990's, I reached an emotional and spiritual bottom after breaking up with my fiancé. At the time the emotional pain was no fun at all, as you may imagine; but looking back I see the gift in that pain. The pain helped me to find a freedom that gave me the ability to create hope in my life. The pain motivated me to look for solutions. The pain helped me to realize that I needed to examine patterns in my relationships. I needed to look at what drove and motivated me.

Through my process, I discovered a 2 cassette tape series by Mr. John Bradshaw ***"Healing the Shame that Binds You"***. I listened to that tape series over and over again. As I listened to the 2 tape series I heard about other authors and books, 2 of which helped me to understand shame and the impact of shame upon my life. I listened to that tape series over and over again. As I listened to the 2 tape series I heard about other authors and books, 2 of which helped me to understand shame and the impact of shame upon my life. I was drawn to 2 particular authors and their books. Two particular authors and their books, that Mr. Bradshaw spoke about in the tape series got my interest. So I went out and purchased those books.

As I listened to the tape series, I was drawn to 2 particular authors and their books. I would encourage anyone who feels like they just don't make mistakes, but they are a mistake to read these 2 books. These 2 books helped me to realize that "it" was not all about me.

The 2 Authors, Jane Middleton-Moz and her book, **Shame and Guilt — Masters of Disguise** and Alice Miller and her book, **Drama of the Gifted Child**. Other books such as, **Do I Have to Give up Me, to be Loved by You** by Dr's Jordan and Margaret Paul and Dr. Margaret Paul's book, **Inner Bonding** gave me further insight into my codependency. As I listened the 2 tape series, ***"Healing the Shame that Binds You"*** I was drawn to read other books, which helped me to understand how toxic shame based codependency undermined creativity and hope. Gaining the wisdom and insight from all of these books helped me tremendously recovery process. The information helped me to begin to love and accept myself.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 7

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Acceptance

Through examining how shame impacted my recovery process I grew in awareness. As I grew in awareness, I grew in acceptance. As I grew in acceptance, I discovered that I had choices. These choices helped me to take action. Through taking a different course of action, once depleted and drained sources of energy became available to me. As I discovered once depleted and drained sources of energy, I found a new freedom. With my new freedom, I discovered that I no longer had to be limited by my deficits and limitations. I discovered that I no longer had to focus on what I could not do, but that I could use my creative energy to find ways to use my gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that would work for me.

With my discovery, I found hope for the future in today.

My Experience with Shame

In my experience, my Dad's inability or unwillingness to accept that I had a disability motivated his behavior. He blamed me for not being able to be more and do more. His criticism of my best efforts made me responsible for his disappointment. My Dad could not or would not accept that I was doing the best I could, given the fact that I was a traumatic brain injury survivor. I also believe that my Dad transferred his guilt and shame onto me for his driving the night of the accident that caused the damage to my brain. Because my Dad was unable to process his own guilt and shame, he transferred that guilt and shame onto me in the form of blame and criticism. His criticism and blame drained my creative energy for many years as I attempted to gain his approval.

I am not angry or bitter at Dad. I am glad I worked through a lot of my hurt and pain and was able to stop carrying my Dad's guilt and shame for not being more. I believe that I am more than enough, disability and all. I am not my traumatic brain injury, but my brain injury changed the course of my life forever. I wish my Dad could have accepted that I was doing my very best, rather than wanting me to be someone without a disability. I am sad for both my Dad and myself because we could have had a much better relationship for many years before he died. His acceptance of my disability came in the last 3-4 years of my Dad's life and he was able to accept that I was doing my very best. He also told me that he was proud of me on many occasions during those last years.

Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 8

September 6, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Freedom — Action

Through my recovery process, I was able to let go of my need to have and gain the approval of my Dad. Not only the approval of my Dad but also people like my Dad, who are unable to accept the impact of my brain injury. As I was able to let go of the need for my Dad's, and people like my Dad; approval, I discovered a once depleted source of energy. With this new source of energy, I discovered my capacity to create in ways that worked for me. I discovered that although I had deficits and limitations, I did not have to be limited by my deficits and limitations. Through much trial and error, I discovered that I possessed a talent to write and communicate through sharing my experience, strength, and hope. On February 6, 2007, I created Second Chance to Live.

To read more about my process and journey in recovery, I would invite you to click on this link: [About Page — Second Chance to Live](#)

In Conclusion

In conclusion, I would encourage the parents that are reading this post to encourage your children. Your child may have an invisible disability that has gone undetected for many years. If you want your child to excel avoid blaming, shaming and criticizing them for not being more. They may not be able to reach or meet your expectations, however, they may be doing the best that they can. By acknowledging this reality, you will be able to cultivate an empowering relationship with your children that will last a lifetime.

Parents by nature want their children to grow up to be professional adults. Having such a hope is not wrong, however, your child may never be able to become a Doctor or a Lawyer or some other dream you have for them. Encourage your children, teenagers, and young adults to follow their dreams, not yours. Nurture their strengths and you will both get what you desire, an empowered individual. An empowered individual who is learning how to use their gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that will work for them.

Brain Injury and Growing in Our Capacity to Create

September 14, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Yesterday I finished the **5th Part** of the article series Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom, and Hope. Today, I feel led to write this article to include links to each of the **5 Parts** of the article series.

I would invite you to read each part of the article series by clicking on the links. My encouragement would be that you read each part of the article series in consecutive order, from **Part 1** through **Part 5**.

[**Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 1**](#) — Living with the impact of brain injuries and no longer having to suffer in silence.

[**Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 2**](#) — Living with the impact of brain injuries and people pleasing and approval seeking.

[**Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 3**](#) — Living with the impact of brain injuries and growing in the capacity to create hope in our lives.

[**Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 4**](#) — Living with the impact of brain injuries and making peace with our past, so our past does not spoil our present.

[**Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom and Hope Part 5**](#) — Living with the impact of brain injuries and discovering new sources of energy to create and live our dreams.

Coming Out of Hiding to Find Freedom after Brain Injury

September 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Yesterday I published an article, [Brain Injury and Growing in Our Capacity to Create](#) I shared links to an article series **Brain Injury, Parents, Awareness, Creativity, Freedom, and Hope**. In the article series, I shared what helped me to begin to create after my brain injury.

In May of 2007 I wrote and published an article. In this article, I shared what helped me to find the freedom to discover and be myself. What helped me to find the freedom to come out of hiding. What helped me to find a freedom from self-alienation and self-reproach.

Below are excerpts and revisions from the article:

Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel.

"I believe that the title of this article sums up a theme that reeks havoc in many people's lives. These 3 rules mandated that I adhere to them without question. In the process, I had to discard parts of me on a regular basis in order to avoid negative repercussions. In the process of maintaining these 3 rules, my creative uniqueness shriveled and my energy died. These 3 rules kept me isolated, believing that I was a victim of my circumstances.

Although these 3 rules appeared to protect me at the time, they entrapped me in a web of deception. These rules kept me bound because they alienated me from a loving God, from others, and from myself. Obeying the 3 rules kept me stuck in the shadows of isolation. The 3 rules fed my denial and the denial of family and friends. These 3 rules undermined my ability to trust myself. These 3 rules kept me focused on matters that were out of my control.

When I began attending support meetings in August of 1986, I heard these rules discussed by the people attending the meetings. At first, these three statements sounded like cliches. As I continued to attend meetings and listened I started to understand how these three rules laid the foundation and perpetuated many dysfunctional behaviors and beliefs. When I first heard these rules discussed I was isolated, afraid of being rejected and frozen in my emotions. I had no idea what I felt beyond being glad or angry. Through attending meetings and becoming involved in my own recovery process, I was able to understand how these rules had gotten in my way many years. As I listened to what people shared in meetings I found the courage to begin to break the 3 rules.

Coming Out of Hiding to Find Freedom after Brain Injury Part 2

September 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

What I discovered about the 3 Rules

Three rules are often used to mask reality. These rules give way to a state of helplessness. When helplessness becomes a learned behavior, individuals are led to believe they are trapped by their circumstances. Instead of seeking to learn and grow from their circumstances, being a victim becomes an alternative way of living. Unconsciously, living is reduced to a series of events to be endured and hopefully survived each day. Drama replaces a passion for living. Drama becomes the WAY to feel alive. Rather than seeking to be empowered, individuals are led to believe that their success is measured by their ability to survive what happens in their lives. Instead of learning to thrive in life, individuals are led to believe that “this” is the best it is going to be.

Instead of seeing their circumstances as a portal to possibilities, they are led to believe that their circumstances are adversaries. As adversaries given to them to hinder and undermine their ability to reach their dreams and experience hope in their lives. Not only does this belief undermine the creative capacity of the individual, it also perpetuates a fear of failure and a cynical outlook on life. Circumstances and opportunities are equally revered, as a nemesis to be reckoned with on a daily basis. Living is subsequently reduced to merely “clocking in” and “clocking out” each day (as a disgruntled employee) hoping that the minutes and the hours pass by with increasing speed. Instead of seeing circumstances as opportunities, circumstances are seen as getting in the way.

The Impact of the 3 Rules upon my Life

I spent a large part of my life running as fast as I could to avoid having to talk, trust or feel. I viewed life as a dress rehearsal, to be lived later. But later never seemed to come for me. Through maintaining the belief, that I could do nothing more than surviving what was doled out to me, I became a resident reactor. I found myself jumping like a cat on a hot tin roof. Sure, I trusted God with my life, but I saw the actual living part as a battlefield. I felt like a soldier who found himself in a foxhole, attempting to protect himself from every direction. This way of life drained and depleted me spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Because I did not know any better, I continued in this way of thinking and relating to life, other people, and myself until I reached a bottom.

Coming Out of Hiding to Find Freedom after Brain Injury Part 3

September 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I reached an emotional bottom when a relationship ended. The disappointment from that break up changed my life. The emotional pain proved to be the catalyst that motivated me to seek solutions. I began to break the three rules, Don't talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel. I started attending support group meetings, where I listened to other people break the 3 rules by talking, trusting and by sharing what they felt. With time, I felt safe and began to process what I thought and felt. As I did people listened and told me to keep coming back. As I shared my pain they listened without judgment. As I continued to feel safe, I slowly began to share more of myself, learn to trust and understand what I was actually feeling. As I continued to share, my outlook on life changed.

I began to see my circumstances in a different way. I began to see my circumstances as a way to build me up. As a way to teach me lessons that prepare me to take advantage of opportunities. I began to see my circumstances as a way to come out of hiding. I began to see my circumstances as a way to create hope in my life. I began to see my circumstances as a way to discover and follow my dreams. I began to see my circumstances as guides to my destiny. I began to see my circumstances as a way to have a relationship with my process, a loving God and myself. I began to see my circumstances as a way to have relationships with other people. I began to see my circumstances as a way to discover myself. I began to see my circumstances as a way to express my creativity.

Encouragement and Invitation

In the event that what I shared above sounds familiar, I would encourage you to explore finding a safe place where you can process, your thoughts, your feelings and learn to trust. Where you can feel safe to come out of hiding. Where you can find freedom from feelings of alienation. Where you can take a look to see how these 3 rules may be affecting and impacting your quality of life.

Moving Beyond the Mindset of a “Survivor” to Create Possibilities

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

In my article, [Moving from bitter to Better in Life](#) I spoke to how I reached a place in my life that I no longer wanted to merely be a survivor, tossed about by my reactions to people, places, and things. In today’s article, I would like to speak to what I discovered that led me to no longer wanting to be merely a “survivor”. The decision that motivated me to examine the mindset of a “survivor”. What I discovered revealed to me that having the mindset of a “survivor” kept me focused on what I could not do, instead of considering the possibilities of what I could do with my life.

What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I focused on what I could no longer do with my life. What I discovered was that having the mindset of a “survivor” I nurtured a victim mentality. What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I bought into the notion that I was limited by my limitations and deficits. What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I did not consider the possibilities of what I could do with my life.

What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I bought into the notion that I deserved to be labeled, stereotyped, and stigmatized. What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I bought into the notion that I deserved to be kept in a “box” of limitation, given by the label, stereotype, and stigmatization. What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I traded my opinion of what I could accomplish with the opinion(s) of what the “professional and provider” community told me I could or could not accomplish. What I discovered was that by having the mindset of a “survivor” I never considered the possibility that I could create possibilities.

Let me explain:

Let me first share with you that I understand what it is like being a survivor. I sustained a severe traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. I am now 59 years old. What I learned as a survivor is that often the designation comes with a label and a stigmatization. The label and stigmatization are frequently bolstered by secondary dependencies and secondary gains. The label and stigmatization that leads the individual to believe that they are the identity of the survivor, with the trimmings of the assumed limitations; assigned by the stigmatization.

Being a survivor can subsequently be worn as a kind of badge of courage. The badge can lead the individual to stay focused on the assumed limitations provided by the identification purported by the stigmatization. With ongoing reinforcement, the “survivor” may find themselves being relegated to a “box” that seeks to discredit their significance beyond the “box” that accompanies the label and the stigmatization. Being a “survivor” can then find the individual in a place where they devalue both themselves and their significance.

Moving Beyond the Mindset of a “Survivor” to Create Possibilities Part 2

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

The mindset that, in practice; can lead the individual to stay focused on their being a “survivor”. The mindset of being a survivor can lead the individual to focus on the limitations that being a survivor communicates to the individual. The mindset can serve to diminish the individual’s sense of worth and value. The mindset that seduces the individual into believing that they are a victim of the adversity, that has befallen them. The mindset that leads the individual to believe that their choices are limited. That they are prisoners in their own skin.

The mindset that leads the individual into believing that their dreams have been crushed and that their destinies are too far out of reach to them. The mindset that squelches ambition and motivation. The mindset that fosters complacency. The mindset can lead the individual to become dependent on secondary gains, which in turn can breed apathy. The mindset that leads the individual to believe that they are left to live their lives in a “box”. A “box”, in which there are limited options. A “box”, from which there is little hope of escape.

Today’s Thought

We can move beyond the “box” of a system, that by design seeks to define who we are as individuals; through a diagnosis, a treatment plan and a prognosis. We can move beyond the mindset, that leads us to believe that we are limited as “survivors”. We can move beyond a mindset, that leaves us feeling like prisoners, in our own skin. We can move beyond a mindset, that perpetuates a stereotype; that is based on a contempt prior to investigation.

We can live our lives beyond a mindset, that keeps us focused on our limitations. We can move beyond a mindset, that leads us to believe that we have few choices. We can move beyond a mindset, that minimizes and marginalizes who we are as individuals. We can move beyond a mindset, that dismisses, discounts and does not take us seriously. We can move beyond a mindset, that shows us little, respect and serves to offer us little, hope.

Epilogue

I share the above with you to encourage you, as I need to remember; that we no longer have to remain trapped by a “survivor” mindset. We can live our lives beyond the confines of diagnosis, a treatment plan, and a prognosis. We can live beyond the grasp of a stereotype and a societal stigmatization. We can live beyond the “voices”, that seek to undermine our hope, dreams, and destinies.

Moving Beyond the Mindset of a “Survivor” to Create Possibilities Part 3

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

I wrote **More than a Survivor** to encourage people who have been faced with adversity; to not get trapped into believing that they are victims of what has befallen them. I did not mean to challenge the reality of what has transpired in our lives, that we have survived.

I wrote **More than a Survivor** to encourage people who are faced with trauma, abuse and life changing events to not allow those events to define who they are as individuals.

I wrote **More than a Survivor** to encourage people to see themselves as more than a survivor of those life changing events. By seeing myself as more than a survivor, I begin to realize that I have choices. These choices help me to grow in awareness and acceptance of the event so that I can get into action.

I wrote **More than a Survivor** to encourage people faced by life changing events to get into action to pursue their dreams, their destinies and to impact their world.

We can live our lives beyond the mindset, of a “survivor”. We can be more than a “survivor”.

Below are several quotes that inspire me to remember, that I can be more than a survivor. As you read these quotes, may you also be inspired to remember; that you can be more than a survivor.

“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

“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 cannot hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“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 something beautiful on it.” Zig Ziglar

“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

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

Moving Beyond the Mindset of a “Survivor” to Create Possibilities Part 4

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

“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

“I will prepare and someday 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

“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

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” Mahatma Gandhi

“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.” Marianne Williamson

Brain Injury, Fear, Anxiety and Creating New Realities

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

Are you living with the impact of a brain injury? Do you experience fear and anxiety? Would you like to create new realities? If so, I would invite you to read today's article.

Several days ago I wrote and published the article, [Moving Beyond the Mindset of a "Survivor" to Create Possibilities](#), I shared some principles in that article that helped me realize that I no longer have to stay stuck. Stay stuck like a deer caught in the headlights, not realizing that I have choices. Choices that will help me to give me hope. Choices that helped me to realize that I could live outside of the "box" of my limitation.

If the mindset of survivor keeps the individual focused on a diagnosis, a label, a stereotype and a stigmatization, then the individual does themselves a favor by moving beyond a mindset that limits and keeps them in a "box" of limitation. Grieve your reality and then set out on a course to create a new reality.

During the past several days I have been thinking about a quote that also gave me hope. as I have been experiencing some depression. This quote gave me a gift to realize that I could take an inventory of my thoughts and feelings. The thoughts and feelings that led to my experiencing some depression. The quote reminded me that I could take a different course of action. A different course of action that would help me to stop feeling depressed.

"If you do not like something, change it. If you can not change it, change the way you think about it." Mary Engelbreit

Based on my previous experience I remembered something that had helped me in the past. I remembered a short, but powerful reality. My reactions / My reality. As I reflected on those 4 words I remembered that I could examine how I interacted with people, places, and things. I remembered that I could take an inventory of what I thought and how I felt as I interacted with people, places, and things. By examining how I interacted with people, places and things I became aware of how I felt and thought about those situations and what led to my depression.

By taking an inventory of what led to my anxiety and depression, I was able to change the way I looked at those situations. By changing the way I looked at what led to my anxiety and depression I was able to change my reality. The reality of how I felt about the situation that led to my experiencing, fear, anxiety, and depression. What I discovered helped me to stop berating myself. What I discovered

helped me to change my reality and gave me hope. Hope, that in turn helped me to realize that I could create a new possibility. A new possibility to create a new reality.

Brain Injury, Fear, Anxiety and Creating New Realities Part 2

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

In the process of creating a new reality, I realized that I could get different results that would empower my life and my relationships.

An Example of How Changing my Reality Empowered my Life and Relationship

Last year I wrote an article in which I shared how I was able to create a new reality. Below are excerpts from the article.

“Several days ago, during and after a phone conversation I found myself agitated at the person. The morning after the phone call, I wrote them a letter and was preparing to mail that letter later in the day to tell them what they needed to do to avoid triggering my fear and anxiety in the future. But as the day moved on, I had an uneasy feeling about sending the letter. Amidst my uneasy feelings, about sending the letter, I realized that my”triggers” had been pushed. Triggers that had been pushed that brought up fear and anxiety in me. In response to my uneasiness, I took the letter out of the sealed and stamped envelope and re-read what I had written to the individual.

As I read the letter, I realized that I was reacting out of my own fear and anxiety. With my awareness, I realized the fear and anxiety, that I was experiencing; was my responsibility and not the other person’s responsibility. With my awareness, I realized that sending the letter would not resolve my fear and anxiety, only shift the responsibility for my fear and anxiety. The individual who triggered my fear and anxiety was not responsible for my feeling insecure. With my awareness, I realized that I needed to examine both the trigger and my fear and anxiety. By owning my trigger and through examining my fear and anxiety I was able to own my power. By owning my trigger, by examining my fear and anxiety I was able to empower both myself and my relationship.

With my awareness, I decided to tear up and throw the letter away. With my decision, I owned my power. With my decision, I owned my responsibility for my fear and anxiety. By taking responsibility I created a new reality for myself and my relationship.

Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety

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

Today, I received a comment / question: “Do you have or have you had social anxiety as a direct result of your brain injury. Thanks for your help.” As I thought about what my friend asked, I thought about an article that I had written in July 2010. As I thought about the question, related to the article **Living with a Brain Injury and Feeling Like a Broken Toy**, I had a spiritual awakening. The reason why I felt like a “broken toy” among other toys — when I wrote the article — was because of what I had been experiencing: social anxiety. Social anxiety that left me feeling alone and isolated.

As I made the connection between feeling like a “broken toy” and social anxiety I decided to revise the article: [Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety](#). As I thought about the question my friend sent to me (thank you my friend) I began to realize that I am not the only one who experiences social anxiety. Social anxiety that leaves me feeling alone and isolated. Social anxiety that leaves me feeling like I am the only one who struggles. Struggles with feeling as though there is something terribly wrong with me.

As I thought about the question, “Do you have or have you had social anxiety as a direct result of your brain injury. Thanks for your help.” with regard to feeling as though there is something terribly wrong with me, I had another spiritual awakening. I would like to share my spiritual awakening with you in my below-revised article. When I say, a spiritual awakening; I mean that what I have known and understood now makes sense to me. Like the saying, connecting the dots.

Revised Article

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. Several weeks ago I wrote a series in which I shared with you that I had made a decision to take greater risks. In that series, I shared with you how I took the risk to use the principle of asking for help. I took the risk to ask for help to improve upon my skills when interacting in social settings. The risk that I took was that I began attending what are called “meet up” groups. Meet up groups started, from what I understand; in response to what occurred in New York and Pennsylvania after the attacks on September 11, 2001. Meetup groups started as a way to help people connect with other people. Meetup groups form to connect people with common interests.

Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety Part 2

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

During the past several weeks, I have had an opportunity to attend meetup group events. On these occasions, I have been able to add to my skill set through continuing to take the risk to ask for help. Consequently – in the process of taking these risks – I have grown in awareness. In the process, I have gained a whole new perspective about myself as I interacted with other individuals in various social settings. In the process, my perspective of myself changed; as I began to understand what I experienced as I interacted with other people. A friend helped me to give it a name. As my perspective changed, I began to grow in awareness. I began to realize that I am not the only one who has similar experiences. I am not the only one who feels out of place as I interact socially.

I am not the only one who feels like a “broken toy” in the “toy box”. I am not the only one who struggles with social anxiety whether I am living with or without the impact of a brain injury. I am not the only one who feels like I do not “fit in”, as I attempt to interact socially.

Awareness

In the summer of 2010, I had the great fortune to be able to attend pool and lake parties almost every weekend during that summer. It was like a summer that I had never experienced and may never experience again. Unique in that I was able to interact with a large group of individuals who got together to grill out, hang out and spend with one another at a friends house on the lake. As the summer turned to fall I began to realize that I was not the only one who struggled to interact socially. I began to realize that everyone struggles with social anxiety. I began to realize that each individual copes with social anxiety in different ways. Some healthy and some not so healthy way to overcome their social anxiety.

With my awareness, I realized that I was not the only one who felt alone.

In my awareness, I began to experience hope in the midst of feeling “broken”. I began to experience hope because I realized that I could now do something about my social anxiety. I could take the risk to reach out and ask for help. I could practice skills to reduce my social anxiety through interacting with individuals and groups of individuals. I could learn from my interactions by discovering what worked and what did not work for me. In the process, I could begin to celebrate the successes that I made in my interactions with individuals and groups of individuals. I began to realize that I could learn new skills that would help me to overcome my social anxiety, a little at a time; without placing a judgment on my efforts as I learned.

Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety Part 3

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

I began to realize that I could feel my social anxiety, but not judge myself for having social anxiety. I began to realize that I could feel alone, but not abandon myself in the process. I began to realize that I could feel my social anxiety, but still feel connected to myself. By feeling connected to myself, I could make the decision to learn, instead of being intimidated by my social anxiety.

Spiritual Awakening

My spiritual awakening helped me to realize that I live among other individuals who feel broken. Other individuals, who are doing the best that they know how to overcome their social anxiety. With my awareness, I am discovering that I can relax in social settings. I can remember that I no longer have to feel judged or less than for having social anxiety. I don't have to strive to fit in. I can observe, realizing that I am not the only one with social anxiety. With my awareness, I am able to work on new social skills, without placing a judgment on my efforts. With my awareness, I am able to remember that I am not the only one who feels broken and that my feeling broken does not make me different. With my awareness, I am able to relax and be myself among other unique toys.

Relax and learn to be myself, as I learn new skills. New skills and skill sets, that will help me to overcome my anxiety. Overcome my anxiety in social situations.

I have also created a video presentation of the article that you can watch and listen to by clicking on this link: [Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety Video Presentation](#)

Social Anxiety, Understanding and Finding Freedom from Bullying

October 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In yesterday's article, [Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety](#), I shared some awareness' that helped to reduce my social anxiety. In today's article, I would like to share with you what I discovered about the impact of bullying. These awareness' did not come overnight but through many struggles trying to figure out and understand why I felt anxious in some social situations.

Our feeling anxious in different social setting may not be about us. Our feeling anxious in different social situations may be because we are being bullied.

The anxiety that we are experiencing socially may be due to the expectations placed on us by individuals, groups, churches, organizations or associations. These expectations may come in the form of subtle peer pressure or through overt demands. These expectations come in the form of manipulation to get you or me to do something to fulfill a plan or an agenda. These expectations have the tell-tale signs of bullying.

My awareness helped to understand how bullying always left me feeling intimidated and anxious in social settings. My awareness gave me the ability to take better care of myself when I am in situations where and when I am feeling bullied.

In **April 2013** I wrote a **3 Part article series** to share what I learned that helped me to recognize bullying. I then created a **3 Part video presentation series** to share what I had learned with individuals who learn through watching and listening. The article and video presentation series, **Is the Group that You are In Hurting You — Are You Being Bullied?**. Below are links to the 3 Part article and links to the 3 Part video presentation. I would invite you to read, watch or listen to the series. Let me know what if the series helps to reduce your anxiety when interacting socially.

Social Anxiety, Understanding and Finding Freedom from Bullying Part 2

October 16, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

I have also created a video presentation of the article that you can watch and listen to by clicking on this link: [Social Anxiety, Understanding and Finding Freedom from Bullying Video Presentation](#)

Article Series

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You — Are you being Bullied? Part 1**](#)

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 2**](#)

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 3**](#)

Video Presentation Series

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Video Presentation Part 1**](#)

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 2 Video Presentation**](#)

[**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 3 Video Presentation**](#)

Brain Injury, and Learning to Manage Anxiety in Social Settings

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

In an article that I wrote several days ago, [Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety](#) I spoke about several realizations. I realized that everyone experiences anxiety when interacting socially. I also realized that I could manage my anxiety. In my article [Social Anxiety, Understanding and Finding Freedom from Bullying](#) I spoke to bullying, as bullying relates to social anxiety.

What I realized changed my life, as I began to discover that I could learn how to manage my social anxiety. Having these awareness' helped me to be more gentle with myself. Through understanding that everyone experiences anxiety in social settings, that there are bullies and that I have deficits and limitations, I am better able to take care of myself. Better able to be aware and better able to take care of me, in social settings. Better able to take care of myself through these realizations by respecting my deficits and limitations. Better able to stop berating and beating up on myself for having anxiety in social settings.

By taking care of myself I discovered that I could stop beating up on myself for matters that are out of my control. By taking care of myself, I began to realize what I could do to manage my anxiety, and in the process, enhance my experiences as I interact socially.

Compassion for my Anxiety in Social Settings

After writing and publishing the article [Living with a Brain Injury and Overcoming Social Anxiety](#), I was asked a good question. "Your article is helping me build some perspectives on things. But just to make sure, have you overcome your social anxiety or is it an ongoing battle. Thanks so much again." I really appreciated this question as the question helped me to sort through my own experience. In today's article, [Brain Injury, and Learning to Manage Anxiety in Social Settings](#), I would like to share some of the strategies that I have learned that help me to manage the anxiety I experience in social situations. My learning to manage my anxiety in, social settings took a long time. It took a long time because I bought into the notion that there was something wrong with me and that I deserved to be anxious. What I discovered helped me to begin to accept myself as I have sought to interact in different social settings.

What I discovered helped me to begin to accept myself, socially, as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. What I discovered helped me to realize that it was my responsibility, not anyone else's responsibility, to take care of me.

Brain Injury, and Learning to Manage Anxiety in Social Settings Part 2

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

With owning, my responsibility, I became aware of what I was experiencing. With my awareness, I discovered what I needed to do to take care of myself. What I discovered was that I needed to examine why I was feeling anxiety in social settings. Being anxious, in social settings, was a symptom. By examining the symptom — my anxiety — I discovered that I was afraid of being ridiculed for not being enough or for being different. As I looked further, I began to realize the under my fear, was the belief that I not OK without the approval/validation of other people in social settings. What I also discovered, through owning the responsibility to take care of me in social settings, was that I needed to learn to be OK with me. Be OK with me, despite my deficits and limitations, (visible and invisible) and my idiosyncrasies. I am not suggesting that being arrogant or having the attitude that” this is just the way I am”, but instead seeing myself...

Seeing myself as a work in progress. By seeing myself as a work in process, I am given hope. Hope to realize that I can do something about the anxiety that I experience when I interact socially.

What I Discovered about Myself and Social Settings

I do not know if I would call what I experience as social anxiety. I am fairly gregarious when I am out and about. The extrovert part of my personality feeds off of brief, but positive interactions with people I meet at the Y, at the store and as I go about my business. I believe what I experience is a degree of frustration in knowing how to engage in substantive conversation, as I have not learned the “art” of small talk. I have also come to realize that many of my interactions with people are like “2 ships” passing in the night and that is OK with me. I have also come to accept that interacting with groups of people can be taxing for me, so I limit the amount of time that I spend with groups of people. I do much better one on one, otherwise I “graze” in groups, so to say; as I interact with individuals in the group. If I click with one person in the group, I have longer conversations. If not, I am cordial with other members of the group and leave.

I realize that I need to learn how to learn how to engage in small talk, but I try to practice easy does it with myself on that front.

Brain Injury, and Learning to Manage Anxiety in Social Settings Part 3

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

I have learned how to respect my limits and thus reduce the amount of anxiety I have when interacting socially. If I feel like I may have been misunderstood, because I did not read a non-verbal cue or social nuance, I ask the person if I overstepped a boundary. By doing so I am able to manage my anxiety if I feel like I am being misunderstood. So to answer your question concerning whether I experience social anxiety, I do at times, however, I am learning how to manage my social anxiety by respecting my limits and asking questions to gain clarification. If there is someone in the group that I respect, I may ask them if I am feeling anxious to give me feedback. I also have a mentor that I run things by and get his insight and feedback given situations in which I experience a degree of social anxiety. So, being aware, asking a friend in the group if I am reading things “right” and by “running” things by my mentor I manage my social anxiety.

What I Realize about the Process and Myself

This too is a process for me and I do not do it perfectly. I need to be gentle with myself in the process and realizing that I need to ask for help. I need to ask for feedback from the people I trust and those who not going to shame me for not getting things “right”, as I am learning. I also am realizing that there are people out there, who I am never going to be able to “fit in socially” because of their cliché mentality. No matter what I do I am not going to “break in” or be a “part” of their “group” or “cliché”. And that is not about me. It is about them. I am always going to feel “excluded” by them for whatever reason. As I spoke about in my 3 Part article on April 2013, [Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are You Being Bullied?](#) I need to remember that there are individuals and groups of individuals who will bully me if I allow them to bully me. With my awareness, I am able to make better choices for myself, as I interact socially.

Please Share the Strategies You Use

Above I shared what I have learned that helps me to manage my anxiety in social settings. Please share what helps you to manage your anxiety as you interact socially. You may share what you have learned with me by using the “leave a reply” section below this article. I look forward to learning from you.

I have also created a video presentation of this article, which you can listen to and watch by clicking on this link: [Brain Injury, and Learning to Manage Anxiety in Social Settings Video Presentation](#)

Brain Injury and The Power of “I CAN” in My Recovery Process

October 25, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Realization

What we become in life is not based on what other people say we can or can not do, but on what we say, WE CAN, in this life. And with this understanding comes the realization that I need to own the responsibility. What I become in this life is MINE.

I do not want to live my life in quiet desperation, nor go the grave with the song still in me.

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation, and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

Henry David Thoreau

Several days ago I watched a TV program that began with the caption, “2-days before”. After the “2 days before” caption appeared, the TV show began showing the events that led up to the present day events. Living with a brain Injury can be likened to the “2-days before” caption.

Living with a brain injury can leave us focusing on what we were able to do, “2-days before”.

Living with a brain injury can also keep us stuck focusing on what we can no longer do.

Living with a brain injury can keep you and I stuck focusing on our limitations and deficits.

Living with a brain injury can keep us from experiencing what we could be experiencing in the present.

The Power of “I CAN” in My Recovery Process

The good news is that I CAN move beyond “2-days before”.

The good news is that I CAN live my life in “2-days” later”.

The good news is that I CAN move beyond any prediction (s).

The good news it that I CAN work to create our own predictions.

The good news is that I CAN explore the vastness of my creative capacity.

The good news is that I CAN move forward to create hope in my recovery process.

The good news is that I CAN set goals and work toward accomplishing those goals.

The good news is that I CAN start focusing on what I can do with my life, not on what I can’t.

Brain Injury and The Power of “I CAN” in My Recovery Process Part 2

October 25, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

The good news is that I CAN take the time to discover how I can make what works for me, work for me.

The good news is that I CAN pursue my dreams and our destinies through using my gifts, talents, and abilities.

The good news is that by the grace of a loving God and hard work, I CAN achieve beyond all reasonable expectations.

The good news is that I CAN have a huge impact on both my life and the lives of other people who are brought into my life.

The good news is that I CAN enhance my well-being and my dreams a little at a time — one skill and one skill set at a time — by not giving up.

The good news is that I CAN make tremendous gains in my recovery by staying committed to the process and by focusing on and running my race.

The good new is that I CAN stay committed to my recovery process through exercising hard work, commitment, determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity, and courage.

The good news is that I CAN trust the process, a loving God and my ability to learn from the process by doing the footwork and then by letting go of the outcomes.

The good news is that I CAN grow where I am planted to be my best self and I CAN build something beautiful on my “lot” in life.

How to Get Started in My Brain Injury Recovery Process

June 22, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In today's article, I would like to share something that has helped me in my brain injury recovery process. I would like to borrow from the concept that many sports use in their preparations, training camps. Training camps prepare the individuals in the sport to achieve effectively and efficiently. Like training camps in sports preparation, I have come to realize that life's experience provide many training camps. These camps are designed to empower you and me to perform effectively and efficiently. And as with any training camp, those who participate in the camp must dedicate themselves to the activities of the camp. The benefit received by each participant is dependent upon the effort put forth during the camp.

But in order to benefit from the training camp the participant needs to stay committed to the process, while executing the basics —determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity, and courage.

Training camps necessitate hard work, commitment, determination, discipline, drive, fortitude, persistence, tenacity, and courage. Making the decision to not give up despite...When the individual makes a decision to persevere in the face of discouragement and setbacks, character is formed. Character enables the individual to grow and develop in ways that once seemed to be out of their reach. Character must be established on a foundation of humility. Apart from humility, any progress that is made during the camp will be eclipsed by arrogance. Arrogance interrupt's the participant's ability to progress in the camp because the individual becomes resistant to learning. The product of arrogance closes the eyes and ears of the camp's participant.

No one is coming to save you or me. We have to do our own work.

When we get busy, we get better.

When the participant can not see or hear what is essential to advance in the camp, they will cease to benefit from the camp. Arrogance can lead the individual to believe that they can bypass hard work, commitment, determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity, and courage. Arrogance can lead the individual to believe that someone else is at fault for them not progressing in the training camp. Arrogance can lead the individual to believe that someone is coming to save them. That a program, in and of itself; will provide a magic pill or a special potion to replace hard work. To that I would say, learn from the program, but then get busy to apply what you have learned in the program. You are the only one who can benefit from the time, energy and effort that you put into your training camp.

How to Get Started in My Brain Injury Recovery Process Part 2

June 22, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

**“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”
Thomas Edison**

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

If you are doubting that you can benefit from the “training camps” that your experiences provide, let me share some good news with you. You are capable. You can learn from what works and does not work for you. What works for you may not work for anyone else, but you won’t know unless you put in the time and effort. So look at your circumstances as opportunities as training camps, designed to help you win in life. And stay committed to each of your training camps. Don’t take short cuts. Apply the basics — hard work, commitment, determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity and courage — to your process and before long you will be able to see how much progress you have made, because you stayed committed to the process in each training camp (s).

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single 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

Today’s Thought

Envision yourself winning in life.

See your experience’s in life as a series of training camps.

Training camps that are helping you to run your race in life.

Training camps that are preparing you to finish strong.

Training camps that are rewarding you for your hard work and determination.

Training camps that empower you to follow your dreams

Training Camps that cause you to triumph in your life.

Brain Injury and Success in the Recovery Process Part 1

June 22, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

In yesterday's article [How to Get Started in My Brain Injury Recovery Process](#), I spoke about the basics that make a successful training camp. In the article, I shared that living with a brain injury and by applying the basics — hard work, commitment, determination, drive, discipline, fortitude, persistence, tenacity, and courage — I am able to achieve far beyond all reasonable expectations by not giving up.

In my experience, I have found that through the grace of God and hard work I can achieve beyond all reasonable expectations.

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 the desired outcome.

For me, hard work does not mean running a sprint but involves running 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 something 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](#)

Brain Injury and Success in the Recovery Process Part 2

June 22, 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 on the road that helps 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 someday 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.

The 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!**](#)

Brain Injury and Success in the Recovery Process Part 3

June 22, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

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.

Brain Injury and Success in the Recovery Process Part 4

June 22, 2015 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

article link

[Answering the Call that Never Came](#)

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 learn, 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](#)

Freedom to Realize Choice in Brain Injury

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 me.

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.

In Part 2 and Part 3 I share several of the Freedoms I came to Realize in Choice

Freedom to Realize Choice in Brain Injury Part 2

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

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.

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.

Freedom to Realize Choice in Brain Injury Part 3

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

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.

Brain Injury — No Longer Limited by Limitations — Live Your Dreams

October 30, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

We No Longer have to Be Held Hostage by LIMITATIONS. We No Longer have to be Limited by Limitations. We are Free to Live Our Dreams. We are Free to Dream, Dreams. We are Free to Live those Dreams.

I have also created a video presentation of the article that you can watch and listen to by clicking on this link: [Brain Injury — No Longer Limited by Limitations — Live Your Dreams Video Presentation](#)

Living with a brain injury no longer has to be considered a death to our dreams. Living with a brain injury no longer has to hold us hostage. Hold us hostage to the belief that we are somehow limited because of our brain injuries. Hold us hostage to the belief that we are limited by of our limitations.

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

“When you reach for the stars you may not quite get one, but you won’t come up with a handful of mud either.” Leo Burnett

As with the impact of my brain injury, over which I was / am powerless to change, I experienced [many circumstances over the course of my life](#) that changed my plans. Happened with 4 different majors in undergraduate school and with my experience in graduate school at both Asbury Theological Seminary and the University of Kentucky. Happened with being fired from a myriad of jobs. Happened with my experience with 2 different vocational evaluation processes with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Happened with my training to become a black belt.

“Dreams do not vanish, as long as people do not abandon them.” Phantom F. Harlock

In March 2009 I wrote an article to share how my plans of achieving a dream were interrupted by a set of circumstances that were out of my control. I would invite you to read my article by clicking on this link: [When Circumstances Change our Plans and Dreams](#). What I discovered was that I could re-define my dreams to live my dreams.

To read about what the **Black Belt Cycle Qualifying Progress Check — November 8, 2008, Saturday** entailed, that I needed to pass to qualify to enter the 10-month long black belt cycle to be able to test for my black belt, click on this link: [Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury– Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams! Part 3](#) The article was written on November 12, 2008.

Although my circumstances changed my plans, I am glad that I did not give up on my dreams.

Brain Injury — No Longer Limited by Limitations — Live Your Dreams Part 2

October 30, 2016 by [Second Chance to Live](#)

Encouragement

I share this article and the 2 above article links with you to encourage you to not give up if you find that your set of circumstances that have changed your plans. Living with limitations, although they may delay our dreams, do not have to spoil our dreams. Living with limitations do not have to keep you and me from living our dreams. The only thing that will keep us from living our dreams is if we give up. So don't give up! Keep looking for ways to use what you have to live your dreams. We no longer have to be held hostage by our limitations. We can adapt. We can make adjustments.

We can Use Our Circumstances. We Can Open the Door to Possibilities. We Can Live Our Dreams.

An Interview with Tiger Woods

Several evenings ago, while “surfing” through the channels on my TV I came across an interview of Tiger Woods with Charlie Rose. I really enjoyed the interview, as I had never heard an interview with Tiger Woods. During the interview, Charlie asked Tiger a question that I was particularly interested in hearing the answer. Charlie asked him what was one of the main lessons that his Dad, Earl Woods, instilled in him. After hearing the answer, I felt let to write it down on a 3 X 5 card. Tiger said his Dad, Earl Woods, told him: “You get out of it, what you put into it.” Earl Woods

“You get out of it, what you put into it.” Earl Woods

You may be asking yourself, why would I share this interview with this article? To that, I would say, “You have asked an excellent question”. Tiger Wood is one of the most highly regarded professional golfers of our time, if not of all time. What stood out to me from Charlie Rose’s interview with Tiger Woods is the work ethic that Earl Woods instilled in Tiger from an early age. No doubt Tiger has some seeming “supernatural” abilities, but as Tiger said during the interview he was committed to working at and developing his skills.

“It is not that I am so smart, it is just that I stay with problems longer.” Albert Einstein

What became evident to both Tiger Woods and Albert Einstein is that they found ways to excel. They found ways to excel in the gifts, talents, and abilities they were given. And they excelled because they did not give up on the process, or themselves. They worked long and hard through their commitment to be their best. Although you or I may never be able to golf like Tiger Woods or have the IQ of Albert Einstein, **WE CAN** learn to excel in our given gifts, talents and abilities. We can live our dreams.

Introduction to Telling my Story

November 4, 2016

On August 11, 1967 I was in a motor vehicle accident in a Volkswagen Beetle with my Mom, Dad and brother. I was sitting behind my Dad who was driving. When the woman driving the Cadillac that hit our Volkswagen Beetle, I was launched forward (as there were no seat belts in the back of the car). In the process of being launched forward, I snapped my left femur (thigh bone) on my Dad's bucket seat. I then hit the inside of the windshield with my right forehead, resulting in an open skull fracture.

I remained in a coma for 3 weeks. I remember waking from the coma and feeling the right side of my forehead, which felt like a shallow bowl. I remained in traction, to set my left femur, for 7 weeks and then was put in a full body or Spica cast. I remained in the Spica cast for 5 months. I underwent brain surgery after being placed in the cast. I was home schooled for 1 year and returned to school in the 6th grade. After returning to elementary school the impact of my brain injury was never discussed again.

Because I was able to relearn how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences the injury to my brain was never again discussed. Consequently, I lived with an invisible disability, not knowing the impact or significance that the injury to my brain would contribute to my difficulties in living life.

I did my best to navigate through life, but I found myself experiencing much of which I had a very difficult time understanding. In my series, **Finding Craig**, I share, in some detail, what I experienced and what I learned through my process of navigating through life with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. On **Second Chance to Live** the series, **Finding Craig**, is divided into **8 Parts**. Here in this e Book, **Finding Craig**, is spanned over 24 Parts to aide in reading of the series.

I believe and has been my experience that there is tremendous power being able to identify with the experience of other people. Other people with similar experiences, struggles and adversity. As I identify with other people I feel safe and find the freedom to come out of the shadows of isolation. I also find that, as I identify with other people, the snare of alienation is broken and I find the courage to be myself. As I find the courage to be my self, I never have to be alone again. I can always reach out.

To read my other 7 e Books – which like this one is free to download – you may click on this link: [**Second Chance to Live — 7 e Books — Free for Download**](#)

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 1

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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 2

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

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.

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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 3

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

“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.

As previously shared, 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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 4

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

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 be 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

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

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 5

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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

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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 6

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

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

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high school, as portrayed by the classic movie, **The Breakfast Club**. I did not have girlfriend or a “steady” to go with during high school, as all interested girls were discouraged.

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.

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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.

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

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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.

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

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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 as 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' fault. Not my or anyone else' 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 the 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.

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.

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Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness

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.

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

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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. **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

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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.

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

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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

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.

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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.
- 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.

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- 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.
- 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).

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- 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.
- So that I could learn how to trust my judgment instead of defaulting to other people’s judgment.

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- 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

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

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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 previously explained earlier, I realize the work ethic I developed during those years kept me from giving up on life.

I 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.

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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 to 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 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.

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.

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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 be 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

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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 22

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

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.

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.

Finding Craig — Telling My Story Part 23

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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 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 a 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 — Telling My Story Part 24

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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.

Permission to Be Different

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.

Permission to Be Different Part 2

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

Let me give you the permission to follow your dreams.

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

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

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[Empowering Life after Brain Injury — 8 Free e Books](#)

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