

**Being Your Own Hero  
Through Overcoming Adversity  
Tools for Rebuilding Your Life**



You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

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In the words of Mr. John Bradshaw, “We stand on the shoulders of people who have come before us.” I want to thank Mr. Bradshaw, Jane Middleton-Moz, Alice Miller, Virginia Satir, Margaret and Jordan Paul as well as a host of other authors who have shared their wisdom with me over the years through their books and tapes. They have helped me to put words to concepts that helped me to find my way on my journey.

I want to thank the many people who have left comments and sent in testimonials surrounding my articles and the impact that Second Chance to Live has had upon their lives and families. Your comments and testimonials have served to encourage, motivate and empower my path and journey with Second Chance to Live. Your words of encouragement have served to confirm what God placed in my heart. Thank you. I am so glad that I took the risk to start Second Chance to Live nearly 8 years ago.

## Introduction

As I have shared on Second Chance to Live, I sustained an open skull fracture and a brain injury in 1967 when I was 10 years old. Although I was not expected to live the night of the accident or succeed academically beyond highschool, I went on to obtain both my undergraduate degree – in 10 years – and my graduate degree – in 5 years. To read more extensively concerning my process and journey over the course of the past 47 years, please visit my about page by clicking on this link: [about page](#).

On February 6, 2007 – at the encouragement of a friend – I created Second Chance to Live to share what encouraged, empowered, motivated, gave me hope and helped me to face, address and overcome adversity. At the writing of this e Book I have written and published a total of 1320 articles and have created 250 video presentations that I have uploaded to my You Tube channel. I create video presentations to make the information available to auditory and visual learners.

In the summer of 2014 I created a library of categories to house my articles and video presentations on a variety of topics [Archives](#). I did so to make the information more accessible. In January 2015 I created my first e Book [Living with a Brain Injury eBook Putting the Pieces in Place 60 Video Presentations \(PDF file\)](#). This e Book [Being Your own Hero through Overcoming Adversity — Tools for Rebuilding Your Life e Book](#) is my 2<sup>nd</sup> e Book, in a series of e Book's that I am compiling to to further aid in the accessing of information presented with in my articles and video presentations.

**The information that I present through my articles and video presentation can benefit anyone, regardless of their particuar set of circumstances or specific adversity.**

Since the writing and publishing of this 2<sup>nd</sup> e Book I have published 2 additional e Books. Here are links to my 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> e Book. [Living with a brain injury and Building Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance e Book](#) and [Living with a Brain Injury, Making Sense of Why and What is my Destiny? e Book](#). I am in the process of finishing my 5<sup>th</sup> e Book, which I will publish with in the week. As you read my articles and listen to / watch my video presentations and questions come to mind, please send those questions to me. All questions are good questions and all comments are welcomed.

Please send your questions and comments to me by clicking on this link [Contact Information](#). I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

## Traumatic Brain Injury Survivor Support Group / Meetings — Update

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 5, 2007

I am happy you are attending support group meetings. I want to be a part of your continued participation in your support groups. In that spirit, you are free to use material from Second Chance to Live and my e Books to generate discussion with in your meetings. My only request would be that you cite or attribute me as being the author of the articles and video presentations and that you provide a link back to Second Chance to Live <https://secondchancetolive.wordpress.com/>. Thank you.

I look forward to being of service to you and your support group.

Craig

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## How to Use Second Chance to Live

If this is your first visit time or you are a frequent visitor of Second Chance to Live let me say that I am happy to have you around my table. You are always welcome and your presence matters to me.

As you may know, I created Second Chance to Live on February 6, 2007, in response to the encouragement of friends. My friends encouraged me to share from my experience, strength and hope. With their encouragement, I started to write and publish articles from **The Power of Identification** .

Consequently, the format that I use in my articles is to first share a personal experience that I encountered as an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability. In the second part of my article I share how I addressed and handled experiences. In the final part of the article, I encourage the reader to apply the principle and strategies. The goal of each article is to share a message of encouragement, motivation, empowerment and hope .

Many of the articles that I write are lengthy. Because of their length, I made the decision to divide the article (s) into parts. By breaking the articles into parts, I have found that reading the entire article is more manageable to read. Please note that each part of the article contains information that gives clarity to the preceding and the continuing parts of the article. That is why I encourage my readers to read each part of the article — from the beginning and to the end of the article.

In some of my articles, I also include links to articles that I have previously written for Second Chance to Live. Many times I will say, “please read my article” and then cite the article by placing the title in **bold print** with a **blue or purple color font link**. Simply click on the link, 1 time; and you will be taken to that article on Second Chance to Live. The reason why I encourage my readers to read these previous articles is to gain a greater understanding into what I am writing about in the current article.

Once you are finished reading the “linked” article on Second Chance to Live, return to this Ebook and continue reading the article.

In the event that you have any questions, please let me know.

I look forward to being of service to you.

Have a great day.

Craig

## **Answering the Call that Never Came — Pursuing Our Destinies Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 29, 2014

For many years I felt like some one all dressed up with no where to go. Although I diligently applied myself to everything that I put my hand to, no one seemed to want what I had to offer. After giving up on the notion or idea that I needed some one to recognize my value, I answered the call that never came.

As you read this article, may you be encouraged to answer your call – the call that may have never come – as you pursue your destiny.

### **Answering the Call that Never Came — Pursuing Our Destinies Part 1**

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. I want to share something with you that I learned and was recently reminded of through an article that my Mom forwarded to me. The article brought the lesson back to my memory.

For many years I waited for someone — a group, an organization, a church, an employer or a relationship — to recognize my worth and value. For many years, I bought into the notion that I had to obtain some type of stamp or validation of approval before my gifts, talents and abilities could be deemed to be valuable and worth while.

Sure I used my gifts, talents and abilities, but I did not feel as though my gifts, talents and abilities were that significant. Consequently, I spent many years waiting and hoping for the call.

When the call to use my gifts, talents and abilities did not come, I felt inadequate. I felt insignificant. I felt “less than” the individuals, who were recognized and validated for their gifts, talents and abilities. Consequently, I became discouraged and despondent.

## **Answering the Call that Never Came — Pursuing Our Destinies Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 30, 2014

My discouragement and despondency continued to persist until I became sick and tired of being sick and tired. When I became sick and tired of being sick and tired, I became willing and motivated to look for solutions.

**Through being open to solutions, I had a spiritual awakening. I realized that the call I had been waiting for that never came— from outside of me — was already inside of me.**

In my willingness, I realized that I no longer needed the approval or validation of an organization, church, employer or a relationship to use my gifts, talents and abilities.

**I realized that I no longer needed to wait for an organization, church, employer or relationship to recognize and validate what I valued and considered essential.**

With my realization, I started on a quest to find a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities to pursue what I valued and considered important.

Through my quest, I discovered that I could use my gifts, talents and abilities writing and speaking. On February 6, 2007 I started on my journey to encourage, motivate, empower and share hope through articles and later video presentations. My delivery would be a web log and I would name that web log — Second Chance to Live.

### **Today's Thought**

Today is the first day of the rest of our lives. What we possess is on the inside of us — our call, our passion. Our call — regardless of our disability or limitations — is waiting to be pursued, one step at a time.

**Be bold and courageous my friend. You do not have to wait to be approved or validated. Take one step at a time. And remember; as you walk, the journey involves a process, not a destination.**

You will discover how to use your passions You have already been validated. Your call resides within you. Answer the call. And as you walk, trust the process, trust a loving God and trust yourself.

More will be revealed to us.

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

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

## **Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 24, 2013

I do not believe I ever shared the back story and development of Second Chance to Live since I created Second Chance to Live on February 6, 2007. I feel led to share this information with you to encourage you to commit to your dreams and your destiny, whatever that entails. For many years I felt like some one all dressed up with no where to go – although I diligently applied myself to my studies and seeking to apply what I had learned in my vocational / employment endeavors.

As I shared in my series, My Journey thus Far I had a long history of getting and losing jobs despite my best efforts. While a counselor with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, I was made a client. That outcome did not result in a suitable job placement. After being fired from several more jobs, I was recruited to North Carolina to begin a job, which I was fired from 4 months later. Following that firing and an unsuccessful job search, I reapplied with the DVR here in North Carolina. After completing the evaluation and testing process I was deemed to be unemployable by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Soon there after, my 3rd application was approved by the Social Security Administration. Although I had been declared unemployable and disabled, I still desired to use what I had to give to people who wanted what I had to give. I wrote a collection of poems and a series of articles. After receiving some back pay, a friend of mine helped me to purchase a computer and I began to discover the world of dial-up technology. During the next 3-4 years the computer manufacture rebuilt 2 computers one piece at a time through my using 1st, 2nd and 3rd level tier technical support through several dial-up (not cable or dsl) companies.

With my use of the computer, I started to input my poems and articles onto the 1st computer's hard drive and then re-enter the data of my poems and articles onto the 2nd computer hard drive. I learned from my experience to store data on an external hard drive and make copies of my poems and articles onto floppy and CD discs. As you might imagine I spent countless hours on and off the phone following the computer manufactures technical support recommendations. After 2 rebuilds, and much aggravation, I asked some friends if they had a computer they were no longer using. One of my friends gave me an HP computer.

Over the next 3 years I continued writing and developing as a writer. Through my process, I wrote an autobiography and then a book – Table Topics for the Soul – Journey to the Heart. I attempted to get my book published with several publishers – after registering my book with the Library of Congress. I spent nearly \$100 attempting to get my book published with out success. I continued to write and a year of so later — at the encouragement of a friend – I sought to create a weblog. After researching several blogging engines, I decided to create my weblog using WordPress.com to host Second Chance to Live.

## Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 25, 2013

After deciding on WordPress.com to use as my blogging platform I spent 60 – 70 hours a week for the next 8-12 weeks learning about the world of the bloggosphere, writing, publishing, answering emails and comments. I also sent letters to introduce Second Chance to Live to organizations domestically and internationally to share the mission and vision of Second Chance to Live. Then for the next 6 months I spent 50 – 60 hours a week continuing to learn about the bloggosphere, write / create, answer emails and comments manage my web log and write letters to send to contacts around the world.

For the next 3 – 4 years I spent 45 – 50 hours a week, then for the past 3 years I have spent between 40 – 50 hours a week writing / creating, answering emails and comments, sending email introductions of Second Chance to Live, and learning about how to be more effective as a creator, writer and communicator. On July 29, 2011 with the encouragement of a friend I created a You Tube Channel and started to make video presentations of my articles for people who learn through watching and listening. During the course of the 80 months I have written 1130 articles and created 168 video presentations.

In April of 2013, I presented in a workshop in Anchorage, Alaska and then in May in a workshop in Seattle, Washington. In a few weeks I will be giving a keynote presentation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I realize that I would not have been able to or be asked to be a part of these conferences if I had not followed my dreams. I do not know what is around the corner. I am thankful for the opportunities that I have been given during the past 80 months. I look forward to future possibilities, as doors open for me to be of service. My experience has taught me that nothing in my development has gone to waste.

### Today's thought

In my experience, I have come to realize that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself. I have come to realize that everything that I considered to be disappointments and disillusionment were preparing me to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. What appeared to be setbacks were in actuality set ups. I share the above details with you for this reason my friend. You may have also experienced disappointments, disillusionment, setbacks, aggravations and adversity during your life time. My encouragement to you my friend is to not give up. Keep moving forward as you pursue your dreams.

### More will be revealed to you my friend.

Commit to “suing up and showing up” in your life each day. By doing so, you will be amazed at the things that you can and will accomplish because you did not give up on your process, a loving God or yourself. You will see what you thought was being used for your harm, was in actuality being used for your good. You will see why you needed to learn the lessons that your disappointment, disillusionment and adversity has taught you. You will see how all things have been working together for your good. You will be a blessing to the people who are brought into your life. You will see that nothing in your development has gone to waste.

## Finding Our Way out of Isolation Part 1

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

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

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

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

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

### The Power of Identification

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

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

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

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## Finding Our Way out of Isolation Part 2

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

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

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

### Identification as opposed to Comparison

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

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

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

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

I am interested to know what other contrasts you may have discovered. If you have any, please share them with me.

## In the Midst of Adversity — Resilience

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 11, 2012

During the past week, I was asked to write a post on the topic of resilience. Consequently, I spent some time reflecting upon the indelible nature of resilience. Resilience provides the provision to press on, regardless of discouragement, disappointment or disillusionment. Resilience determines to believe that a positive solution exists. Resilience chooses to frame life's experiences in a positive manner. Resilience empowers focus in the midst of distraction and negativity.

**I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.**

**Thomas Edison.**

Resilience encourages me to not give up on my process because I know that I am learning. Resilience reminds me that with all learning there is a learning curve. Resilience gives me the permission to learn at my own rate and pace. Resilience reminds me that life is not a sprint. Resilience helps me to trust that I will learn the lesson. Resilience motivates me to look for opportunities to learn, rather than be defeated by what I do not understand. Resilience encourages me to keep moving, when giving up may seem to be a viable option. Resilience emboldens me to believe that good will come from what may not make sense to me.

**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**

Resilience strengthens my capacity to be tenacious and persistent. Resilience prepares me to take advantage of fresh possibilities. Resilience motivates me to accept my reality, even though I may have people in my life who want me to live in their denial system. Resilience encourages me to celebrate life even when I scrape my knees through living. Resilience reminds me that I am not a victim of my circumstances, because I have the power to choose. Resilience motivates, encourages and empowers my process because I know that more will be revealed with time. Resilience motivates trust, because I know that I have a future and a hope.

**Today's Thought**

Above are some of the characteristics of resilience from my perspective. I would encourage you to sit down with a pen and a piece of paper and list ways in which being resilient could benefit you. You may like to discuss your list with another person and gain their perspective of resilience. If you would like to share your ideas with me, please do so through a comment. I want to learn from you too my friend.

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? Understanding the Process -- Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 25, 2008

Today I want to begin talking about the process of acceptance. Through my process of acceptance I came to a life changing awareness. I found that I could not begin to accept myself and move on with life until I first made peace with the losses that I experienced because of my traumatic brain injury. In my quest to make peace with those losses I needed to address my sadness. In my experience I could not just “get over it” with out first doing the necessary work.

**I needed help to be able to identify and address my sadness and frustration so that I could move beyond my sadness and frustration. I needed to identify what I was experiencing so that I could move beyond what could not be changed.**

In my experience I needed to stop avoiding my reality. In Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’s book *On Death and Dying* Elizabeth elaborates on the stages of grieving. In her book she introduces the 5 stages that people go through as they grieve their loss (s). The first of these 5 stages is denial. Denial is a defense mechanism that protects the individual from having to confront the shock of their loss. Denial manifests itself in various ways. I have heard denial explained as a warm blanket that insulates and shields the individual from having to face their reality. Denial can also be used as a door to shut out, that which is just too painful to address.

Denial can also be used to ignore and avoid what we do not want to confront. Denial can be used to erect a dam to hold back unwanted memories and emotional pain. Denial can be used to suppress body memories. Denial can be used as a disconnect, so that our heart’s won’t let our head’s know what is or what has happened. Denial can also be used to defend, answer and explain away behaviors that undermine our well beings. Denial can also be used to dismiss or invalidate another person’s pain or reality in order to avoid having to interpret or address uncomfortable feelings.

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? The Impact – Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 26, 2008

Before I began my grief work, I saw denial as an ally. When anguish motivated me to begin my grieving process I began to see denial as an active adversary. As my eyes slowly opened I saw that denial was seeking to keep me trapped in a system that would or could not allow me to realize or accept my reality. In collusion with my fear (s), denial shamed me for not being enough even though I sought to do my very best. Denial also sought to keep me distracted so that I could not see a way to my destiny. Denial led me to believe that I was my disability, deficits and limitations.

Denial minimized my passion and discounted my gifts, talents and abilities. Denial — in practice — sought to silence my voice. Denial kept me shrouded by a societal stigma that devalued my worth because of my traumatic brain injury. Denial kept me subservient to what other people thought of me. Denial undermined my self-worth and self-esteem. Denial kept me crouched in the shadows of isolation. Denial told me that what I thought and felt were of no accord. Denial sought to keep me distracted so that I could not see the truth. Denial sought to disparage my value and worth because I did not live up to denial's expectations.

**As my awareness grew and I saw how my denial was limiting my life. Consequently, I made the decision to confront my denial.**

Through the process of confronting my denial I have learned some valuable lessons. I will share some of those lessons with you. As I confronted my denial I needed to keep the focus on my self. I needed to be accountable to and for how I was choosing to respond my loss (s). I needed to own my sadness because of my loss (s) instead of detaching from my reality. I needed to feel my feelings. I needed to sit with my discomfort. I needed to determine why I was reacting to people, places and situations. I needed to determine why I thought that I needed to maintain my denial.

**I needed to love myself through the process of confronting my denial. Consequently, I could no longer blame anyone for my loss (s) or for how I was choosing to react to my loss (s).**

Through my experience of confronting my denial I have become more accountable to myself. As I have continued to be accountable to and for myself I have been able to own my process. As I have been able to own my process, I have been empowered to move beyond my denial. In the process, I have broken free of a denial system that sought to justify its position by denying my reality. By confronting my denial I have been able to open the door that denial sought to keep shut. Therefore I have been able to move on with my journey towards the acceptance of my loss (s).

**Consequently I have given myself the permission to be present for myself.**

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? Finding Freedom – Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 27, 2008

Yesterday, I spoke about the 1st stage in my grieving process. In that post I shared how denial acted as an active adversary in my recovery process. I then went on to speak to the need to confront denial for the impact denial was having upon my life. In Part 1 of this series I used several metaphors to describe the effect that denial was having upon my life. One of these metaphors was the door.

When I decided to confront denial, I became aware of how my life had been infected by a lie. As I examined the strategies that denial used to avoid the truth I started having spiritual awakenings. One of these spiritual awakenings revealed that denial had been acting as a door, in that denial denied access to any and all unwanted thoughts or feelings. In effect, whenever any unwanted thoughts or feelings sought to be heard or experienced, denial would discount and minimize the relevance of those thoughts and feelings. Denial imposed a code of avoidance to mask what needed to be addressed.

### **Denial through shame actively sought to silence my reality.**

In a denial system that seeks to maintain that reality does not exist, feelings are considered a threat, especially those feelings that trigger a sense of shame. Shame is different than guilt, in that shame is a being wound. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame are very similar in that the individual is led to believe that they don't just make mistakes, but they believe they are a mistake. As a traumatic brain injury survivor – with an invisible disability — I was led to believe that because I did not live up to expectations I was a mistake. For many years I internalized my inability to live up to expectations.

### **Despite all of my efforts to prove that I was not a mistake, I still believed that I was a mistake.**

Because I was led to believe that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake I remained in denial. For many years I sought to justify my worth and value through people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading. I attempted to do more to be enough. When these strategies failed I sought to discard parts of myself that I found to be displeasing to my family, friends, teachers, schoolmates, employers and coworkers in an attempt to prove that I was not a mistake. Slowly, but progressively denial stole bits and pieces of my reality. In the process of discarding parts of my reality, I discarded parts of myself.

As I mentioned in Part 2 of this series, when I realized how denial was limiting my life I made a decision to confront denial. When I began to confront denial, I experienced various reactions. Among these reactions was anger. I was angry at myself, angry at other people and angry at my reality. My anger many times came out side ways because I did not know how to express my anger in healthy ways. I was angry at my deficits and limitations. I was angry at life in general because I felt helpless in many ways. In the process of confronting both my and other people's denial — per my reality — I discovered that I had and held resentments toward various people, places, churches, educational institutions and employers.

### **Further confrontation of my denial revealed that I also had and held resentments towards myself.**

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? – Anger and Resentment – Part 4

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 29, 2008

Over the past 3 days I have been developing a series on Traumatic Brain Injury and the Process of Grieving. Through my process I discovered that I was using huge amounts of spiritual and emotional energy in ways that undermined my creative capacity to direct my passion through my gifts, talents and abilities. In my experience I found that I needed to grieve the losses created by my traumatic brain injury.

In Part 3 of this series Traumatic Brain Injury and the Process of Grieving Part 1, the second stage in the grieving process was introduced: anger. Per my experience, as I slowly became aware of my anger I realized that I had bought into a denial system that sought to keep me in denial through shame. Because I believed that I deserved to be shamed for not being enough, I internalized my anger. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame convinced and contained me in denial because I believed that I was the problem and thus deserved to be shamed. Shame undermined my ability to trust.

Shame set the stage for me to become a reactor rather than an actor in life. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame left me feeling helpless. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame sabotaged my ability to trust the process, a loving God and myself. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame drained my spiritual and emotional energy as I attempted to overcompensate for my unknown deficits and limitations. Through my process, I also discovered that much of my anger was buried under a mountain called debilitating guilt and debilitating shame. Consequently, I needed to address my debilitating guilt and debilitating shame.

When I started to experience my anger — in my helplessness — I turned that anger inwards. For many years I unknowingly allowed my anger to fester in the realm of resentments. I had resentments toward various people, but the biggest resentment I had was toward myself. I was resentful towards myself because I was unable to prove to other people that I was not a mistake. Specifically I spent huge amounts of energy chiding and berating myself for not being able to do enough to be enough to prove that I was enough. Consequently I spent much of my life apologizing to other people for not being enough.

Through my process I found that much of the criticism that I had toward other people stemmed from self-criticism. Moreover the judgment and criticism that I showed toward other people was often in direct proportion to the judgment and criticism that I showed toward myself. I found that my relationships with other people mirrored the relationship I had with myself. I also determined that my resentments were in a way a cry for help, however no one was listening. Instead the direct opposite occurred. My judgmental attitude and criticisms of other people and myself alienated everyone and anyone who may have been willing to help.

**In my process, I discovered that as I held onto my anger and my resentment I pushed people away from me. I also found that in the process of alienating other people, I was in effect alienating myself. Consequently, I became my own enemy.**

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway – Awareness – Part 5

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 31, 2008

In part 4 of the Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process – Anger and Resentment, the impact of anger and resentment upon the grieving process was discussed. In part 4 I shared how my life had been negatively impacted by the anger that I turned inwards on myself. I then went on to share how denial sought through shame to thwart my spiritual and emotional energy.

In part 4 I shared how I discovered that my shame — fueled by my internalized anger – perpetuated my denial, negativity, criticism and a judgmental attitude toward other people and myself. I found that the impact of my negativity, criticism and my judgmental attitudes proved to be counter-productive to being able to accept my reality. Through my process I discovered that I desperately needed to address my shame, anger, negativity, criticism and judgmental attitudes.

Once I realized that I needed to address my shame, negativity and critical nature I found myself back in a familiar anxiety. Upon further examination I found that my anxiety stemmed from my fear of physical and emotional abandonment. In the process I discovered that my fear of abandonment was firmly attached to my core belief that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake. As I have shared throughout this series — for many years — I believed that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was not a mistake. Consequently, I lived in a state of shame.

As I examined my motives I determined that I sought to prove that I was not a mistake in order to avoid the dread of being physically and emotionally abandoned. My anxiety and fear stemmed from my core belief that if I was unable to make another person OK with me, then I could not be OK with me.

When I realized that I needed to address my denial, anger, negativity, criticism and judgmental attitudes I began a program of rigorous honesty. I found that I needed to examine the resentments that I held toward other people and myself. In my process, I found that by examining my resentments I was able to look at the patterns that I maintained in my relationships with other people and with myself. Through my process, I discovered that the resentments that I held toward other people and myself actually sustained my denial, anger, negativity, criticism and judgmental attitudes.

## Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? – Acceptance – Part 6

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 2, 2008

In part 6 of this series the concept of resentments being the key to open the door to isolation and self-reproach will be explored. My resentments in effect held the key to the door of my isolation and my self-reproach. In my experience, I found that I needed to determine who I held resentments towards and why I sought to maintain those resentments towards those individuals –family, places, churches, significant relationships and institutions — so that I could come out of my isolation and be free of self-reproach.

In my desire to be free of my resentments I needed to make a list of the people that I resented. Next I needed to ask myself a series of questions regarding the people that I resented. I needed to determine what I believed those individuals did to me, how my life as a result – i.e. my self-esteem, emotions, security, ambitions as well as my personal and sex relationships. Next I needed to explore how the situation that led to my resentment make me feel? I then needed to determine how I responded to the event.

Next I needed to examine what my part was that led to my resentment — how I contributed / participated in / to the situation that led to my resentment. Was I self-fish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, inconsiderate, ect? Lastly I needed to examine what I did right – if anything — in the situation that led to my resentment.

In my experience I needed to examine specific time periods in my life in order to be able to identify my resentments. Specifically, I needed to examine how I related to my family, friends, educational venues, churches, employers and other significant relationships. Because I wanted to be free of the negative energy that my resentments created, I did an inventory of my resentments during specific times in my life. I examined as far back as I could remember until I was 6 years of age, then from ages 6-12, 12-18, 18-24, 24-30, 30- 36, 36-42 and so on.

Through my proactive participation in the above exercise I was able to identify specific patterns of behavior that I used to relate both to other people and to myself during those time periods. As I identified patterns in my behavior I was able to address what was my part, what was not my part and how I could be freed from the negative consequences of my resentments. As a byproduct, I was able to begin to recognize where other people ended and where I began. Consequently, I was able to begin to establish healthier relationships with both other people and with myself.

Through practicing rigorous honesty in own recovery process, I was able to slowly stop participating in a dance that told me that I needed for another person to be OK with me, before I could hope to be OK with me.

## **Why Do I need to Grieve Anyway? – Action – Part 7**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 3, 2008

In this the final installment of the 7 part series, Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process I wanted to share a few of the personal awakenings that I have experienced through being present in my own process of grieving. As I have grieved, I have grown in the awareness of my reality. In the process of becoming aware, I have grown to love and respect myself. I have been able to address, confront and understand the impact of my denial.

I discovered that the effect of my denial, anger and resentments produced a sclerotic substance that insidiously attached itself to the channels of my creative capacity, which in effect blocked the flow of my spiritual and emotional energy.

I found that as I made peace with other people and with myself the spiritual and emotional energy that I once used to manage my denial, anger and resentments became available to empower my process. Consequently, I have been able to channel my spiritual and emotional energy in ways to enhance my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. By addressing my denial, anger and resentments I have been able to flush my previously blocked channels so that my spiritual and emotional energy can flow freely.

I have been able to examine the roots of the anger that I had toward other people and myself. I have been able to identify the resentments that I harbored against other people and myself.

In my experience I have found that by addressing the distractions of my denial, anger and resentments I have been able to keep the focus on what is my business. I have learned to be responsible to rather than for other people and their choices. Consequently, I have been able to keep my side of the street clean in my relationships. I have also discovered the power of choice. Consequently, I no longer need to believe that I am a victim of my circumstances. Instead I am able to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

I have been able to learn valuable lessons. I have been able to take advantage of opportunities. I have been able to consider the possibilities. I have been empowered to pursue my destiny.

## How can I Change things Around?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 19, 2007

So many times in life I have felt like a deer caught in the headlights of a car, not able to move. Circumstances and situations would dictate my mood and peace of mind. I felt powerless to do otherwise. You see, I believed that there was something inherently wrong with me.

I have since discovered that I can step away from the car. The headlights of negativity and pessimism no longer need to render me helpless. Now, I can choose to move away from the beam of negativity and to step into the light of positive motion. When I choose positive motion, I find myself led to green pastures and beside still waters.

### Positive Motion

As the morning sun rises and the day sets its course, I am faced with time. As the seconds and minutes tick away, energy fashions itself around the attitudes that slip into my conscious mind. This energy feeds upon the value that I attach to my experiences. Negativity, if allowed to linger, will invite a dark cloud of suspicion.

Negative energy will also invade my reasoning, creating a pandemic of negative thinking. As it spreads, negativity will slowly encroach on my ability to discern what is good and favorable. I may then find myself melting into an abyss of fear and dread. If I allow negative thinking and pessimism to invade my life, I will find myself believing that I have limited choices. I will feel stuck and victimized by my circumstances. Circumstances will then be seen as a nemesis to my soul rather than as a friend, which can teach me valuable lessons.

On the other hand, if I allow positive energy to determine my attitude, I will be empowered. I will find myself increasingly resourceful and proactive rather than reactive. Solutions will become evident and regret will slip away. I will not allow myself to be stuck in mediocrity or delusion. I will not allow the enemies of my soul — apathy, complacency or neglect — to be alternatives, to living, life to the full. I will be motivated to excel and I will gladly accept abundance.

My attitude will ultimately influence every facet of my life—my spirit, soul and body. My attitude can either be negative or positive. I have the power to make this choice. This decision will define my reality. I am responsible.

## Is the pain really worth the suffering?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets Part 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Exercise:

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

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

### Riddle:

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

## **Baby Steps Turn into Miles, When put Together Part 1**

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

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

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

### **Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own Race**

Posted by Second Chance to Live on June 11, 2010

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

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

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

### **Today's Thought**

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

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

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

**“Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative**

## **Baby Steps Turn into Miles, When put Together Part 2**

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

force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you only have a extemporaneous half-possession...Do that which is assigned to you and you can not hope too much or dare too much.”  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

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

## **Finding Myself – Who Am I? Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 8, 2007

### **Boundaries**

For many years of my life, my concept of boundaries was limited to what separated One State from another. When it came to having, respecting or even understanding how boundaries factored into relationships, I was clue-less. The notion of my needing to set or maintain boundaries seemed ludicrous.

### **Because I did not respect my own need to have boundaries, I developed a series of limiting behaviors.**

These limiting behaviors reinforced my distorted perceptions and led me to believe that boundaries were merely obstacles to be overcome. I also maintained the belief that control and manipulation preceded the need to have or respect anyone's boundaries. My distorted perceptions also kept me guessing at what was normal.

### **For much of my life, I felt like a blind man, who kept bumping into different walls. As a result, any adjustment came with pain.**

As my emotional and spiritual pain increased so did my willingness to look for solutions. My recovery process, brought me to a place of awareness. My awareness revealed that I needed to both value and respect boundaries. My awareness revealed that boundaries, when not respected give way to a host of other limiting behaviors.

## **Finding Myself – Who Am I? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 22, 2009

**Such behaviors undermine the individual's ability to experience their destiny.**

These limiting behaviors manifest when personal responsibility is discarded as trivial, while seeking to hold other people accountable for choice, happiness and discontentment. When personal responsibility and accountability is dismissed as trivial, trust is repeatedly thrashed upon the rocks of disillusionment and disappointment.

Hope is also squashed beneath disdain and denial. Resentments become the anesthetic that justifies and defends irrational behavior. Drama and crisis becomes the focus, while a virtual strangle hold is placed upon personal empowerment and creative expression. In the process the individual slowly drowns beneath the under tow of contempt and bitterness.

Consequently, disregard becomes the standard operating procedure in the attempt to force solutions. Expectations dictate the quality of the relationship. Self-serving and self-absorption became the drivers. Power struggles ensue and become the vehicle to assert ones will.

Through my recovery process. I have also come to understand that I am a separate and unique individual. Although this statement may seem naïve, when I do not own and respect my need to have and maintain boundaries, I lose me. I slowly acquiesce to being controlled and manipulated by strong-willed individuals.

## **Finding Myself – Who Am I? Part 3**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 22, 2009

Through owning and respecting my boundaries, I have come to value where I end and where other people begin. When I maintain healthy boundaries, I am able to keep the focus on what is my business and what is not my business. When I mind my own business the stress associated with trying to change others and/or be manipulated by them is reduced.

Boundaries are meant to keep me in, not to shut other people out of my life. Through maintaining healthy boundaries, I am able to keep the focus on me, while respecting other people and their choices.

Boundaries help me to define what is my responsibility when interacting with other people. Being accountable to others is essential to maintaining healthy relationships. Nevertheless, I need to accept that I am not responsible for other people or for their choices. I am responsible to other people, but not for their choices.

**Boundaries have helped me to know where I end and other people begin and where other people begin and where I end.**

## What is Keeping me Depressed?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 10, 2007

As I have grown in awareness, certain truths have become self-evident. As a person with a disability, I allowed a culprit to bully me for many years. This bully controlled and manipulated my every move until I began my healing process. I now realize that I allowed this bully to reek emotional and spiritual havoc. I believe you also will be able to identify with my awareness.

In my duress I felt like a man a drift on the high seas, desperately attempting to tread water so that I would not fall beneath the swelling waves. In these attempts, I was battered and bruised. Living became a struggle to survive, as I attempted to swim against the tide of low self-esteem, a faltering self-worth, and a myriad of insecurities. In my attempts to make it past the tide of discouragement, I over compensated in an attempt to protect my fragile self-image. Although I was able to make it past a series of waves, doubt would again sweep over my heart. My best efforts to make it to shore were often met with chiding. Chiding came in the form of criticism. Criticism perpetuated the God- awful lie that I was a mistake.

Shame is the culprit. Shame is different than guilt. If you make a mistake, you can correct that mistake through making an amends. On the other hand, if you believe that you don't just make mistakes, but that you are a mistake you feel helpless. For many years I believed I was a mistake. Shame told me that I could never do enough.

### **Perfectionism demanded more, but more was never good enough.**

Through my process, I have come to understand that shame is at the root of all that seeks to undermine who I am. Shame seeks to act as a cancer upon the creative energy that resides with in my heart. Shame's goal is to discourage, dishearten and destroy. Through my experience, I have found shame to be at the root of all my distress. I have come to regard shame's message as my arch nemesis.

Therefore, I avoid interacting with people, organizations, and even churches that use shame to control. I believe that people who use shame to control and manipulate have hidden agendas. I do not believe they have my best interest at heart. Consequently, I avoid the tentacles of shame like the plague. I have come to believe that perfection is the offspring of shame who married disillusionment.

## **Do I want to be right or Do I want to be happy?**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 5, 2014

Over the course of the past week I have been woken by neighbors. I attempted to resolve the matter in several ways unsuccessfully. I found myself being angry and frustrated at the neighbors and then I made a decision to do some thing different. In the process of making the decision and executing the plan, I found myself continuing to be frustrated and angry. My thoughts were, “Why do I need to do something different, when these neighbors are not being considerate?”. In my frustration and anger. I remembered some thing that I have heard, “Do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?”.

As I thought about this statement, I found myself empowered by what I could change. I could change my bedroom furniture to move my bed away from my bedroom window. In the process of moving my computer desk, work desk and bed, I found myself empowered by the things that I could change, instead of continuing to fight against what I am powerless to change — other people.

### **Process**

In my anger and frustration, I realized that I had choices. I could continue to be angry and frustrated or I could do some thing different. I could choose to stay stuck, or I could choose to be happy. I could choose to get into action, by accepting the things that I could not change. I could choose to accept the things that I am powerless over — the way that neighbors behave — and I could choose to do something different to get different results. I could choose to use my time and energy in ways that would empower my life, instead of continuing to be angry and frustrated. I could choose to move my bedroom furniture, in order to move my bed further away from my bed room window.

Consequently, I choose to change the things I could, and as a result I got a better nights rest.

## What is keeping me stuck?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 21, 2007

In many families where ongoing conflict persists, a heightened tolerance for emotional pain ensues. Denial, rather than resolution become the goal. Repression, shame, and blame then become tools that are used to perpetuate the need to deny what exists. Overtime all the members of the family assume different roles to perpetuate the lie. Denial perpetuates the drama that contains the conflict. Each individual within the family system denies their authentic self to avoid conflict. Maintaining the role becomes more important than becoming a separate and autonomous individual. The role then becomes the person's identity and drama becomes the vehicle to feel alive.

For many years, I stayed in my role as a scapegoat because I believed that I was responsible for people, places, and things. By focusing on the drama, my ability to individuate atrophied. My time and energy were devoted to managing the conflict. Rather than focusing on solutions, I was duped into believing that the drama would somehow save me. It was only after I experienced an emotional bottom that I became willing to look for solutions. Through this process, I came to understand that the role I had been living did not represent God's will for me.

The answers to my questions came from my willingness to be honest — with myself. Through my recovery process, I discovered why I felt comfortable in the role that I sought to justify on a daily basis. Over time, I was able to identify behaviors that shackled me to that role. Consequently, I stopped saying, "I am sorry" for everything under the sun. I made a decision to allow people the freedom to take responsibility for their own restlessness and discontent. I also decided to give people the dignity to be responsible for how they chose to react to things that were out of my control. As a result, I found myself breaking free from the yoke that once controlled my world. I no longer needed to identify with that role. Through changing my behavior, I was able to break free from the drama.

I have also come to understand that drama distracts me from living life on life's terms. If I find myself buying into the illusion that I can control the drama, I will remember that I can chose to get off of the merry-go-round of denial. I have come to accept that I am powerless over drama so I don't fight the distraction. Instead I chose to step back and let the whirling dervishes, whirl. I have found that by staying in the moment and through being responsible for/to myself, I no longer need to adopt a role that someone may want me to play. This decision gives me the freedom to discover and pursue the purpose for which I was created, one day at a time.

## Why am I so Sad? Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 25, 2007

I want to share something with you that has helped me. My motivation is to provide insights to the parents that read my blog. My motive is to provide awareness. The beauty in living is that we can make a decision to change our behavior at any time. The process of behavior modification usually begins with 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. The action that we take provides the momentum that resolves our guilt and shame.

When parents do not deal with their shame and guilt, they make their children carry it for them. In many instances, the shame transfer is a learned behavior that is passed from one generation to the next. Through my recovery process, I have learned many valuable lessons. One of the most valuable lessons is that I am not responsible for anyone's shame or guilt. I do not have to carry the burden of another person's unresolved guilt or shame. Each person is given an opportunity to learn and grow from his or her individual experiences. If they chose to avoid or deny the reasons for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment, I do not have to absorb their pain. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame can only be resolved through rigorous honesty and a commitment to personal accountability.

In transactional analysis there is an expression that sums up such a process. It goes something like this; we will work it in, work it out, or project it onto other people through blame, shame, or scapegoating. As I understand this concept, when a person chooses to work it in, they chose to deny that they have shame and guilt and act as though it does not exist. When a person represses shame and guilt, addictive behavior is frequently used to avoid responsibility. When people chose to work it out, they become involved in a recovery process / program to identify and repair the reasons for that shame and guilt. The last option involves passing the responsibility for his or her shame and guilt onto anyone that is willing to be abused. Transactional analysis sums up the last behavior as passing the "hot potato". This last option involves making someone else the reason why they experience their shame and guilt.

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 on to me in the form of blame and criticism.

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 with out a disability. I am sad for both my Dad and myself, because we could have had

## Why am I so Sad? Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 25, 2007

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.

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 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 who is following after their bliss.

## **You are not a failure! Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 21, 2007

I have been thinking about a parable today. I am not sure who is the author of this parable. To the author of this parable I say thank you. You are a very wise person.

I shared the parable of The Cracked Pot with several of my friends earlier today and they were encouraged by its message. I will share this parable with you, in its entirety, because it is so powerful. You may think that your life is inadequate, that you are not able to contribute, that your life falls short of being enough. You and I can not see beyond today and that can discourage us at times. The good news is that we are enough, that we do not have to know everything and that our lives do matter. Your life provides hope to those around you. You are a blessing to those who come across your path each day. You are also a blessing to me. Thank you my friend.

So don't give up on your process, a loving God and yourself. More will be revealed. You have a future and a hope.

Now sit back and read the parable and be encouraged. You are a gift to your world!

### **The Cracked Pot**

A Water Bearer in India had two large pots; each hung on each end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pot's full of water in his masters house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water-bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your masters house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts." The pot said.

The Water Bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the masters house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the Pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but

## **You are not a failure! Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 21, 2007

not on the other pots side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my masters table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We re all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His Fathers table. In Gods great economy, nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you will be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness we find our strength.

## **Rules that keep me Stuck – Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 24, 2007

Tonight I want to introduce a series of topics through this post. I believe that the above title sums up a central theme that reeks havoc in many people's lives. These rules mandated that I adhere 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 rules, my creative uniqueness and energy shriveled and died. These rules kept me isolated and victimized by my circumstances. Although these rules appeared to protect me at the time, in reality they entrapped me in a web of deception. These rules keep me bound because they alienated me from God, from others, and from myself. Unknowingly, I was feeding my own denial as well as the denial of both family and friends. In my experience I have had to break three rules.

The three rules are as follows: Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel. When I began attending 12 step 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 for many dysfunctional behaviors and beliefs.

When I first heard these rules discussed I was isolated, afraid of being rejected and in a frozen emotional state. Through attending meetings and becoming involved in my own recovery process, I was able grasp how these rules had pillaged my existence. Slowly, I was able to talk, to trust and to feel. During the course of my own recovery process I have arrived at some definite conclusions. I am an adult. I am responsible for my happiness and well-being. Blaming anyone does me no good. I am the only one who can live my life for me and if nothing changes, it remains the same.

I did not arrive at these conclusions over night, but over the years. Like I have heard said, "It just takes what it takes". It just took what it took for me to get busy. I have found that the journey to living life on life's terms comes through awareness, acceptance and action. In the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, there is one line that my sponsor reminds me of at times when I am frustrated with people, "It is better to understand than to be understood". As I have worked on the reasons for my own restlessness, irritability and discontent, I have been able to let people off the hook. I have also been able to have empathy for the people in my life, who do not seem to know any better.

**Below I will share some of my personal experience, strength, and hope on the topic of Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel.**

Three rules are often used to mask reality. These rules are Do Not Talk, Do Not Trust and Do Not Feel. These rules give way to a state of helplessness. When helplessness becomes a learned behavior, individuals may unconsciously believe they are trapped by their circumstances. Instead of seeking to learn and grow from their circumstances, being a victim becomes an alternative to living. Living for them is reduced to a series of events to be endured and hopefully survived. Drama replaces vitality. Rather than seeking to be empowered, these individuals consent to the notion that success is measured by survival. Surviving each crisis becomes the unconscious battle cry.

Not only does this mindset undermine the creative capacity of that individual, but it also perpetuates a fear of failure and a cynical outlook upon life. Circumstances and opportunities are equally revered, as

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## **Rules that keep me Stuck – Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 24, 2007

a nemesis to be reckoned with on a daily basis. Life itself is reduced to merely clocking in and out each day (as a disgruntled employee) hoping that the minutes and hours pass with increasing speed.

I spent a large part of my life running as fast as I could to avoid the above discontent. 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 survive 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.

I reached an emotional bottom, when a relationship ended nearly 17 years ago. 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's experience, strength and hope. With time, I began to trust people. I shared my pain with them and they listened. I also found myself thawing emotionally as I began to trust the God of my understanding and myself. Slowly I began to see myself as an empowered individual, who no longer needed to be jostled about by events or circumstances.

### **Epilogue**

If you have bought into these 3 rules, I would encourage you to find a safe place to begin processing the reasons why you have been adhering to these three rules. My suggestion would be that you begin attending a 12 Step meeting in your area. Per my experience, my recovery started when I made a commitment — to myself — to regularly attend these meetings. My recovery accelerated when I began working with someone who had what I wanted, serenity. Through working with a sponsor —who protected my anonymity — I learned how to trust and how to speak my truth. You may want to work with a counselor or with another group and that is fine. What is most important is that you begin to talk, trust and feel. As you begin to heal through this process, you will learn to love and trust yourself. As you learn to trust the process, a whole New World will open to you (Please read my post, From My Heart).

## Why I needed to Break the Rules that Keep me Stuck? Consequences Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 24, 2007

Last night I introduced three rules that need to be broken. Today I will briefly sum-mate those rules and then provide some of the consequences of maintaining those rules. The list is not comprehensive. You may also want to add to the list of consequences.

### **Don' Talk**

This rule is often burned into the subconscious of the individual through threat of reprisal. The individual has to live their life from the lie based on the denial inherent in the secret or conflict. The secret is more often than not connected to shame and guilt. The secret becomes more valuable than the individuals. Shame and guilt perpetuate the denial that debilitate the individual. Denial promotes dysfunction in an attempt to justify the secret or conflict. Within a family that promotes the Don't Talk rule, each member assumes or is given a role to mask the secrets or conflicts.

### **Don' Trust**

This rule isolates the individual from the help that could be found to resolve the conflict. The individual also learns to trade their judgment for the judgment of other people. When the individual does not trust their judgment, they become vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals. The individual becomes conditioned to accepting abuse from and by the judgment of other people. As the abuse continues the individual internalize the reasons for the abuse as being their fault. The abuse confirms that they can not trust themselves or their judgment.

### **Don't Feel**

This rule alienates the individual from themselves. When the individual discards the part of themselves that connects them to their creativity, they slowly die from the inside out. Feelings are the mechanisms that connect our soul to our spirit, which in turn enables us to interpret our environment (Please read, [A tool from my toolbox](#)). When I feel, my brain connects with my heart, which makes me unique. In families where feelings are considered a threat, the individual learns to shut down emotionally. Feelings are often seen as a threat because they are connected to an unresolved conflict or secret. In many dysfunctional group settings feelings are also minimized and discouraged for this very reason.

### **The Consequences of Maintaining the 3 Rules**

Each of these rules minimizes the quality of life for the individual.

**Don't Talk, Don't Trust, and Don't Feel** keep the individual from discovering their authentic creative self. If I am sworn to secrecy or told that I can not trust anyone, including myself

I will see no value in feeling my feelings.

I will become a reactor, rather than an actor in my life.

I will believe that life is merely a gauntlet of obstacles to overcome and struggles to survive.

I will become preoccupied with people pleasing and approval seeking and I will not think outside the box (Please read my post, [Are You Living In a Box?](#))

## **Why I need to Break the Rules that Keep me Stuck? Consequences Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 24, 2007

### **More Consequences of Maintaining the 3 Rules**

I will be in a constant state of anxiety without knowing how to stop the madness.

I will buy into the notion that someone is to blame. Personal responsibility will be replaced with control and manipulation.

I will believe I am a victim of my circumstances and an heir to misery.

I will not look for solutions, but will be satisfied with being abused.

I will seek to justify my behavior because I am not at fault.

I will live my life in quiet desperation, because I have no hope.

I will see myself as a statistic, rather than as an empowered being.

I will believe that I am responsible for rather than to other people.

I will not develop faith in a power greater than my self, because no one can be trusted.

I will seek out drama to feel alive.

I will never be satisfied with life. Good will never be, good enough.

I will seek to be involved in relationships that perpetuate my despondency.

I will remain in denial and trade the truth for a lie.

I will seek to stymie anyone that makes me feel my feelings.

I will merely exist.

## Are You Carrying Your Parents Shame? Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 26, 2007

In many dysfunctional family systems shame seems to be the core driver. Shame can be used in various ways. Shame is used to avoid uncomfortable feelings and / or personal accountability through blame. Shame can also be deployed to prevent physical and emotional abandonment. Blame through shame mandates compliance to avoid the threat of abandonment. In such family dynamics each individual has to discard parts of themselves in order to avoid being shamed or abandoned.

Such a dynamic can be seen in the individual's physical, emotional and spiritual development. Early in the child's life, disowning or discarding occurs each time a trait, quality or characteristic displeases the parent or caregiver. Unconsciously the child learns through the parent's eyes and gestures what pleases and displeases them. The child begins to associate any quality, characteristic or behavior that does not please the parent as bad. In the event that the parent withholds affection or attention from the child – when the child does not “please” the parent– the threat of physical and / or emotional abandonment is instilled in the child. With holding of affection or attention can be a terrifying event for any child. The child unknowingly begins to associate certain behaviors with specific responses from the parents or caregivers.

As the child continues to develop they learn that repressing what does not please the parent is a way to avoid making Mommy or Daddy angry. {Repression –The unconscious exclusion of painful impulses, desires, or fears from the conscious mind}. Over time the child learns that in order to please his or her parents they must discard any trait, characteristic or quality that displeases the parent. Unconsciously the child may fear the threat of emotional and / or physical abandonment. Depending upon the level or dysfunction in the family system, the child may begin to use active suppression to protect themselves from feelings of annihilation. {Suppression –the conscious exclusion of unacceptable desires, thoughts, or memories from the mind.} As repression turns into suppression, denial becomes the operative mechanism to discard what is perceived as being unacceptable to the “love object” or parent.

Because the child learns to associate negative outcomes with specific qualities, characteristics and traits, they may continue to berate themselves for having “those” unacceptable qualities, characteristics and traits. As the child continues to develop – from an adolescent to a teenager — they may be unable to differentiate between what makes them valuable, special and unique and what they had to discard.

As the individual gets older and begins to seek to form intimate relationships, an interesting phenomenon occurs. The traits, qualities or characteristics once discarded (as they were growing up) are now admired in the new relationship. Initially, these traits are valued and appreciated in the beloved and then something horrible seems to occur. The shame once assigned to those discarded parts of the individual is now transferred onto the beloved. Insidiously, the beloved is now expected to carry that shame for having those once admired traits. Instead of these traits being encouraged and nurtured, they are now viewed as a threat. If the two people stay together in the relationship, those qualities, traits and characteristics will again have to be discarded. Shame has thus again won in the squelching of those qualities. If this goes unchecked, creativity is often lost and thrown by the wayside of life itself.

I have found that the solution to ending the cycle of displaced sadness resides in the place of honesty. I need to look at the parts of myself that I have had to discard to maintain any relationship. Once I begin

## **Are You Carrying Your Parents Shame? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 26, 2007

to realize that someone wants me to carry his or her displaced sadness, I need to evaluate if staying in the relationship is good for me. I have come to believe that I can not help anyone, by carrying his or her sadness. If I continue in that relationship, I may find myself being dragged under spiritually. Each person needs to do resolve their own sadness and shame, as it hinders them. This process ultimately needs to be their choice. I no longer want to discard parts of me; in order to be loved or valued by another person, especially at the expense of carrying someone's unresolved sadness.

## **Celebrating Small Successes**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 13, 2007

This simple but profound concept alluded me for a large part of my life. You see, I thought that perfection was the benchmark of success. The demand of perfection clouded my eyes and I was unable to celebrate the progress I was making in my pursuits. Perfectionism kept raising the bar of expectation. The fear of failure coupled with a pervasive sense of shame seemed to be my constant companion, dissuading me from trying new projects, activities or goals. I was stuck in an abyss of fear and anxiety.

In my attempt to silence the voice of shame and inadequacy, I found myself tenaciously pursuing the illusion of perfection. As I continued to overcompensate, I found myself in a dilemma. Because the good that I did rarely seemed to be good enough, I found myself in an endless cycle of striving to be more and do more. As I began to realize the futility of my efforts to do enough to be enough, the clouds that once kept me under a yoke of oppression began to part and my spiritual eyes were opened.

Through my pursuit to be free from this faulty belief system, I had spiritual awakenings. I began to realize that life is a process, not to be defined by outcomes. I also discovered that when I attempt to define my life by potential outcomes, I set myself up to be irritable, restless and discontent. In my process of growth, I have discovered that I could be satisfied with small successes brought about by the footwork that I set forth in all my endeavors. I have also discovered that it is in my best interest to trust the God of my understanding with any and all outcomes.

My belief system has changed. I no longer feel the need to overcompensate, in order to prove my worth and value. I now know that I am enough. Trusting God with the outcomes frees me to enjoy the footwork. I now find myself encouraging people I meet along the path of life with this statement, "Take one step at a time, keep going at what you are doing and before long you will look back and see how far you have come".

This philosophy has inspired me to enjoy the process of living, which in turn keeps me from judging my efforts, one day at a time.

## How to Not Judge Our Efforts

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 19, 2009

Over this past weekend, I attended a series of workshops. During one of the workshops the principle of “keeping it simple” was presented as a topic. As I listened to what people share on the principle of k.i.s.s.

Last night I attended a meeting where the topic of “keeping it simple” was also tabled as the topic to discuss during the meeting. Through attending the work shop and then the meeting on “keeping it simple” I heard several people refer to the principle of “keeping it simple” with an additional “s”. In this post I want to reflect on that fourth “s”.

As I listened to the discussion I heard several people make reference to being stupid: k.i.s.s. — keep it simple stupid.

When the time came for me to share my thoughts on the topic of “keeping it simple” I shared some of what I have learned through my experience. I told the group of individuals that I discovered that I do not like shaming words — such as stupid — because such words place judgments on my efforts.

I continued to share that I discovered that when I place judgments on my efforts I set myself up to experience alienation and isolation.

With my awareness, I discovered that I could change the way in which I looked at or “framed” my learning experience. By changing the way in which I view my learning experience I am able to stop judging my efforts. Consequently, instead of placing judgments on my efforts, I am able to enjoy my learning process and applaud my efforts.

I am able to applaud my efforts because I know that with all my learning there is a learning curve. I am able to applaud my efforts because I can not know until I know. I am able to applaud my efforts because I know that it just takes what it takes for me to know — and I am learning as I go...

## How to Achieve Goals – One Bite at a Time Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 27, 2007

While training at the martial arts school earlier today, Sensei (Instructor) had the brown and black belts drill round kicks, followed by tornado kicks. We drilled these kicks with a partner and a focus pad. Which each series of kicks I was encouraged by my ability to execute the tornado kick with accuracy and height. A tornado kick is likened to a spinning crescent kick, which requires coordination, agility and timing. I was particularly encouraged by the progress I made because I have not always been able to execute a round kick followed by a tornado kick.

I use the above illustration, not to draw attention to my ability, but to convey a principle. The principle may seem obvious to some and being able to execute a tornado kick may not be a big deal to other people. When I first began training at the martial arts school I had limited coordination which limited my ability to perform any kicks, much less a tornado kick. When I watched more advanced students demonstrate tornado kicks I was amazed by their grace and agility. When I attempted to mimic the ability of the advanced students I looked and felt extremely clumsy. What became apparent was that my leg strength did not support my ability to perform tornado kicks. I had not yet developed the necessary muscle memory to perform tornado kicks.

Rather than becoming discouraged and despondent I made a decision to develop my leg strength and muscle memory. Through my decision I decided to drill and drill again and then drill some more. Because of my limitations and deficits I knew I needed to spend additional time and attention to drilling. In my process as a martial artist I had to spend more time at the Y developing my leg strength to improve and enhance my balance. The combination of drilling my kicks and increasing my leg strength significantly improved my ability to execute tornado kicks. I am not suggesting that my tornado kicks are stellar in appearance or delivery, but I have determined to deal with my elephant. I may never be able to execute a tornado kick flawlessly, but I know that my tornado kicks are looking and feeling better with each new day.

You may have a desire to improve in your physical rehabilitation or in some other area of your recovery process. I have found that the journey of a thousand mile begins with the first step. Unless we decide to take the first step and then keep moving we may never see our desires and dreams come to fruition. I have heard the question asked, “How do you eat an elephant?” The immensity of the elephant can appear to be overwhelming. Rather than being discouraged I can chose to look for a solution. The impossible becomes attainable when I follow the principle in the answer to that question, “One bite at a time.”

## How to Achieve Goals – One Bite at a Time Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 27, 2007

When I view my elephant, such as improving a tornado kick as manageable through bites, I find encouragement to keep chewing. You may have seen your elephant as overwhelming and daunting. You may have asked yourself the question, “What is the point?” The elephant is just too big. My encouragement to you my friend is to work with your therapist and do the drills to improve your skill. As you stay committed to your process the immensity of your elephant will be reduced to bones and you will grow stronger with each bite. Before long you will look back in your recovery and rehabilitation process and see how far you have come. We grow because we respect the elephant, but refuse to give up on our process, on a loving God or on ourselves, because we know that our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but to build us up!

## How to Succeed – The Measure of a Champion

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 16, 2007

I have been thinking about what makes a champion — a champion — and then who certifies the individual as a champion. Society as a whole seems to promote several notions that, by nature disqualify most of us from believing we are champions. Some of these notions include the following scenarios. Being a star athlete or a professional athlete who makes millions of dollars. Being an Olympian who has achieved a bronze, silver or gold medal in the Olympic Games. Being a race car driver who wins a certain amount of races or someone who has won the Nobel Peace Prize. I am sure you could think of other instances where society deems a person worthy of being a champion. Each of the scenarios stress achievement and recognition.

From an early age, many of us get duped into believing that being a champion is the goal to strive for in life. Consequently, we set off on personal crusade to win the prize and become a champion. I spent many years of my life attempting to qualify to be some ones champion. I was convinced that if I could just win the prize (education, athletic superiority and a high paying job) then I could, to be a champion. Through my process, I learned a valuable lesson. If I am waiting for some one to certify that my efforts are in league with other champions, I may find myself chasing after the wind. Subsequently, I may find myself frustrated and despondent.

As a person with a disability, I need to remind myself that I do indeed have a disability. I need to remember lest I fall into someone's denial system (read my post, Traumatic Brain Injury and Denial— My Perspective as a TBI Survivor). Although I am not my disability, I do have specific deficits and limitation. Although I have limitations and deficits, I am not those limitations or deficits. You may have a disability, but you are not your disability. You may have limitations, but you are not those limitations. You are a champion because you pursue excellence on a daily basis. You are a champion because you do not give up on yourself. You are a champion because you get up more times than you fall down. You are a champion because you chose to live as an empowered being. You are a champion because you learn from all of your experiences. You are a champion because you refuse to believe that you are a victim of your circumstances. You are a champion because you are doing your best.

We are champions because we live life on life's terms. We are champions because we trust the process. We are champions because we know that we are not alone. We are champions because we celebrate small successes. We are champions when we take advantage of the opportunities that become available to us each day. We are champions when we follow our passions. We are champions when we refuse to be ignorant or arrogant. We are champions when we are accountable to other people and for ourselves. We are champions when we look for solutions. We are champions when we think outside the box. We are champions when we are honest with ourselves. We are champions when we trust the God of our understanding.

**We are champions because we are... You are a champion, because you are... I am a champion, because I am... not because I have been approved by...**

## **Living with a brain injury and Denial – My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 12, 2007

I met with a group of friends tonight. During the time together, I felt led to share some of my struggles as a traumatic brain injury survivor with a friend of mine. My motivation was to provide encouragement and insight from my experience, strength and hope as a traumatic brain injury survivor. You see, her boyfriend went through a series of treatments several years ago to treat a malignant melanoma. The interferon saved his life, but in the process caused some brain damage. The damage to his brain has limited his ability to function at the level prior to the cancer treatments.

As I have shared in my post, My Journey thus Far (please read for further details) my brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. I was in a coma for 3 weeks and in traction to set my left femur, which was also fractured at the time of the accident. After being placed in a Spica or full body cast (for my left femur after completing traction) I was transferred to another hospital where I underwent brain and skull surgery. Several months after the surgery I went through a battery of cognitive, psychological, and social tests. I also had 2 EEG's done—the first was done with metal spikes. Thank God technology improved by the time I had the second EEG, which was done with electrodes pasted onto my head and not drilled into my skull.

The results from these tests were shared with my parents, however they decided to keep the findings from me. I did not find out about those results until after I finished graduate school. My Mom revealed that the test results, done some 30 + years before, showed that due to the extent of my brain injury I was not expected to advance beyond my high school education. Another piece of the puzzle became apparent approximately 3 years after I completed my graduate degree.

While working as a master's level rehabilitation counselor in a state department of vocational rehabilitation, I began having difficulties performing job duties as well as interacting with other staff.

This experience was not unlike many of my professional and non professional jobs that I had through out my 20 + years in the work force.

After working on the job for several months as a master's level rehab counselor, I started having difficulties completing some of the job duties, as well as interacting with other staff members. In my frustration, I decide to disclose to my supervisor that I was a traumatic brain injury survivor. She in turn told her boss, who in turn told the district director, who in turn had a meeting with me. She determined that it was in my best interest to become a client of the department of vocational rehabilitation. Over the next 3 months I was transitioned out of my job as a rehabilitation counselor into the role of a client or consumer of services. As you might imagine, this period of time in my life provided confusion and depression.

## **Living with a brain injury and Denial – My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 12, 2007

After being given my own rehabilitation counselor, I was scheduled to undergo another EEG. My counselor also arranged for me to undergo a neuro psyche evaluation. The results from the EEG confirmed that I had some brain damage. I then met with the neuro psychologist to complete the neuro psychological evaluation. Several weeks after I completed the evaluation, I received a detailed report of

his findings. The long and the short of the findings showed that I was functioning at a level above my abilities. The second revelation that the neuro psychologist shared in his report raised a key question. He stated that I had somehow had been able to obtain both my undergraduate and graduate degrees despite my cognitive and psycho social deficits. The Dr. went on to say in his report that he attributed my success to sheer persistence and motivation.

When I said his report raised a key question, I was not making an understatement. How could I be able to obtain my undergraduate, graduate degree, as well as my national credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor, but not be able to function at an undergraduate or master's level in the work force. The conclusions drawn by the neuro psychologist seemed to be in direct contradiction with what I had been able to accomplish. His findings did not make any sense to me. I was both frustrated and bewildered after reading his report.

When I shared the results of the tests with my family they all thought the neuro psychologist did not know what he was talking about concerning my level of functioning. For the next 3 to 4 years I continued to work under the assumption that the neuro psychologist findings were rubbish. My parents and brother continued to concur with the assumption that the reason I was having difficulty maintaining employment was because I did not try hard enough. Nevertheless, I continued to get and lose jobs.

Even after I had been declared disabled, part of me continued to believe that my parents and my brother were right and the test results were bogus. What made matters worse for me was that I berated myself for my inability to maintain employment. My Dad also mercilessly criticized my inability to get along with people. His denial crushed my ability to love and accept who I was in the face of what I could not understand. My Dad wanted to believe that if he pushed me hard enough that I would straighten up.

I share the above information with you, as I shared with my friend's girlfriend to illustrate a point. Traumatic brain injury in many instances is an invisible disability. Although the individual may appear to be functioning well on some levels, they may still have a brain injury which grossly interferes with their ability to function on other levels.

## Living with a brain injury and Denial – My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 12, 2007

My interest in sharing my story is to illustrate how a person with a traumatic brain injury can be misunderstood and minimized. What I needed most from people was understanding. I needed support and understanding because I had experienced a significant brain injury. But this understanding did not come for many years. I shared this information with my friend tonight in an attempt to help her understand that her boyfriend's acquired brain injury should not be denied. I told her that denying the reality of his brain damage would not change that reality. Denial would only perpetuate his feeling of inadequacy and anguish. I also encouraged her to support her boyfriend and to not place demands on him. I encouraged her to accept his reality and to love the person. As we spoke, I emphasized that he was not his brain injury. Please read my post [Traumatic Brain Injury — Following your bliss...](#) regardless. Thank you.

For many years, I bought into different denial systems. I believed that I should be able to function as a person with out a brain injury. My denial was encouraged by those who could not or would not accept that I was indeed disabled because of a traumatic brain injury. Consequently, I continued to berate myself until I began questioning my own denial system. When I stopped trying to measure up to or be someone with out a brain injury, I was able to accept myself as a person with a traumatic brain injury.

In the event that you have someone in your life who has experienced an acquired or traumatic brain injury, please understand we are not faking it. We are not fudging or making excuses. You may have a hard time accepting our reality, but that does not change reality. We are not like people who have not experienced a brain injury. What we need most from you is support and understanding. Don't make us live in your denial system. Please understand that we are doing the best that we can, just for today.

For my brothers and sisters who are traumatic brain injury survivors, do not give up on your selves. Keep the faith and keep trucking. Your brain injury makes you unique and magical. Revel in your position. You are beautiful just as you are. Follow your dreams. Dream big and do the footwork. Live each day with zest and vigor. I guarantee that more will be revealed in time, one day at a time. Most of all please remember that you are undoubtedly a very valuable and special person. You are not your acquired brain injury. You are a bright and shinning star and you are a gift to your world.

So where do I go from here? Please read my article , [When will I find my Destiny?](#); by clicking on this link: [When will I find my Destiny?](#)

## **When Will I Find My Destiny and What Do I need to Do?**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 23, 2008

I have been thinking about the matter of find one's destiny. Through considering the quest, I arrived at some definite conclusions.

**A person's destiny is in the now. A person's destiny is something that evolves with each experience. Consequently, a person's destiny is not to be found, but experienced.**

During many years of my life I focused on the "when's" of life. When I get the degree, when I get the job or when I get the relationship. Consequently, I spent huge amounts of time and energy in my attempt to secure the when's of life. You see, I bought into the notion that these when's were going to complete me and in the process secure my destiny. In essence, I attached my being to the outcomes and became a human doing. In my obsession to secure my destiny, I lost sight of my journey and my being.

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

Living essentially became a means to an end, rather than something to be cherished and valued. The when's of life consequently became more important than life itself. Living became a chore as I sought to prove my worth and value through the obtaining of these "when's". For many years I was unaware of how my invisible disability — traumatic brain injury — impacted my life. Consequently, I found myself frustrated again and again because I repeatedly fell short of obtaining the when's that I had for my life.

**Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.**

**Robert Louis Stevenson**

Over time I became aware of how the "when's" — that I had for my life — distracted me from the "now's" of my life. The "when's" of life were a distraction because they were like the proverbial golden carrot that remained just out of reach. In my awareness, the obvious became apparent. My "now's" are always present. Because my "nows" are always present I am given the opportunity to learn from my present moment. As I learn from my "nows" I am provided with the knowledge to experience my destiny in the present moment.

Consequently, I no longer need to pursue my destiny. Instead, as I stay in my present, I am able to participate in my destiny because I choose to create in the now. Through creating in the present I am able to take advantage of the circumstances that my now's offer to me, because my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but they are meant to build me up. Through staying in the now, I am freed from the belief that I need to find my destiny. Therefore, I am free to be in my destiny without needing to prove my worth or value in the when.

## **Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors – Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 14, 2007

Today I am going to process some of my personal struggles with you. Before I was aware of this particular struggle I believed I deserved to be abused and berated. I typically do not like to label or place people in stereotypes, as labels can be very limiting, however in this instance I will use groups to illustrate my struggle.

As a person with an invisible disability I have interacted with four different types of individuals over time. The first group involves people that are completely oblivious to my being a traumatic brain injury (tbi) survivor or for that matter do not care. The second group of individuals who hear that I am a tbi survivor, but because my disability is invisible believe that I am somehow using my invisible disability as an excuse. These individuals treat me with contempt, either overtly or covertly because I am unable to satisfy their expectations.

The third group of individuals know that I have am a tbi survivor, and that my brain injury has affected me in some manner, but still want me to function as an individual without a brain injury. The individuals in the third group also believe that I use my brain injury as an excuse when I tell them I am unable to fulfill their expectations. The individuals in the third group refuse to accept that I have legitimate limitations and deficits.

When I state that I can not do something because of my brain injury — or what some people refer to as a “head injury” — individuals within the third group blame me for reminding them that I have a brain injury. The fourth groups of individuals thankfully realize that I am a tbi survivor and that my brain injury interferes with my ability to work with people, especially with those in the first three groups. They also understand that I am not making excuses for what I can not do and accept and value me as a friend.

With the fourth group I do not have to be more than I am, nor do I have to continue to convince them that I have an invisible disability.

The second and third groups of people give me lip service when they tell me they understand and accept that I am a traumatic brain injury survivor. Nevertheless, when I interact with the second and third groups of individuals I feel less than because I can not measure up to their expectations. Nothing I can say or do can convince them of my predicament –being disabled despite not appearing to be disabled. When I interact with the third group of individuals, I feel like I am between a rock and a hard place.

The second group blatantly chides and ridicules me with disdain while the third group has a degree of awareness and acceptance until individuals within the third group want me to be or give more than I am capable of giving. In my experience, when members of the third group have an expectation of me — which I am unable to achieve — I also receive ridicule and covert contempt from them. When I tell these individuals that I am unable to be more or do more they want me to buy back into their denial system.

## Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors – Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 14, 2007

Their denial system includes manipulation through shame, guilt and emotional coercion. I have spoken of this denial system dynamic throughout Second Chance to Live.

I have spent countless hours attempting to disprove the reality of my disability. For many years I internalized the impact of my disability as a reflection of my being. I shamed, blamed, berated and criticized who I was because of my inability to perform as an individual without a traumatic brain injury. I allowed my Dad to treat me with contempt for many years because I did not know the significance of my invisible disability.

Per your information, I have only recently –in the last 5 years– come to accept that I am a traumatic brain injury survivor, who has an invisible disability. Several months ago I turned 50, so for many years I was led to believe that the severe injury to my brain injury –which occurred in August of 1967– had little to do with my limitations. Rather than supporting and encouraging me through my process, my Dad criticized my attempts to overcome my deficits and limitations. Good was rarely good enough for him during many years of his life.

Currently, I have the above third group dynamic taking place in my life with members of my family. Although my Dad passed away January 10, 2007 I am continuing to be affected by the legacy of his denial.

Some of my family members still want me to do and be more than I know would be good for any of us. My family still has unrealistic expectations of me, despite my reality; however, I am no longer willing to allow those demands or expectations rule my world. Even though I have spent a lot of time logically explaining to them why I can not fulfill their expectations, they continue to be angry with me. In essence, my family members want me to again buy into the notion that I should not be affected by the injury to my brain.

I have reached a point in my life where I am unwilling to buy back into anyone's denial system. I spent too many years of my life berating who I am because I did not measure up to someone's unrealistic expectation. Today my good is good enough. I am OK with me and I accept myself as a man with an invisible disability.

Through my recovery process – from the affects of inadequate role modeling, codependency, shame based spirituality, traumatic brain injury and distorted perceptions– I have arrived at specific conclusions. People can not see what they are not willing to look for in life. People react to what they do not understand with anger and accusation. Sometimes people react from being afraid of losing something they have or not getting something they would like to have in their life.

## Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors – Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 14, 2007

Some people have no idea why they react, accuse, or blame, they just do. With these awakenings I have been able to accept several realities. I am powerless over opening people's eyes that want to remain closed. I can not change or fix denial systems. I am not responsible for how people choose to react to my reality. Although I may want to have people understand my reality some people will –like my Dad did for many years – choose to not understand.

Finally I have learned that if people do not have ears to hear, nothing I say can or will be heard.

In the final analysis, I need to apply something that my sponsor has told me. As St. Francis of Assisi's stated in his prayer, it is better to understand than to be understood. Through my personal empowerment process over the last 30+ years, I have grown in self-awareness. As a result, I have been able to accept myself, as well as my frailties. Consequently, I have come understand how I too can succumb to reacting; blaming and denying when I am anxious or afraid.

With my understanding I am able to show compassion toward individual's who chose to react, blame or accuse when they are anxious or afraid. Consequently, I do not have to react to my friends, family members or acquaintances when they are restless, irritable and discontent. In the event that I have to interact with those individuals when they are in unrest, I can say what I mean, mean what I say, but not be mean in what needs to be said.

Another tool that has proven to be effective is detachment. I can also limit the amount of time that I have to be around people or situations that are not good for me. I can practice being brief, being calm and being gone. When I practice healthy self-care I am able be who I am, rather than attempting live in someone else's reality.

In the spirit of wanting to be helpful I committed myself to helping a family member move across the country, prior to having all the details concerning the move. These are the events that led to my being in an awkward position. Nevertheless, in the process, I learned some valuable lessons.

After the individuals made the decision to move I assumed that the trip was going to be made several months sooner than was in the mind of the mover. First lesson leaned. Ask questions and get more information before committing. I said I would help them move cross-country before I knew how long the total trip was going to take. When I found out that the people I was now committed to moving were planning on taking 6-7 days to move across country, I started experiencing some anxiety.

The expectation was that I spend 8-9 days at one location visiting prior to then taking the 6-7 days to travel across the country to the destination where they planned to move. The expectation was that once I arrived at the second location that I would spend an additional 4-5 weeks. As I did the math that would mean I would be away on the road for 7-8 weeks.

## **Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors – Respecting My Limits Part 4**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 17, 2007

As my anxiety increased due to the expectation of time, I attempted to logically share my concerns with the people who I was going to move. I attempted to explain how the damage to my right frontal lobe predisposes me to becoming emotionally and physically fatigued, especially when I have to spend extended periods of time with people. I also sought to help the parties involved understand that when I have to spend extended periods of time with people I become stressed, fatigued and anxious.

Based on past experience, when I am overly stressed, anxious or fatigued my ability to monitor my interactive skills significantly diminishes. What a non-brain injured person does involuntarily, I have to do monitor voluntarily.

The injury to my right frontal lobe impedes my ability to read subtitles and social nuances, so I have to adapt on a conscious level. As a result of having to work overtime to compensate for the damage to my brain I become fatigued and depleted. Practically speaking, as I fatigue my stress levels increase significantly, which in turn leaves me depleted emotionally, mentally and physically. As I become depleted my ability to interact effectively with people progressively diminishes.

Therefore I have learned to limit the amount of time that I spend interacting with people. Through limiting the amount of time that I spend with people, I am able to relax and enjoy the time I do spend with people. Prudence has taught me that when I limit the amount of my interactions, along with the amount of time I spend during those interactions I am able to maintain healthier relationships. Through my awareness I am capable of having functional relationships.

As I shared in the 3rd installment of this series, the injury to my right frontal lobe (executive center functioning) limits my ability to read many subtleties and social nuances in “real time”. The more time I have to spend interacting with the second and third groups of people that I talked about in, My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability – Part 1 my stress level increases. When I am stressed beyond my limits my ability to monitor and manage external stimuli decreases.

Mental and emotional fatigue decreases my ability to read and interpret ongoing social interactions in real time, which can in turn lead to my being misunderstood.

With continued and ongoing interactions my relationships can come under strain, especially as I become fatigued and stressed. In the event that people do not understand or want to accept that I have limitations and deficits because of the damage to my brain, they can become confused. Their confusion can lead to various scenarios. In some instances people will avoid interacting with me, because to do so sometimes requires more energy.

## Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors – Win / Win Outcomes Part 5

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 19, 2007

In other instances, I am either overtly or covertly criticized for my inability to interact in real time. Both scenarios prove to be uncomfortable because they lead me to believe there is something inherently wrong with me. Both scenarios do not factor in the significance of my invisible disability. Therefore, I have learned that I need limit both my interactions and the amount of time that I spend with some people, especially with individuals who insist on denying and minimizing my reality.

In these scenario's I seek to be kind and considerate, however I have learned to limit the time I spend with those individuals.

My desire to bring about win-win outcomes teaches me to honor my limitations. When I honor my limitations I honor my relationships. Consequently, I have come to respect my limitations and value the abilities I possess. Because I have experienced the consequences of not respecting my limitations I made the decision to not place myself in a situation that would invariably produce a lose-lose outcome. In my attempt to provide a win-win outcome I decided to spend 2-3 weeks at the second location.

Through making the decision to spend my time at the second location, I was told that I never wanted to help the parties move in the first place. In reality, because I needed to respect my limitations, and because of previous information I received from the parties who will be moving, I made the decision to spend my time at the second location. The second location quickly became my priority because of love.

My prayer is that the matter I have shared throughout this 4 part series will be resolved in peace. Your prayers would also be highly valued. My struggle living with an invisible disability certainly has and continues to be a tool for instruction. I am grateful for the opportunities that my unique set of circumstances provides, because my circumstances are not meant to keep me down but they are provided to build me up.

**As an empowered individual, I can live life on life's terms because I know that more will be revealed.**

### Epilogue

Though understanding and respecting my limits my relationships with family members has drastically improved during the past 7 + years. We have all grown in our acceptance of life on life's terms. What has been most important is that I have grown in my acceptance of my reality.

What I discovered through my process is that I am the one who needs to accept my reality, regardless of whether any family members or friends are able to accept my reality. With this awareness, I have been able to practice the principle of live and let live, when people do not accept my reality.

I have also discovered what occurs when I continue to deny my reality. I will share those lessons in the next article series. **Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequences of Denying my Reality.**

## **Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequence of Denying Reality – Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 21, 2007

I have been thinking about a reality. Today is the first day or the rest of our lives. We get to choose how to spend and use our time. I am reminded that I am powerless over people, places and things, however I am not powerless over my attitude. My attitude and the perspective I choose to maintain determine how I experience my life.

### **I have found that when I believe that I am a victim of my circumstances, I feel helpless.**

As I have shared in my 4 part series, My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability, not every one is going to accept the limitations of my disability. My responsibility — if I chose to accept that some people do not have eyes to see and ears to hear — is to honor myself. Although some people may be angry with me because I can not be more or do more, I do not have to take on their anger. When I allow people the dignity to own their attitudes or perspectives I free myself from the need to rescue or fix those individuals.

### **I do not need to “fix” them or make them OK with me so that they will not be angry with me.**

Through my experience, I have learned that when I attempt to “fix” anyone — so that they will not be angry with me, in order that we can be OK, so that I can be OK — I live in a state of panic and dread. Through my recovery process I found a title for this dynamic: toxic shame based codependency. Toxic shame based codependency creates lose-lose outcomes. Many times, when toxic shame based codependency is being practiced, double-messages are given. Manipulation occurs as these double messages create inconsistency and emotional hostage taking.

### **Behaviors, which convey messages such as “come close go away”, incite the fear of physical and emotional abandonment.**

For many years, the threat of physical and emotional abandonment led me to disown the parts of myself that were not pleasing to the people of significance in my life. In my attempts to reduce the threat of emotional abandonment, I developed a false self. Unconsciously I was conditioned to disown whatever did not please the love objects in my life. Consequently, I had no idea who I was, what I liked or what I wanted from life.

### **Through the course of reaching my own emotional bottom, I came to realize that I desperately needed to stop doing the “dance” to prevent people from being angry with me.**

In my experience, in order to live an empowered life; I had to get off of the merry go round of denial. I had to stop attempting to please and approval seek so that people would not be angry with me. I had to let people be responsible for their anger when I did not measure up to their expectations for me. I had to learn to accept myself as a traumatic brain injury survivor, regardless of whether people of significance in my life could accept that reality.

### **I had to learn how to live in my skin and be at peace with myself.**

## Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequence of Denying Reality – Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 21, 2007

Yesterday I introduced the concept of consequences for denying my reality. Today I am going to share what I have learned. For many years I was encouraged to buy into a belief system that would not or could not consider the possibility that the injury to my brain contributed to the difficulties I encountered when interacting with some people and social situations. Consequently I was frequently criticized for my inability to “get along” with people without factoring in the damage to my brain.

**The sad reality created by a lack of acceptance — concerning my invisible disability — resulted in my being blamed, shamed and in many instances made to be the scapegoat for matters that were out of my control.**

Because I believed that I created my sad reality for many years, I lived in a state of guilt and shame. I did not believe that I merely made mistakes, but that I was a mistake. I had an overdeveloped sense of responsibility and spent much of my time saying I am sorry. My 6th grade English teacher had me write out I am sorry 500 times in his attempt to get me to stop saying I was sorry. My exercise in writing those words did not help to rid me of my sense of shame.

**Consequently, I continued to assume the position of a scapegoat because I was led to believe that I was responsible for the restlessness, irritability and discontent in my world.**

I continued to believe that I was responsible for people, places and things even though they were out of my control until I reached an emotional bottom when the relationship with my fiancée ended in 1991. In response to the break up I started to look for solutions. As I looked for solutions precious answers were revealed to me. I found that when I became sick and tired of being sick and tired I was willing to be honest with myself.

**I had no idea — at the time — how much good would come from the ashes of my pain.**

As I was honest with myself my ability to change the way I related to myself changed forever. My ability to love and respect myself began when I was able to come out of hiding. (Please read my post, Who am I) Although shame and guilt left me accusing or defending myself for many years, as I began to accept the child that God loved unconditionally, I was able to find and integrate parts of myself that I previously discarded in the process of protecting my wounded child.

Over time I have grown in my ability to accept myself and live an empowered life as a man with an invisible disability. My circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but to build me up. Because I know that with everything there is a learning curve I have determined to live life on life’s terms.

Please read my post, **The Art of Change**, by clicking on this link: [The Art of Change](#)

## Making Peace with God – Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 14, 2007

In my recent posts I have been sharing a lot about faith. There was a time in my life that I toyed with a dualistic theology. Dualism essentially states that the mind and body function separately, the world is ruled by antagonistic forces of good and evil and that humans have two basic natures, the physical and the spiritual. (Definition provided by the free on line Dictionary by Farlex) In this theological construct, I was beginning to believe that God was in some far off place undeterred by what was happening in my life. Consequently, I was going to have to figure life out by myself. Over time, my cynicism and doubt grew.

For many years of my life I lived in a state of shame. I believed that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake. At the core of my being I believed that I had to perform to be loved and if I did not measure up, I could not be loved. I believed that I had to justify my existence. I also believed that I had to fix people and situations before I could experience any emotional security.

For many years, I was criticized and berated by my Dad for not measuring up to his expectations. He frequently told me that I would never amount to anything while I was growing up. My Mom would frequently tell me to prove your Dad wrong. I believed I needed to be more than, rather than just am. As I grew older and attended college I found myself seeking out people like my Dad. My unconscious motive at the time was to appease surrogate Dad's in order to prove that I was lovable. Nevertheless I continued to fail in my attempts to satisfy the expectations of those individuals.

In my effort to purge myself of my unbeknownst sense of shame and guilt, I attended various types of churches from hard line fundamental, to non-denominational, denominational, charismatic, full gospel and Four Square assemblies. I sat under pastoral teaching and submitted myself to what was taught. I concertedly attempted to apply what I was learning, in order to gain favor with God and with those individuals with in the church I was attending. My motive was to be accepted and approved of through measuring up to the expectations set forth for me. My efforts to measure up to the literal interpretation of the Bible proved to be inadequate and the legalism only reinforced my sense of shame and guilt. I listened to various teachers declare that the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. As I sought to learn from the leadership of those churches, I heard other conflicting messages.

One such double message told me that God loved me and wanted me to have life and have it more abundantly, however I could not have an abundant life and receive the love of God with out fulfilling specific expectations. Performance based acceptance and love appeared to be the underlying premise. Consequently, I continued to feel inadequate and unlovable in many church settings and fellowships. My experience with in these religious settings reflected the message that I had become all too familiar with in my life experience: Come close, Go away. The impact of the come close, go away messages created confusion and reinforced my experiencing emotional duress. I found myself wanting what I could not have and seeking to be in relationships with an emotionally unavailable God. The crazy making behavior of come close, go away kept me trapped in a sense of inadequacy and unpredictability.

## Making Peace with God – Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 14, 2007

Because I experienced harsh criticism while growing up and then by actively participating in shame based spirituality, my relationship with God suffered greatly. Rather than being encouraged to draw upon the love of God, I was conditioned to avoid displeasing God, because if I displeased God, He would go away. My motivation was driven by fear, rather than by love. I believed based on my experience with my Dad and through my experience with the church (His representative on Earth) I could not satisfy the requirements to be in a relationship with a loving God. Subsequently, I found myself being cut off from the very source of my healing and courage. I believed that my hope could not be realized because I was not able to consistently measure up to the criteria set to be accepted and loved by the God of my understanding.

Today, I will bring to conclusion the series, Making Peace with God. In my process, I had to make peace with the God of my understanding. I had to resolve the conflicts and inconsistencies. I had to understand God's heart toward me so that I could trust Him. I had to be like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz" who had to see what was behind the guise of the loud ominous voice. I had to make peace with myself and be convinced that God truly cared about my world in a non-punitive fashion. I had to engage with a God who loved with an everlasting love, an unconditional love and a renewing love. I had to replace my mis-guided, inadequate belief system in order to trust the God who knew me before I was created in my mother's womb. I had to know this God who created me in awe and wonder. I wanted to know my God who cried with me, and was sad when I was sad, who rejoices over me with gladness because I am called according to His purpose. I wanted to know God as a kind and loving Father. I wanted to know my God, who loves me with an everlasting, unconditional unfailing love. I wanted to know my God who promised to be with me, even to the end of the age.

In order to restore my relationship with a loving God, who truly cared about my world, I had to make significant changes. In my experience, I had to physically detach from places, groups and organizations that controlled through the use of debilitating guilt and debilitating shame. I had to stop paying attention to people who wanted me to qualify my worth through performance. I had to understand how debilitating guilt and debilitating shame drained my creative capacity. I had to understand how critical voices undermined my ability to trust God, the process and myself. I had to replace the demand of perfection with the pursuit of excellence. I had to replace the message of you always do things in a half ass way with a learning curve. Spiritual progress, rather than spiritual perfection had to become the measure of success. In my experience, I had to come to terms with my humanity, so that I could do a fearless moral inventory of myself in order to identify patterns that set me up to believe I was a victim of my circumstances. I had to identify defense mechanisms that no longer worked and I needed to be rigorously honest with myself. I had to do the necessary work to enable me to see myself as an empowered being, rather than a human doing. I had to learn how to trust a God who was kind and loving and wanted my very best. I had to do the work to be able to accept the reality that I have a God, who dances and knows how to have fun. I had to begin to live life on life's terms and let go of matters that are out of my control.

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## Making Peace with God – Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 15, 2007

In the work I have done subsequent to my awareness I have come to realize that God is for me, not against me. I do not have to earn the love of God for that is given to me unconditionally. I want to serve God and be of maximum service to my fellows because of love, not because I am driven to qualify to be loved. I have come to understand that I am made up of a body, a soul and a spirit and they are to work in tandem, not separately. I have come to realize that God is more interested in my being, than in my doing. My relationship with a loving God motivates me to do the right thing. While there is evil and good in the world, I believe my choice determines how I respond. I can choose to follow goodness and mercy. I can choose to be a part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I can be empowered regardless of what evil may lurk in my world.

Because I have committed myself to my process, I am able to be at peace with a loving God and with myself (most of the time). I am able to learn from my circumstances, rather than be victimized by them. The lessons that I learn from my circumstances enable me to be apart of the heart of God that extends to all people. I am just one of the kids that God truly loves. You are one of God's kids too and He loves you with an everlasting love. God loves us and cries with us when we cry. He dances with us when we dance and He is sad when we hurt. His tender mercies are extended to you and me every morning. Because I know that God loves me I can depend upon His leading. He is my source and my posterity. He alone has the sum of my days in mind always. Having peace with God enables me to accept who I am, warts and all. I am the apple of God's eye and so are you my friend. Rejoice with me in that reality my friend. God knows and cares and has a future and a hope for both you and me. We are not orphans or stepchildren with God. He loves us with an everlasting love and promises to never, no never leave us. Because of His great love for you and me, we can rest in His presence and receive from His unspeakable grace and mercy.

### **Today's Thought:**

God I do not know if you really care for me, but I am open to receive your love for me. Please restore our relationship and help me to experience you. I want to know how much you really love me. I am wounded and scared from past experiences and I need you to perform a miracle. Please heal my broken heart. Please reveal yourself to me. I am willing. Help me to be willing. In faith I ask you to be apart of my life. I ask you to lead me into your will and purpose for my life. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen!

## Do you feel limited? – What are you telling yourself? Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 7, 2007

Life limiting scripts are messages that we tell ourselves. These messages were given to us through various people. Unknowingly, we then internalized these scripts. For some of us these scripts have gone unchallenged for many, many years. Consequently, we may have found ourselves being manipulated solely because we did not question the scripts validity. Practically speaking, we may have found ourselves engaging in activities that were not in our best interest.

For many years I was held captive to many limiting scripts. I remained mesmerized by what I believed to be true. And then, one day, my spiritual eyes slowly began to open. My spiritual awakening helped me to realize that I had been trading the truth for a lie. My spiritual awakening helped me to understand the true nature of limiting scripts. Limiting scripts intentionally undermined my growth and development as an individual. Limiting script's impacted my ability to trust God, other people and myself. Limiting scripts hindered my ability to explore and to create with my authentic self. Limiting scripts actively sought to shame my existence. Limiting script's created insecurity. Limiting script's corrupted my ability to be empowered. Limiting script's undermined all that was good and genuine.

After having the above spiritual awakening, I began listening to what I was telling myself. In the process, I began identifying specific limiting scripts. I found that it was important to write these scripts down on a piece of paper. I then needed to determine why I had believed those limiting scripts. I also needed to identify the source of the script –not to blame anyone—but to consider the source. I then needed to explore the belief system behind the limiting script.

Through using these steps, I am able to remove the trigger created by the limiting script. Once the trigger was removed, the limiting script lost its power over my life. Once the script lost its power, I was able to replace the script with a new message. The new message was one of encouragement and empowerment.

Below is a short list of some limiting scripts. You may have unconsciously maintained some or all of these scripts at one time in your life. As an exercise, you may also like to get a pen/pencil and a piece of paper. Make a list of any other limiting scripts that you have been telling yourself. Once you have identified a limiting script, you can begin the process of changing your belief system.

### Life Limiting Scripts

1. What I think does not matter.
2. What I feel does not matter.
3. No one will care.
4. Don't trust your perception.
5. Don't feel your anger if you are mad.
6. I don't care.
7. It doesn't matter anyway.
8. Nothing ever works out for me.
9. Relationships just don't work out for me.
10. Life has got to be hard.

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## Do you feel limited? – What are you telling yourself? Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 7, 2007

### More Limiting Scripts to guard against

11. I can't have...
12. I must be...
13. Good girls always do what other people want.
14. A man must take care of everyone.
15. Children are to be seen not heard.
16. Be right.
17. I must perfect.
18. Be good.
19. You think you have it bad. When I was your age I did not have...
20. You are as selfish as your father was...
21. You are as cold as your mother was...
22. You are not good enough.
23. I am not pretty enough.
24. I am not smart enough.
25. I am not talented enough.
26. Do for us (your parents/significant other) and do without.
27. Always obey the authority.
28. Never question the rules.
29. Don't think for yourself.
30. Speak only when you are spoken to.
31. Being emotional is weak.
32. The only thing that matters is wealth and intelligence.
33. People are disposable.
34. Some people are made to be used.
35. Spirituality is for kooks.
36. God does not love me.
37. I have to perform to be lovable.
38. I only exist to be beaten.
39. Don't talk.
40. Don't trust.
41. Don't Feel.
42. I can't be happy unless you are...

## What helped me to Accept Myself

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 30, 2007

Recently I have been asked how I overcame specific challenges after the car accident, when I was 10 years old. Please read my post, My Journey thus Far). In many cases I applied persistence to the task at hand. Perseverance coupled with persistence helped me to overcome many obstacles.

Dogged determination has helped me to keep going despite disappointments and set backs throughout my life. For many years, my will to endure was driven by perfectionism and shame. I functioned to survive emotionally and spiritually. Perfectionism and shame motivated me, however they never let me celebrate my success. The bar of achievement seemed to be raised on a regular basis. I was driven to defend my being through achieving.

**As I have shared in another post, I became what Terry Kellogg first posited, a human doing.**

I would recommend – from what I have learned through my struggle – that you make excellence and progress your motto's, as you heal and recover. My healing and recovery process continues to this day, although my brain injury happened nearly 40 years ago. I have to overcome on a daily basis from the affects of interacting with non-disabled individuals.

It is as though I have to defend myself because I have an invisible disability. I am frustrated by the indolence of those individuals who choose not to understand. They seem to want to blame me for their lack of tolerance. I am sure you can identify with me on some level, even if you do not have a disability. For those in the disabled community who are reading this post... I hear you shouting, "Amen Brother!"

**For some, ignorance seems to be a terminal disease. Thank God that I do not have to buy into their unwillingness to understand that I have a disability. I am not the problem.**

In my personal life, I learn best through repeated repetition. Physically speaking, as I train in the martial arts, muscle memory is essential for me to learn and retain new information. As I train, I drill, and then drill again and then drill some more. Repetition is the mother of all that I learn. I believe that tenacity played a big role in my learning how to walk, talk and speak in complete sentences after waking from the 3-week long coma nearly 40 years ago.

**For those who have to re-learn, keep marching. Read my post, Small Successes. Before long you will look back and see how much progress you have made.**

I continue to learn through repetition in all of the dimensions that make me who I am in this life, i.e. my soul life, my physical endeavors and my spiritual life. The difference these days is that I am motivated to succeed by my desire to pursue excellence. I have given myself permission to fall and get back up again. Progress not perfection has become my creed.

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living

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

Following a brain injury individuals may experience changes in their personality and in their ability to learn. Consequently, both the traumatic brain injury survivor as well as their family and friends may experience an unfamiliar frustration. Frustration may be compounded because the brain-injured person may look “normal” i.e. as though nothing has happened to them. Recently I heard someone say, “She was in a car accident several months ago, but she is fine. She just had a head injury.”

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

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

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

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

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

## **Learning to Live Life on Life's Terms**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 28, 2008

I have been thinking about the nature of life. We may not have chosen to be brought into this world. We may not like the way life looks today. We may be a traumatic or an acquired brain injury survivor. But what of that...

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

We may think that life is not fair. We may believe that our life no longer matters. We may want to give up on ourselves. We may want to blame our circumstances. We may feel stuck in the ashes of our disappointment. We may find ourselves arguing with God. We may be angry at the world, just because...

**Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts. Winston Churchill**

We may be convinced that our disability has derailed the life we had hoped to live. We may believe that life has passed us by. We may believe that we are limited by our limitations. We may believe that we have lost our credibility. We may believe that no one will want what we have to give. What of that my friend.

**Our courage to rise again prepares you and I to use what remains, because we are enough. Craig J. Phillips**

Let me inspire you to dream again. You will see your dreams rise from the ashes of your dismay. You will see your life take on new meaning. What once baffled you will be made clear. Your life will reveal a kaleidoscope of hope. You will fulfill your purpose and your destiny will become apparent.

**To reach a port we must sail- sail, not tie at anchor- sail, not drift. Franklin Roosevelt**

Our willingness to learn from the circumstance that life provides prepare you and I to take advantage of the lessons learned. Those lessons in turn empower our ability to benefit from the opportunities that become available to us. Those opportunities invariably point us in the direction of our destinies.

**The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so keep walking and before long you will be able to look back and see how far you have already come... because you decided to take that first step. Craig J. Phillips**

## More than a Survivor Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 21, 2014

Recently I heard some one describe themselves, as a survivor. As I thought about how they described themselves, I found myself annoyed. Not annoyed at the person who called themselves a survivor, but at the mindset that often accompanies the word “survivor”. The mindset that, in practice; serves to diminishes the worth and value of the individual.

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. The mindset that leads the individual into believing that they are prisoners in their own skin. The mindset that lulls 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 that spawns secondary gains and secondary dependencies. The mindset that creates an identity through a diagnosis, a treatment plan and a prognosis. 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 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.

### 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.

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

## More than a Survivor Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 21, 2014

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 we 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 some thing 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**

**“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 some day my chance will come.” Abraham Lincoln**

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

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

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

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

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

## More than a Survivor Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 21, 2014

**“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 Ghandi**

### Epilogue

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 evening to get into action to pursue their dreams, their destinies and to impact their world.

## How I Found Myself and Broke Free of Agendas Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 25, 2014

Several days ago I wrote and published an article, More than a Survivor. In that article I encouraged individuals who are living with adversity to see themselves as more than survivors and to not get trapped in a “box” set forth for us by a diagnosis, treatment plan, prognosis, stereotype or a societal stigmatization that is based on a contempt prior to investigation. In July of 2014 I wrote an article, Life may not be the party we had hoped for, but... In this article, I encouraged my readers to live life to the fullest, regardless of what we may have found powerless to change.

In today’s article I would like to echo what I shared in these 2 articles and add some thing else to keep in mind. In my experience, I had to let go of the way that I expected my life to turn out, before I could learn to grow and create with in my set of circumstances. In my experience, I had to work through a grieving process so that I could stop blaming other people and myself. In my experience, I had to work through my own denial, anger, depression and bargaining before I could get to a place of acceptance. In my experience, I had to address my own denial, anger and depression, that festered with in me; before I could stop fighting battles with other people and myself. Before I could find my true self and break free of agendas.

In my experience, I had to do the work to get comfortable in my own skin, so that I could stop looking back to at the way that I envisioned the way my life was supposed to look. In my experience, I discovered that I did myself a HUGE favor by doing the work that enabled me to stop fighting against other people and with myself. In my experience, through doing the work; I discovered that other options existed. Options that I never knew existed or thought could be a fit to me. Options to use my gifts, talent and abilities in ways that once seemed out of my grasp. In the process, I discovered that I could live my life beyond the expectations that other people set for me. In the process, I discovered parts of myself that I had disowned many years ago.

Parts of myself that I had disowned, for many years; in order to live in a belief system that unknowingly sought to manipulate and control me. A belief system, rooted in denial and fueled by unresolved pain and anguish. A belief system that needed for me to remain in denial and fighting against myself. A belief system that, in effect; sought to hold me hostage to a variety of agendas.

Several years ago I wrote an article to share what I discovered that helped me to find parts of myself that I had disowned for many years. In the process, I became aware and my awareness helped me to break free from a variety of agendas. I would like to share the article with you. Due to the length and content of the article, I have divided the article into Parts. To aid in accessing the article, I have included a link to each of the 10 Parts of the article. Each Part defines and further explains what I share in the previous part (s) of the article. Consequently, I would encourage you to read each Part of the article to gain the benefit of the complete article. The information helped me to find a freedom. A freedom that I never knew existed.

## **How I Found Myself and Broke Free of Agendas Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 25, 2014

Although you may not be living with a brain injury, the information in the series can benefit you.

Replace the word Traumatic Brain Injury with whatever you may be facing and apply the principles to your particular set of circumstances. I believe that by doing so, through reading the article series; that you will experience a freedom. A freedom that you never knew existed.

Click on each Part of the article and they will open for you on Second Chance to Live.

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing Part 1\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing –Awareness — Part 2\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing — Acceptance — Part 3\*\*](#)

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[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing — Learning to Trust — Part 9\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing — Empowerment — Part 10\*\*](#)

## How to Create and Maintain a Budget while Living on a Fixed Income

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 7, 2014

Because of the financial insecurity that I experienced — for many years — once I began living on a fixed income I decided to set up a budget. I did so to avoid continuing financial insecurity. In July 2012 I wrote an article to share what has helped me to avoid financial insecurity for over a decade. I learned some of these principles from my Mom and then adapted them to fit my particular set of circumstances. As you read through the article, the principles applied may also help you to avoid financial insecurity.

In the event that the principles with in the below article help you, please let me know my friend.

### How to Manage Money while Living on SSDI — Social Security Disability / Insurance

Posted by Second Chance to Live on July 2, 2012

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. You are always welcome around my table. As I shared in my article and video series, My Journey thus Far, I had a long history of getting and losing jobs. The impact of getting and losing jobs was that I experienced a tremendous amount of financial insecurity in my life.

Because I experienced ongoing financial insecurity in my life, when I was deemed to be unemployable and approved to begin receiving a monthly SSDI check, I made a decision to curb my financial insecurity. The way in which I curbed my financial insecurity was to set up a monthly budget and stick to that budget. I have been told that I should share the system with other people who are living on a monthly SSDI check.

Below, I will share how I set up my monthly budget. The success of any budget is that I need to adhere and maintain the budget and live with in my means. Consequently, I am prudent and frugal with how and when I spend the funds allotted to me by my monthly SSDI check. I hope by studying my system, you too will be able to curb any financial insecurity that you may be experiencing my friend.

At the beginning of each month I have my check deposited into my checking account. When that money is deposited into my account, I set up my monthly budget accordingly. I will use the below table (s) to show how I set up my budget. At the top of each of the columns I put the category or what I need to pay for as the bill comes due each month. With in each column I place the budgeted amount of money.

Because of formatting issues, I am unable to paste the charts that I use to set up and maintain a budget while living on a fixed income.. As a result, I would encourage you to click on this link [How to Create and Maintain a Budget while Living on a Fixed Income](#) to view the column design that I use to set up a budget.

## Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”? Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 18, 2014

In my experience, I have learned a hard lesson many times. The lesson is that people can not give me what they themselves do not possess. Does not mean that they are inadequate or bad people, just that I wind up frustrated when I seek to get what I need from them. I have heard this experience as likened to going to a hardware store looking to find bread. Hardware stores do not have bread, no matter how many times I may go looking and hoping to find bread in a hardware store.

In my experience, I liken the medical model of treating patients to a hardware store. The likening is related to beyond the diagnosis and treatment. The medical model many times focuses on the diagnosis and prognosis, instead of on hope. What the patient / individual / consumer may be told is that they may never be able to do... , because of the diagnosis or prognosis. In my experience, I have found that the medical model tends to put individuals in “boxes” by associating them with a diagnosis’ — a statement or a conclusion, and / or by a prognosis’ — what is or is not going to happen in the future. In July of 2013, I wrote a 2 Part series, Traumatic Brain Injury, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization to explore the impact of such a “box”.

Once a diagnosis or prognosis is made, a label is given to the individual. Once the label is assigned to the individual, the individual may find themselves identifying with the diagnosis and prognosis. Many times the label is associated with societal biases and prejudices. These limiting biases, prejudices and stigmatization’s serve to reinforce to the individual that they are limited because of the diagnosis /prognosis. If the individual buys into the judgement and stigmatization associated with the diagnosis and prognosis, the individual may find themselves identifying with the label. Unconsciously, the individual may then find themselves internalizing and justifying the judgement and stigmatization brought on to them by the diagnosis, prognosis and subsequent label.

“Such labeling and stereotyping leads to a stigmatization of the individual. Through my studies and experience as a counselor I have seen the negative impact that such stigmatization has upon the individual. In my experience, as noted; once a determination, diagnosis or label is given or assigned to the individual, the determination, diagnosis or label many times – consciously or unconsciously — becomes the identity of the individual. I have also noted that as the individual adopts the identity of the label as their identity they unknowingly become vulnerable to being victimized by the identify of the label by believing in the stigmatization. The internalization of the label and stigmatization then makes the individual susceptible to being controlled.” From my article, Traumatic Brain Injury, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization

The impact of a diagnosis, prognosis, label and subsequent societal stigmatization can lead the individual to believe that they are intended to remain in the “box”. The “box” in turn creates a dependency upon the medical model to treat the diagnosis and prognosis. The medical model and societal stigmatization sets the individual up to believe that there is little hope outside of the “box”. As a bi-product of the medical model and societal stigmatization secondary gains and secondary dependencies evolve.

## **Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 18, 2014

Because of these secondary gains and dependencies, the individual may feel trapped with in the “box”. Societal judgment and stigmatization of the label then perpetuates a continued need and dependency upon the medical model. In collusion, little hope exists.

In my experience, I have seen the impact of secondary gains and secondary dependencies. Secondary gains and secondary dependencies perpetuate, limit and discourage the individual’s ambition to explore and live beyond the confines of the “box”, created by the medical model. In my experience, I have seen how the medical model — through the diagnosis, prognosis and subsequent labeling process — undermines the individuals drive to look for solutions beyond the “box”. Once labeled and stigmatized, the individual becomes conditioned to believe that they are limited because of the diagnosis, prognosis and stigmatization. With such conditioning, the individual may find themselves relating to themselves and to their “world”, through a “BOX” mentality.

### **Today’s Thought**

Although you and I may have been given a diagnosis and a prognosis, we are not the diagnosis or the prognosis. Although we may have been given a label, because of a diagnosis or a prognosis, we do not have to be limited by a societal stigmatization. Although a diagnosis, prognosis or a stigmatization may have been given or placed on us, they do not have to define our existence. Although a medical model and a societal stigmatization may have placed you and I in a “box”, we do not have to remain in any “box”. Secondary gains and secondary dependencies no longer have to be our lot in life. You and I were created to be so much more than a diagnosis, a prognosis or a label. We were created to live outside and beyond the confines of any “box”.

**We were created to live in hope.**

## Living wit Adversity, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 8, 2013

I have been thinking about some thing that I would like to share with you. When I was attending junior college many years ago one of the courses that I enrolled in and attended was Sociology. The course was an elective and a per-requisite. I am glad that I had the opportunity to attend the classes and learn from the course.

The study of Sociology gives insights into how various factors impact society such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, education, and social class that affect work and how organizations run. During the course of my studies in that class I discovered some thing that has stayed with me for long after completing the class in Sociology. What I discovered was the impact of what I heard described as, “labeling theory”. According to Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia:

“Labeling theory holds that deviance is not inherent to an act, but instead focuses on the tendency of majorities to negatively label minorities or those seen as deviant from standard cultural norms... including terms related to deviance, disability or diagnosis of a mental disorder... The theory is concerned with how the self-identity and behavior of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. It is associated with the concepts of of self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping...A stigma is defined as a powerfully negative label that changes a person’s self-concept and social identity”.

Such labeling and stereotyping leads to a stigmatization of the individual. Through my studies and experience as a counselor I have seen the negative impact that such stigmatization has upon the individual. In my experience, as noted; once a determination, diagnosis or label is given or assigned to the individual, the determination, diagnosis or label many times – consciously or unconsciously — becomes the identity of the individual. I have also noted that as the individual adopts the identity of the label as their identity they unknowingly become vulnerable to being victimized by the identify of the label by believing in the stigmatization. The internalization of the label and stigmatization then makes the individual susceptible to being controlled.

**In the process, the individual — many times — unknowingly relinquishes their own unique creative identify for the identity of the determination, diagnosis or stereotype.**

As a traumatic brain injury survivor, I found myself labeled and stereotyped by professionals and in social settings. The impact of these labels and subsequent opinions left me feeling stigmatized, minimized and marginalized. Unknowingly, I found myself relegated to a category of damaged goods. Like a damaged or tattered toy that was no longer of any use, I found myself tossed into a box with other toys and left to believe that I was no longer of any real value. But thank God that was not the end of the story. Through my process, I came to realize what stigmatization, minimization and marginalization led me to believe was an insidious lie.

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

## **Living wit Adversity, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 9, 2013

In the event that you have not already read part 1 of this article, please do so at this time as Part 2 builds upon Part 1 of this article.

In Part 1 of this article I shared how labeling and societal stigmatization impacts the individuals. I went on to share how these behaviors in effect serve to subjugate the individual living with traumatic brain injury to a proverbial box where they are left to feel practically minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discarded.

In Part 2 of this article, I want enunciate several truths. In my keynote presentations and the workshops that I participate in I make one thing perfectly clear. We who live with a traumatic brain injury are not our traumatic brain injuries. The incident that led to our brain being injured was just one incident in life. Our brain injuries are not who we are, they are just some thing that are apart of our lives. They do not define who we are in life. That truth frees us to dream.

Although the injury to my brain impacts my life, I can still live my life to the full. When I find myself feeling any self-pity, I need to remember that I have choices. Although people may want to place me in a box — by labeling or stigmatizing who I am because I am living with a brain injury — that is not my problem. That is their problem. Normal is relative. Consequently, I can learn to thrive with in my own normal. I do not have to make excuses for my normal.

What I have found with in my experience is that life is made up of pieces and ingredients. My job is to learn from those pieces and grow in my ability to combine the ingredients of my experience. That is what I am seeking to do with my life. I am not any label or stigma that people may want to place on me. Instead, I am a uniquely qualified individual who is learning how to thrive with in the normal that makes me a vibrant individual living with a brain injury.

### **Today's Thought**

The bottom line is that I only get one life to live in my normal. Consequently, I need to stop judging myself by the standard of normal that other people may set for me. I need to continue to walk on the path that makes me normal as a traumatic brain injury survivor. I need to celebrate what I can do with in what makes me normal and I need to use my set of circumstances to empower both my life and the lives of individuals that make them normal.

## Getting Comfortable in Our Own Skin Being Outside of the “Box” Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 31, 2014

During the past several days articles I have spoken to Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”?, How I Found Freedom from the “Box” and Societal Stigmatization and How are We Teaching People to Treat Us?. In these articles I spoke to the awareness that I gained through my process of living with a diagnosis, a prognosis, a label and societal stigmatization.

In the next series of articles I will share what I helped me to get comfortable in my own skin and to find my identity outside of the “box”.

In my experience, I discovered that before I could take the action to live outside the “box” — of a diagnosis, prognosis, label and societal stigmatization — I needed to grow in both my awareness and acceptance of myself. You see the “box” sought to convince and contain me in the belief that I was defective. In my experience, the process of growing in awareness and acceptance began when the pain of denying my reality superseded my need to deny my reality. By examining my pain, I discovered that I was being blamed for what was out of my control. By examining my pain, I discovered that I was not defective, but that I had limitations and deficits that were related to my disability.

By examining my pain, I was motivated to confront the denial that kept me believing that I was defective. By examining my pain, I discovered that my deficits and limitations did not define my worth and value as an individual. By examining my pain, I found myself empowered by hope.

In my experience, I discovered that as I worked through my grieving process, I was able to stop beating up on myself for not being able to because of my disability. In my experience, I discovered that as I worked through my grieving process, I was able to stop fighting against myself. In my experience, I discovered that as I worked through my grieving process I was able to let go of the way that I thought life should be and begin living my life on life’s terms. In my experience, as I worked through my grieving process I was able to stop focusing on what did not work for me and start to looking for ways to use my gifts, talents and abilities, in ways that would work for me.

In my experience, I discovered that as I worked through my grieving process, I became more comfortable in my own skin. As I became more comfortable in my own skin, I felt more comfortable living beyond the “box”. As I became more comfortable in my skin, doors started to open for me.

In my experience, when I reached a point in time when the pain of denying my reality superseded the pain of needing to deny my reality, I realized that I needed to grieve my reality. Several years ago I wrote an article series that helped me to work through the process of being able to accept my reality. At the bottom of this article, I will provide the link to Part 1 of the article series Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process. The article series can benefit you regardless of whether you are a brain injury survivor or not my friend. I would encourage you to read through each of the 7 Parts of the article, as I believe by doing so you will grow in the acceptance of your reality.

## **Getting Comfortable in Our Own Skin Being Outside of the “Box” Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 31, 2014

**By doing so I believe that you will become more comfortable in your own skin and will become more comfortable being outside of the “box”.**

Here is the link to **Part 1** of the article series: [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process Part 1](#). Here are links to the other **6 Parts** of the article: [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#) and the conclusion of this article series in [Part 7](#).

**“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**

## **How to Get Past and Keep from Being Pulled back into a Victim Mentality Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 14, 2014

Several weeks ago I received a question from a friend, “How do we get past a victim mentality( victim hood)? I keep getting pulled back in!” I have been thinking about that question and want to share some thoughts. First of all, I want to say thank you for asking the question.

**I think the biggest way that I get past and stay out of a victim mentality is to remember that I have choices, despite thinking that my circumstances don’t provide me with choices.**

Something that has helped me tremendously is to remember that my circumstances occur in my life to build me up, not to keep me down. They are not being done to me, but for me. Not to hold me back, but to set me up. What I discovered — through my process — was that my circumstances are in essence teachers. Teachers to provide me with lessons that prepare me to take advantage of opportunities that teach me lessons.

**When I forget to look for the lessons provided by my circumstances; I focus on the circumstances, instead of looking for the lessons provided by the circumstances.**

Though my process, I have learned several lessons that I would like to share with you. I learn a lot from visual metaphors, as they help to illustrate these lessons. I would like to share several of these visual metaphors with you. I like the illustration of a tapestry. On one side of the tapestry one sees many different colored threads. seemingly jumbled together. On the other side of a tapestry, there is a beautiful story being told.

**Circumstances can be likened to these threads. How I view these threads determines whether I see myself as a victim or as an empowered co creator of my destiny.**

I also like the illustration of the jigsaw puzzle. The jigsaw puzzle is made up of many pieces. Each puzzle piece by itself makes little sense; however collectively, as they fall into place create a beautiful picture. Circumstance; I believe, can be likened to the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. As I learn from my circumstances, each puzzle piece falls into place at the right time and in the right order. By seeing my circumstances as pieces of a puzzle, I am empowered.

**In my experience, I have found that as I take the time to learn from each circumstance, a puzzle piece of my destiny falls into place. As one puzzle piece falls into place, another circumstance appears.**

## **How to Get Past and Keep from Being Pulled back into a Victim Mentality Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 15, 2014

In my experience, I have come to recognize that I do not have the big picture. I do not know what thread needs to be weaved into the tapestry or what puzzle piece that needs to fall into place. What I have found to be true is that I can trust the process – the threads and the puzzle pieces – to a loving God, Who alone has the big picture. The 2 metaphors help me to recognize that good things are happening in my life, even when I can not see them.

For many years of my life I did not understand or grasp the reality of the metaphors. Instead, I believed that life was filled with gauntlets and mine fields that I needed to survive each day. With my process and journey my eyes slowly opened to recognize the reality of the metaphor's message. What I saw as disappointments and disillusionment were in essence threads that needed to be weaved and puzzle pieces that needed to fall into place for me to pursue my destiny.

In October of 2013 I had the opportunity to give a keynote presentation at the 2013 Southwest Conference on Disability. In preparation for my presentation of 25 minutes, I wanted to provide some back ground information to those attending the conference and my keynote presentation. I would invite you to read the article to see what I discovered about my threads and puzzle pieces. What I share in this article helped me to see that I am not a victim of my circumstances.

**Instead, I am empowered to be a co creator who is given the opportunity to learn from my circumstances and in the process weave a tapestry to complete a puzzle.**

Here is a link to the article in which I shared back ground information:

**[Back Ground Information for Keynote Presentation Craig Phillips Founder and Creator Second Chance to Live Southwest Conference on Disability 2013](#)**

## How are you using your Energy?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on January 16, 2008

In the process of my journey, I have learned many valuable lessons. One of these lessons has had a profound impact upon my motivation. I have found when I attempt to validate my worth and value by doing, accomplishing or succeeding in life I become a human doing, rather than a human being.

For many years I attempted to prove my worth and value through being more than so that I would not feel less than. In the process, I sought to define my being through the eyes of other people. When I did not measure up to their expectations I felt like a failure. Unconsciously, I believed that unless I gained the approval of other people, my very existence did not matter. At a core level, I believed that I needed to justify my existence and well being.

**You see, I was not comfortable in my own skin because I believed my worth and value had to be validated by other people and specific outcomes.**

Consequently, I spent many years of my life striving to be more than in order to prove my worth and value as a person. Because I attempted to live up to the expectations of other people, I rarely believed my good to be good enough. As I strove more to be more I found myself becoming like a rodent running on a wheel inside of a cage. I expended huge amounts of energy without the benefits of my labor – a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. In the process I became a reactor, instead of an actor in my life.

In my experience, I have found that when I let go of the outcomes of my footwork I am able to trust the process. On the other hand when I am emotionally invested in specific outcomes I set myself up to be disillusioned when I do not receive the desired response. Through my process I have grown to value the journey over the destination. As I am able to celebrate the journey I can get off of the wheel and leave the cage of displaced energy. Success then takes on new meaning because I am able to celebrate the process.

## How I found Hope

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 4, 2008

During the past week, I was asked to write a post on the topic of resilience. Consequently, I spent some time reflecting upon the indelible nature of resilience. Resilience provides the provision to press on, regardless of discouragement, disappointment or disillusionment. Resilience determines to believe that a positive solution exists. Resilience chooses to frame life's experiences in a positive manner. Resilience empowers focus in the midst of distraction and negativity.

**I have not failed 700. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.**

**Thomas Edison.**

Resilience encourages me to not give up on my process because I know that I am learning. Resilience reminds me that with all learning there is a learning curve. Resilience gives me the permission to learn at my own rate. Resilience reminds me that life is not a sprint. Resilience helps me to trust that I will learn the lesson. Resilience motivates me to look for opportunities to learn, rather than be defeated by what I do not understand. Resilience encourages me to keep moving, when giving up may seem to be a viable option. Resilience emboldens me to believe that good will come from what may not makes sense to me.

**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**

Resilience strengthens my capacity to be tenacious and persistent. Resilience prepares me to take advantage of fresh possibilities. Resilience motivates me to accept my reality, even though I may have people in my life who want me to live in their denial system. Resilience encourages me to celebrate life even when I scrape my knees through living. Resilience reminds me that I am not a victim of my circumstances, because I have the power to choose. Resilience motivates, encourages and empowers my process because I know that more will be revealed with time. Resilience motivates trust, because I know that I have a future and a hope.

**Today's Thought**

Above are some of the characteristics of resilience from my perspective. I would encourage you to sit down with a pen and a piece of paper and list ways in which being resilient could benefit you. You may like to discuss your list with another person and gain their perspective of resilience. If you would like to share your ideas with me, please do so through a comment. I want to learn from you too my friend.

## What Helped me to Form a Healthy Relationship with Hope

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 9, 2014

My hope is that if you have given up on hope smf this article will help you to see hope in a new light.

Several days ago I wrote the article, Do I want to be right or Do I want to be happy?. In the article I spoke about having choices amidst what I did not like and could not change. In response to this article, I received a lot of positive feedback and a few comments. In response to these comments, I would like to share some thing that has helped me. What I discovered through my process and share in this article, What Helped me to Form a Healthy Relationship with Hope; forever changed my relationship with hope. What changed, helped me to form a healthy relationship with hope.

**For many years I had a dysfunctional relationship with hope. I expected hope to do for me what I needed to do for myself.**

For many years I found myself buying into the notion that if I just hoped enough, what I hoped for would manifest itself. Sort of like that magical thinking manifested in fairy tales. Consequently, when hope did not manifest itself, I became discouraged and despondent. You see I had bought into the notion that hope had let me down, because hope did not play by the rules that I had made for hope. Consequently, I found myself scoffing at the idea of hope. My cynicism surrounding the idea of hope continued until I reached an emotional bottom and experienced a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening revealed to me that hope is neither passive nor ambiguous, but active and engaging.

With my spiritual awakening, hope helped me to realize that I could no longer sit on the “side lines”. With my spiritual awakening, I began to see hope as a coach, who encouraged me to get and stay in the “game”. With my spiritual awakening, hope helped me to realize that I needed to learn.

What my spiritual awakening, hope helped me to realize that I needed to have an active role in the process of hope by learning from my each circumstance that touched my life. Hope also helped me to realize that as I learned from each circumstance, I would be given opportunities and these opportunities would be part of learning about hope. Hope helped me to understand that as I learned from my circumstances and took advantage of my opportunities that I would become a team player. Hope helped me to realize that as I learned and took advantage of circumstances and opportunities, I would learn how to create hope. I would learn how to use them to create active and practical hope.

Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up; for they teach us lessons that prepare us to take advantage of opportunities! Circumstances and opportunities teach us how to create hope from what we may not like or understand at the present time.

With my spiritual awakenings, I engaged in a relationship with hope. With my spiritual awakenings, I involved myself in the process of creating active and practical hope. On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live to share what helped me to have a healthy relationship with hope. Over the course of time, I have written a series of articles and created video presentations of my articles to share what I learned that helps me to create practical hope. I would like to share what I learned with you through these articles and video presentations. To aide in accessing the articles and video presentations, I have created 2 archives, one for my articles and one for my video presentations.

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## How to Accomplish Goals in Ways that Work for Me Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 15, 2007

Through my martial arts training I am learning various principles that have direct applications to living my life as a traumatic brain injury survivor. My balance has been impacted by the injury to my brain. I work on strengthening my legs and improving my balance however I may never be able to effectively execute specific types of kicks. As a short stocky man my arms and legs are shorter than many of the other students who train at the martial school. Being short, in addition to having balance issues puts me at a disadvantage.

**Rather than being discouraged about what I can not do, I focus on what I can accomplish given my stature and limitations.**

Several months ago I asked my Sensei how I could best spar and grapple people who are taller and heavier than I am during class. He told me that I would learn through the experience of grappling taller and heavier people. My Sensei stated a very simple, but profound truth, "What may work for me, may not work for you." Although I heard what he was saying, I still wanted him to give me clarity. He again stated that I would have to learn through my experience. As I have continued to free grapple (using technique and strength) I have learned how to use my stature and balance to work for me when working with taller and heavier opponents. I am definitely still learning, however I have made significant gains because I have learned to use what I have been given.

**As an individual with an invisible disability I have had to learn to accept my limitations rather than fighting against them.**

Through accepting my limitations, I have learned how to use those limitations to improve upon the skills I have been given. I can not change the fact that I am short and stocky fellow, but I can determine to use those characteristics. Although I can work on improving my balance, I may never be able to maintain my balance for long periods of time. Through being a traumatic brain injury survivor I have been presented with a set of circumstances that I am unable to change. Nevertheless, I can learn how to use those circumstances and make them work for me. I can grow beyond those circumstances through learning how to use my limitations to succeed beyond what may appear to be taller and larger than I am today.

You may also be a traumatic brain injury survivor, who has been presented with physical, mental or emotional challenges. You may feel like a short stocky person who has limited balance and ability. You may have come up against taller, stronger and heavier opponents or obstacles in your life. Consequently, you may feel overwhelmed and discouraged because you believe those obstacles can not be overcome. When I first started grappling and sparring taller, stronger and heavier people I had a hard time believing that I could succeed given my stature and balance. Through my experience I found that my ability improved over time through my willingness to not give up on my learning process.

## How to Accomplish Goals in Ways that Work for Me Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 15, 2007

As my Sensei shared with me, “What works best for me may not work best for you” I will share with you. What works best for me may not work best for you given your specific type of brain injury and disability. What I do know is that as you are willing to learn from your experience, you will find out what works best for you. Because you and I were created to be empowered beings, not limited doings we can excel in spite of our limitations. Our limitations and challenges are not meant to dictate to us, instead you and I can determine to explore and find what works best for us regardless of our circumstances. With determination and tenacity we can learn how to use what we have been given and in the process live the life we have imagined.

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

## **A Tribute to the brave Men and Women of the Armed Services – Thank You**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 23, 2007

Thank you for your courage and the sacrifices that you have made while serving to protect our freedom. Our nation owes you a great debt of gratitude. You have honored our great country and you should be honored in return. I have written and published several articles — Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury — 4th of July — Independence Day — to honor your sacrifice and to motivate those in positions of power and influence to provide proactive care and ongoing rehabilitation. Justice cries out and you should be given the best possible care and rehabilitation for however long is necessary given your service and sacrifice while protecting our freedom.

I would also like to thank the family members and friends of our men and women of the armed services. You have also paid a great price and our country owes you a great debt of gratitude. Your love, prayers, and support continue to make a world of difference for our returning heroes. Apart from your love and devotion, many of our valiant service men and women may have given up a long time ago. Thank you for not giving up on those men and women. More will be revealed to you so don't give up on the process.

In the event that you sustained a traumatic brain injury while serving to protect our freedom, I can identify with you. My name is Craig and I am a traumatic brain injury survivor. My brain injury occurred as a result of a motor vehicle accident in August 1967. In the accident I sustained an open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage. As a result, I remained in a coma for 3 weeks and in traction for 1 month to set my left femur, which was also fractured at the time of the accident. Following the traction to set my femur I was placed in a full body or Spica cast and transferred to another hospital where I underwent brain and skull surgery. In follow up to the surgery several EEG's were completed to determine the extent of the damage done to my brain. I was also given a battery of cognitive, psychological and social tests. The results were given to my parents, which indicated that I would probably not be able to succeed academically beyond high school. These results were not shared with me until after I completed graduate school.

Because neurological rehabilitation was not available in 1967 I had to re-teach myself how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. Despite the data and scientific findings / predictions from the EEG's and other testing, I was able to obtain both my undergraduate and graduate degrees. If you are interested in an in depth view of my process, please read my post, My Journey thus Far. Due to the invisible nature of my disability I had to develop strategies to compensate for the injuries to my brain. These strategies have empowered me to succeed beyond all reasonable expectations.

On February 6, 2007, at the encouragement of a friend I created Second Chance to Live to share my experience, strength and hope. The information presented in Second Chance to Live has empowered me overcome many insurmountable odds. The applications offered provide practical solutions for living life on life's terms. The articles are designed to instill hope, give comfort and provide a motivation to succeed regardless of how life might look. Please read my page, Motivation. On my journey and through my process as a traumatic brain injury survivor, I have learned a very valuable lesson. Circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up!

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## Why am I being Bullied?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 24, 2007

As a traumatic brain injury survivor I struggle with a sense of inadequacy at times. At times I listen to messages that seem to challenge me for not being more than I am today. I am encouraged to be more, but for some reason I simply do not believe I can be more. Innuendos of shame in these messages trigger the notion that I am not enough, I don't do enough and that I am unlovable. Unconsciously shame seeks to discredit my desire to succeed in life through minimizing my best efforts. Please read my post, Whose Shame are you Carrying?

### **Shame seeks to keep me distracted by a faulty notion so that I will not achieve my creative potential.**

As a person with an invisible disability, I allowed the message of shame to bully me for many years. The shame bully controlled and manipulated my every move. Shame told me that my good was never good enough. Although I attempted to appease the bully, I seldom believed that my good was ever good enough. Consequently my self-esteem, self-worth and self-image were constantly undermined. In my struggle to prevent the bully from attacking my value as a person, I expended huge amounts of emotional, physical and spiritual resources.

Through my process of healing from the effects of shame I found that the voice of perfectionism – your good is never good enough — to be a cruel taskmaster. My ability to heal and grow emotionally, spiritually and physically was stymied by the demands of unrealistic expectations. Over time I recognized that my internal energy was being diverted away from developing my creative capacity in order to avoid being attacked by the bully. Through recognizing how shame was draining my life I was motivated to look for solutions. These solutions enabled me to slowly heal on a spiritual, emotional and physical level.

In my experience, I had to begin healing from the affects of shame before I could hope to live life on life's terms. As I mentioned above, I still am susceptible to the message that shame wants to exploit. The good news is that I no longer need to be held hostage by the bully. I no longer need to internalize the lie that I am not enough. Through accepting that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, I am encouraged to look for solutions. Although shame may want to bully me I no longer need to pay attention to its taunts. I am released from the grasp of the bully through learning to be empowered through my circumstances, experiences and opportunities.

### **Note:**

Guilt is different than shame. If you made a mistake you can make an amends and thus resolve guilt. Shame on the other hand is a being wound which leads the person to believe that they just don't make mistakes, but that they are a mistake. The tendency to over achieve and develop a sense of grandiosity or to under achieve and develop a sense of helplessness is often a response observed in people who have been bullied by shame. Being bullied by shame can lead to a learned helplessness, which in turn undermines the individual's potential to pursue their destiny.

## Why am I blamed for everything? – Part 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Why am I blamed for everything? – Part 2

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

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

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

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

Be encouraged my friend. More will be revealed!

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 3, 2007

I have been thinking about a particular experience that I had when I was in graduate school. During a conversation with one of my classmates, she disclosed a personal tragedy. She told me that her former husband had committed suicide. I was sad to hear of her loss and the circumstances surrounding the suicide. Apparently he had been unemployed for an extended period of time after being laid off from the Railroad. She told me that he had become despondent and in that despondency he committed suicide.

**Interestingly enough, one week after he committed suicide his wife told me that she received a call from the Railroad wanting her husband to come back to work.**

In the man's despondency he used a permanent solution for a temporary problem. He lost hope and thought nothing could or would change for the better. He bought into the lie that his life no longer had meaning or purpose. Although I do not know all of the extenuating circumstances, I do know that when he died the hope of finding a solution died with him. Sadly, he left his wife and family members in a world of confusion and hurt. In the decision of taking his own life, he chose to give up on hope. He chose to believe the lie that his creative uniqueness no longer mattered to anyone much less to himself. Please read my post, [Flight of the Butterfly](#).

You may have a set of circumstances in your life that has left you in the depths of despair and despondency. You may believe that no good can come out of your traumatic brain injury my friend. Consequently, you may be considering a permanent solution for a temporary problem because you believe your creative uniqueness no longer has value. Please read my post, [Traumatic Brain Injury — Following your Bliss...Regardless](#). In the midst of our storm we may believe that the dark clouds of despair will never leave us. Our ability to see the forest for the trees is sometimes blinded by an overcast fog of negativity and pessimism. Like a deer caught in the headlights, we may find ourselves fixated on the circumstance rather than on the potential of a positive solution.

I have found myself in these dark places too my friend. I have good news for you, the dark places do not last. Although you may feel frozen by fear and doubt, rest assured because you will get through these difficult times. Despair and despondency are like dark clouds that roll in and roll out of our lives. Be encouraged my friend, because you will learn to live and thrive because of the dark places of the soul. As I have found in my own experience, night does turn into morning. Dark clouds shall pass and the sun will shine upon your life. Be encouraged my friend. You will gain a fresh perspective and a new zest for living.

**Please and don't give up on yourself or your process. More will be revealed to you in time.**

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 28, 2009

So if you are going through a difficult time, a time of confusion with feelings of helplessness, please do not give up on yourself, on your process and or on a loving God. Please do not allow your present circumstances to mislead you into a permanent solution for a temporary problem. Please do not give up on people like me — who are apart of your world. Your presence and the essence you bring to this life is of great value. Your creative uniqueness is set to enhance the lives of people in your world for future generations. The gifts that reside within your being will be manifested. Because of your gifts, talents and abilities you will be used — like a key – to open a door of freedom for people who are sitting in darkness and isolation. Because of you, those individuals will find hope.

Your present-day despair and despondency will be turned into triumph. You will find solutions that will empower you to live the life that you have imagined. You will find solutions to matters that once baffled you. You will be set free from the fear of economic insecurity and you will be a light to your generation. Fear not, for you will be led into a land of plenty and you will reap a harvest of satisfaction and contentment.

Be assured, more will be revealed to you my friend. You will find your groove and you will prosper in your body, soul and spirit. You will walk in your destiny and you will fulfill your dreams. You will learn to overcome and succeed despite any present discouragement, despondency or despair. You will use your traumatic brain injury and your circumstances to empower your process and you will in turn be a blessing to those in your world. Be assured my friend, what you may be going through at the present time fails in comparison to what is yet to be revealed to you — because you made the decision to not give up on your process, a loving God and yourself.

**Trust me my friend, because what I have shared with you in this 2 part article has become true to me — because I made the decision to not give up on my process, a loving God or myself — although I wanted to end my life some 23 years ago.**

## How to Break Free from Isolation – Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 7, 2008

I have been thinking and meditating on / about how I have been able to come out of isolation. I share the below events to help you understand my process, not to complain or point my finger in anyone's direction. Neither one of those choices have proven to be effective or empowering. In my experience I needed to identify my process in order to learn from my journey.

For approximately 39 years of my life I functioned as a traumatic brain injury survivor through a web of denial. The denial system convinced me that even though I had experienced a traumatic brain injury at the age of 10 — that left me in a 3 week long coma — that my life was in no way impacted by that traumatic brain injury. Unknowingly I internalized the difficulties that I was experiencing within social and employment settings as a reflection of my inadequacy. I felt inadequate because I was unable to live up to the expectations that people had for me. I internalized a sense of shame for matters that were out of my control – i.e. the deficits and limitations that became part of who I was as a person – post traumatic brain injury.

For many years I attempted to circumvent the impact of my deficits and limitations through people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading. As you might imagine none of these strategies proved to be effective. I could not do more to be more in order to be enough. My ongoing attempts to anticipate and successfully satisfy the expectation's various people had for me kept me frustrated and confused. With time I became more withdrawn and self-deprecating, which frequently left me depressed and isolated. At the age of 17 I had a spiritual awakening. The impact of that spiritual awakening led me to begin a personal crusade to root out the reasons for my difficulties. In my attempt to root out my difficulties I attended a myriad of churches, spent countless hours in bible study, scripture memorization and prayer. In my quest to be a better person and to help other people I obtained my undergraduate degree in theology.

I then applied for admittance and was accepted to begin Seminary in the fall of 1985, however due to what I thought was my sin I was asked to not come back to seminary for my 2nd year of classes.

You see I was led to believe that the difficulties I was experiencing in complex social setting were because I had unrepentant sin in my life. Consequently, I needed to identify and turn away from the sin that so easily beset me (Hebrews 12:1-2 New Testament) before I could be at peace with God and other people. Upon leaving seminary and through a series of events I was able to move into the basement of a man who was going through a divorce and whose wife was an alcoholic. Several weeks after I moved into the man's basement he suggested that I begin attending some support group meetings that he was also attending. At his suggestion I attended my first 12 Step support group meeting in August 1986. Because of an ongoing denial system, the impact of my traumatic brain injury would remain minimized for another 13 more years.

## How to Break Free from Isolation – Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 7, 2008

Because I was continuing to have conflicts when interacting in social settings — at the encouragement of a friend – I started attending support group meetings.

In my pursuit of securing employment I applied to and was accepted into a graduate program. I began attending classes in the fall of 1987. 2 ½ years later I graduated with my master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. During both my undergraduate and graduate programs I encountered similar social difficulties amidst my practicums, internships and work related settings. After graduation I had a series of jobs in professional work settings that ultimately resulted in my being fired or terminated. After being employed by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a counselor, through a series of events I became a client of that Department of Vocational Rehabilitation after 15 months of employment. You see I was having difficulty writing individualized written rehabilitation plans as well as interacting with some of the other staff. The transition from counselor to client left me confused and bewildered.

In the process of my transition from a counselor to a client I was scheduled to have an EEG – I had 2 done as a child – and a battery of neuropsychological tests. The results from these tests revealed that I had indeed been impacted by a traumatic brain injury. The results of these tests were revealed to me in 1994. I was 37 years of age at that time. Even though the results from those tests clearly showed that my life had and was being impacted because of my traumatic brain injury– I continued to buy into a denial system that would not accept that I was disabled because of my traumatic brain injury. Consequently I remained in my own denial for an additional 6-7 years from that point in time.

During those 6-7 years I minimized, marginalized and berated myself for the impact that my traumatic brain injury had upon my life. Consequently I continued to internalize disdain for myself. When the emotional pain of denying my reality superseded my need to deny my reality, I made the decision to accept my reality. During the past 8 years of my life I have grown in the acceptance of my reality – that I am a traumatic brain injury survivor. I have come to realize that my deficits and limitations are not weaknesses of character or sin. My deficits and limitations instead have given me wings to fly.

In my experience, I needed to identify what my life was like before I sustained my traumatic brain injury, what my life was like at the time of my brain injury and how my life has been impacted in the time since I sustained my traumatic brain injury.

In my healing process I have had to look at every facet of my life. Through my academic training but more so through my commitment and participation in my own recovery process — through my involvement and active participation in various support groups — I have come to understand myself. I have come to recognize that who I am – what makes me, me – is specific to my body, soul and spirit. My body houses my soul – my mind, will and intellect – and my spirit. My mind, will and intellect directs my life while my spirit gives me the ability to connect with the God of my understanding and with myself.

## How to Break Free from Isolation – Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 7, 2008

**Through my recovery process I am being healed in my body, my soul and my spirit. As I heal my energy is released to find creative expression through my body, soul and spirit**

Through being an active participant in my recovery process and by attending healthy – solution oriented – support group meetings I have and continue to be healed in ways that once seemed to be out of my grasp. Along the way I have learned how to maintain my spiritual fitness so that I am able to remain conscious to my process. I have learned how to maintain conscious contact with the God of my understanding. I have learned how to be honest with myself. I have learned how to keep my side of the street clean. I have learned how to let go of resentments and unrealistic expectations. I have found where I end and where other people begin.

**The obvious became apparent over time. If I had not actively pursued my own recovery process through attending healthy – solution oriented — support group meetings I would still be an angry, critical and bitter traumatic brain injury survivor.**

Through my recovery process – during the past 22 years of my life – I have learned some valuable lessons. I don't have to be alone in my process. I can ask for help. I don't have to rely on my own understanding or on my ability to figure things out on my own. I no longer need to be limited by anyone's denial, much less by my own denial. I can come out of hiding. I can maintain my conscious contact with a loving God. I can trust the process. I can learn from my circumstances. I can find solutions. I can live life on life's terms. I can come out of isolation and I will heal.

## Facing Adversity and Having Options Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 8, 2010

I have been thinking about my life and my relationship with the God of my understanding. Through my recovery process, I have come to realize that the times I have been angry at God, I have been unable to see beyond my perspective.

**I have come to realize that the times that I have been angry at God I have been unable to see His perspective.**

I am not suggesting that I am more aware of God's perspective. What I am suggesting is that — in hind sight — I have come to understand God's perspective. What I could not see — at the time — I now realize took place to fulfill God's ongoing plan for my life. I now realize that because I focused upon what I could not do or see I was unable to see other options.

**What I thought had been unfair, I now realize was preparing me for other options.**

### Today's Thought

In life we may feel that we have been given a raw deal. We may believe that life has dealt us an unfair stack of cards. We may feel that life and our circumstances are simply UNFAIR. We may be angry at God. We may feel like a victim. We may find ourselves wanting to blame someone.

We may find ourselves stuck in the what ifs, the could ofs and the should ofs. We may be angry at the world. We may be lashing out at the people in our world. We may feel frustrated. We may feel rejected and abandoned. We may feel that life is no longer worth living. We may feel like we can not trust the process, a loving God or ourselves.

**We may find that we are so focused on what we can not do and what we see, that we can not see other options.**

As an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability for 42 years I have cycled through each of these beliefs and feelings. In my experience, I have found a common theme. Although each of these beliefs and feelings appeared real and substantiated — at the time — my recovery process has taught me something completely different.

I have come to realize that I have not been dealt a raw deal or an unfair stack of cards. On the contrary, I have come to realize that deals and cards do not determine my destiny. I have come to realize that life is what I make of it — with God's leading, help and my active participation. Instead of focusing on what isn't, I now see my life as what is.

I have also come to realize that I am not a victim and that blaming anyone for anything is pointless. Blaming or pointing the finger in anyone's direction is a waste of time, energy and accomplishes nothing. Consequently, instead of viewing life through the what if's, should have's and could of's I now view life as a series of learning opportunities.

## **Facing Adversity and Having Options Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 8, 2010

**With my change of perspective, I have chosen to no longer view my circumstances and experiences through a black and white, all or none lens.**

Because I now choose to view my circumstances and experiences through the lens of a learning curve, I realize that life is filled with choices. I now realize that anger – which is an energy – can be channeled in either positive or negative ways. I also realize that how I choose to respond to being rejected or abandoned – by anyone – is my business.

As an adult, I have come to realize that my reactions are based in choices. Choice that I have made – for a variety of reasons — in my past. With my awareness, I have come to realize that I needed to take a proactive role in my present through addressing the reasons why I reacted — to people, places and things — in my past.

**By doing so — through addressing my reactions to people, places and things in my past — I have been able to experience healing in my present.**

In my experience, I have come to understand that God is for me and not against me. I have come to realize that He is not doing to me, but He is doing for me. Because my understanding has changed, so has my perspective. With my change of perspective I have come to realize how God uses my circumstances to empower my process.

**With my change of perspective I now realize that my circumstances are being used to build me up, not tear me down.**

With my awareness, I have come to realize that my circumstances are being used to guide me through the opening doors of my experience. And as I walk through each door, I am always greeted by a familiar friend. Choice. Choice always reminds me that I can choose be empowered by the lessons found within my experiences.

Choice also reminds me that each circumstance — found with in my experience — is designed to be an advocate, not an adversary. Choice also reminds me that my circumstances are not meant to be gauntlets, but portals that open to opportunities. Choice then encourages me to remember that each circumstances, lesson and opportunity is leading me to my destiny.

As I continue to walk through the door — of my experiences and the portals of my opportunities – choice motivates me to trust the process. In the process, choice helps me to let go of the outcomes of my footwork — because I am told that I do not have to know or have the big picture. Choice reminds me that I can trust a loving God to guide me.

## **Facing Adversity and Having Options Part 3**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 8, 2010

Choice reminds me that I do not have to lean on my own understanding. Choice reminds me that I can ask for help – from the God of my understanding. Choice empowers my process and my ability to trust a loving God to work all things – even the ones that I may not understand or even like at the time – together for my good.

**Choice reminds me that I have hope. Choice reminds me that I have options.**

Choice encourages me to keep moving in the direction of my dreams and my destiny.

**“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**

## **We are not alone – Learning to Ask for Help Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 28, 2010

Several weeks ago I shared with you that I had made the decision to take more risks with my life. Specifically, I made the decision to risk interacting with more groups of people – which has not been one of my strong suits.

I made the decision to take the risk to interact socially with groups of people — out of my need and desire to have community. I made the decision to take the risk to interact socially with groups of people out of my desire to improve my social skills. Out of my need and desire I took the risk to sign up with and become a member of an organization called [Meetup](#).

**Although I took the first step to become a member of Meet up 10 months ago, I did not get involved with many of the meet up groups or events. I did not get involved with many meet up groups or their events because of a financial fear and of a fear that I would not “fit in”.**

As my need for community increased – over the past several months – so has my willingness to take greater risks. As I have heard said, “ I faced my fear and did it anyway”. Consequently, I made the decision to start attending events with various meet up groups. I made the decision to start attending meet up group events that did not require much money to participate. I made the decision to take the risk to observe how people interacted in social settings.

**I made the decision to begin to practice new behaviors.**

Among the group meet up events that I have attended during the past several months, I have attended 3 different pool parties. This past Saturday I attended one of these pool parties. As I mingled about during the pool party I saw familiar faces, faces that I had seen at other meet up events. Among these faces, I saw several individuals who I had developed rapport during other meet up group events.

## **We are not alone – Learning to Ask for Help Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 29, 2010

During the pool party — and as the opportunity presented itself – I was able to start conversations with these individuals. During our conversation, I shared with them that I admired the way in which they interacted socially. I went on to share that I wanted to learn how to be more effective in my social interactions and would appreciate their help.

As our conversations evolved I asked for their opinion. I asked these individuals for their opinion (s) for several reasons. I asked for their opinion (s) because, I wanted to learn and grow from their social strengths and abilities. I asked for their opinion (s) because, I wanted to improve upon my social skills as I interact in social setting.

I am happy that I took the risk to ask for help, because with the time, kindness and input of these individuals I have grown in my ability to interact socially. I am glad that I took the risk to ask for help, because I now have new tools in my toolbox to use when I attend upcoming meet up group events – such as another pool party this weekend.

### **Today's Thought**

I am glad that a friend of mine encouraged me to sign up with Meet up — in the area in which I live. I am glad that I took the risk to start attending different meet up group events. Although I was reluctant to being involved with such groups – for a variety of reasons – I am so glad that I did, because I have developed friendships and learned new social skills.

By signing up and getting involved with meet up group events, I have been able to ask for help. I have been able to grow in self-awareness. I have been able to use what I am learning during each subsequent meet up group event. In the process, I am becoming more comfortable in my own skin. In the process, my confidence is growing as I interact in different social settings.

Consequently, I would encourage you – as a friend of mine repeatedly encouraged me – sign up with Meet up and then start attending meet up group events in your area. As you attend those meet up groups events take the risk to reach out to the members of the meet up groups and ask for help...

**because as a friend reminded me many years ago that, if nothing is ventured, nothing will be gained.**

## **Are you in a Battle? – Finding the Calm in the Storms of Life Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 9, 2011

Earlier this week there was an electrical storm in area where I live and as a result I was among many who lost power. The power outage lasted several days and as a consequence all the food in my freezer and refrigerator spoiled and had to be thrown out in the garbage.

With that spoilage and having to throw out approximated \$100 in chicken, beef, hamburger and other items in my freezer and the perishables in my refrigerator, I had certain expectations. When these expectations were not met I found myself becoming angry. As I examined my expectations, I realized that the expectations were mine and that I needed to own my expectations and let go other them.

**I have heard it said that expectations are premeditated resentments and that resentments are like drinking poison while hoping the other person dies.**

With my awareness, I realized that I needed to let go of my unfulfilled expectations. By letting go of my unfulfilled expectations, I found that my anger faded. By letting go of my unfulfilled expectations, I found that resentments did not take hold. By letting go of my unfulfilled expectations, I found that no one was harmed. By letting go of my unfulfilled expectations, I found the calm in the storm.

Along with the power outage, I developed an upper respiratory infection which has had a similar impact of being hungry, angry, lonely or tired – H.A.L.T. And Sick. When I am hungry, angry, lonely, tired or sick I have found that I am more vulnerable to stinking thinking. Stinking thinking can negatively impact the way in which I respond or react to what people say in my interactions with them.

With my awareness, I realize that I am prone to stinking thinking and adversely reacting to specific people and what they say to me. Because of this realization, I have chosen to limit my interactions with them, rather than be unkind to them by reacting to their good intentions. By doing so I am taking care of myself while honoring the relationship.

What I have found in life is that it is not so much what happens to me that is important, but how I respond to what happens in my life. Rather than reacting to what happens to me – because of my expectations and my stinking thinking – I have found that I can choose to learn about myself because of my expectations and my stinking thinking.

**I do not do this perfectly. The goal is spiritual progress, rather than spiritual perfection.**

## **Are you in a Battle? – Finding the Calm in the Storms of Life Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 9, 2011

Through my experience, I have learned that I do not have the big picture. Through my experience, I have learned that a loving God has the big picture. Through my experience, I have learned that a loving God is often doing for me, what I can not do for myself. Through my experience, I have learned that a loving God is protecting me from what I can not see.

I had several events that I was planning on attending over the weekend, however because I was sick I decided to cancel those plans. Consequently, instead of being disappointed – because I could not attend those events – I remembered what I had learned. God has the big picture. God is doing for me what I can not do for myself. God is using what is out of my control to protect me from what I can not see.

My experience has taught me that I can trust the process and a loving God.

### **Update**

As an update to this article series, over the weekend we experienced severe thunderstorms with golf ball and baseball size hail stones. If not for my being sick, I may have been on the road being pummeled about by blistering rain and bombarded by falling hail stones.

## **I am so Angry -- Why do I React the Way I do? Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 18, 2009

Several days ago I wrote an article, My Reactions / My Reality. In that article I shared an awareness that I gained through my recovery process. I discovered that my reactions — to a large degree — were responsible for how I defined my reality. Through further examination I became aware of another reality.

**Many of the reactions that I was having toward the people, places and things in my life were directly connected to the events of my past.**

Many of my reactions to people, places and things had direct connections to the way in which I reacted to the people, places and things of my past. Upon further discovery I found that the only thing that had changed in my current experience was the time and location of my reactions. In addition, I discovered that I was unconsciously super imposing my past imprinted memories and reactions on to current people, places and things.

People, places and things — that reminded me of past hurt, anger, disappointment and resentment — unknowingly became the recipients of my hurt, anger, disappointment and resentment. Through my process, I also discovered that my reactions — to present day circumstances and experiences — some times would come flooding forward without any warning. I also discovered that some of my reactions were out of proportion to my present day circumstances and experiences.

**I discovered that my reactions were driven by my previous interactions with people, places and things.**

Through my recovery process, I came to understand my reactions as “triggers”. Triggers bring about reactions to circumstances and events that remind me of circumstances and events that transpired in my past interactions with people, places and things. More specifically I discovered that my triggers were connected to my unfinished business. Unfinished business is business that I have not made peace with from my past. I then discovered that my triggers were tripped at an unconscious level.

**In the process I discovered that my unfinished business became apparent when ever I was ‘triggered’ to react.**

Unfinished business reminds me of events, people, groups, organizations, ect. who have hurt, disappointed or made me angry. Unfinished business connects me to the feelings that I did not know how to process at the time of the incident. In practice I discovered that my unfinished business bonded me to the people, places and things that had hurt, disappointed or made me feel uncomfortable or experience unfamiliar feelings. In my reaction I blamed and criticized “them” for my feeling hurt, angry or disappointed.

## **I am so Angry -- Why do I React the Way I do? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 18, 2009

In practice, I held people, places and things responsible for the events, situations or circumstances that evoked my uncomfortable feelings. In essence, I blamed “them” for my feeling hurt, angry and disappointed. I also discovered that my triggers kept me feeling like a victim.

Through further observation I discovered a common thread that linked me to my “unfinished business”. The common link was the resentments that I held toward people, places and things from my past. My next spiritual awakening revealed that when I react to my present day events, circumstances, people, places or things I inadvertently tap into the resentments that I have held toward the people, places and things who / that are apart of my unfinished business.

Because of the resentments that I harbored against the people, places and things of my past, I found myself reacting to my present. Through my awareness I discovered that my unfinished business was in effect sabotaging my present.

**Because of the resentments that I harbored against the people, places and things of my past, I found myself reacting to my present. Through my awareness I discovered that my unfinished business was in effect sabotaging my present.**

I discovered that my resentments were undermining my ability to make healthy choices. Rather than being a proactive participant in my life I became a resident reactor. I reacted to my circumstances as though I was a child, an adolescent or a teenager — while as an adult. I reacted to defend myself and my life when no imminent threat existed.

**Although I did not realize the ramifications of my resentments — at the time — I witnessed the impact that resentments were having upon the lives of countless others. The consequences of those resentments became apparent when I turned on the radio or television and listened to the news. Bad choices and fatal outcomes.**

Through my recovery process I then became aware of the negative consequences that my resentments were having upon my life and my relationships. While sitting in a meeting I heard a member make a profound point. They said that having and harboring resentments is likened to drinking poison while hoping people, places and things die. When I heard the comparison reality became apparent. My resentments were slowly killing me and hindering my ability to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

## **I am so Angry -- Why do I React the Way I do? Part 3**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 18, 2009

**The obvious was quickly becoming apparent. Nothing good was coming from the resentments that I held toward, God, myself and other people. The impact of my resentments hindered my ability to trust the process, a loving God and myself.**

With my awareness — and through the encouragement of my sponsor — I realized that it was in my best interest that I begin a program of rigorous honesty. The student had become willing. I wanted to be an actor in life rather than a reactor to life. And so the course was set. My sponsor suggested that I make a list of all the persons that I resented. He told me that I needed to be as thorough as possible — as my memory allowed. Consequently, I sat down with a pen and paper and began to write.

**As a framework I needed to examine my past relationships / interactions. I needed to make a list of the people, places and things that I held / harbored resentments toward — for what ever reason.**

In the framework I needed to examine the relationships / interactions that I had with family members, with relationships with women — romantic and otherwise. I needed to examine my relationships with teachers and fellow students dating back to grade school, junior high, high school, colleges, universities and other training venues.

I needed to examine the relationships that I had with bosses, supervisors and fellow employees in the various work settings — over the years. I needed to examine the relationships that I had with clergy, church leadership and fellow church members in the various churches that I attended — during my life time.

I needed to examine my relationship with the God of my understanding. I needed to examine the relationship that I had with myself. I needed to examine the relationship that I had with my fears. I needed to examine how I had harmed other people. I needed to examine my sex conduct.

**I was told that I needed to complete the exercise to look for the patterns in my relationships. Where, when and why I reacted and how I contributed to the formation of those resentments. I was also told that the purpose in identifying my resentments was not to blame or berate anyone — including myself.**

## **I am so Angry -- Why do I React the Way I do? Part 4**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 18, 2009

Through becoming aware of the patterns that led to my resentments I became aware of the “reasons” why I reacted to the people, places and things in my past. By doing so I discovered that I could make healthier choices.

**Through the exercise I discovered that the pattern of my resentments were predictable — in all of my relationships — and I was at the center of my resentments.**

### **Today’s Thought**

Until I examine the patterns in my relationships, I am prone to reliving pain from my past expectations — through current events. My triggers will remain set until I do the work to remove their impact — both from my conscious and unconscious mind. With my awareness I will be able to own the responsibility for how I choose to react — the Way I do.

With my awareness, I can choose — to do the work — to look for the patterns in my relationships. By doing so I can stop reacting to my past through my present. Through looking at the patterns of my interactions I can identify and make peace with my unfinished business.

**“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. Albert Einstein**

## **What is defining our Worth, Value and Significance? Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 1, 2011

Of late I have been thinking about the concept of worth, value and significance. Upon reflection I found that – for many years — I sought to find my worth, value and significance from outside of myself.

Because I bought into the notion that my worth, value and significance could only be defined from outside of myself, I strove to prove my worth, value and significance through seeking to meet various requirements. In my experience, when I found that I was unable to meet the requirements set forth to prove my worth, value and significance I felt minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

As I felt minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted by people, I in turn allowed people to treat me with contempt. I allowed people to treat me with contempt because I bought into the notion that my life was of little value, worth or significance. Because I bought into the notion that my life was of little worth, value or significance I also regarded myself with contempt.

Because I was so focused on attempting to fulfill the external expectations – to feel worth, value and significance – I never took the time to look with in myself. Consequently, I never stopped to realize what other people thought of me was not as important as what I thought about myself. Because I spent my time and energy people pleasing and approval seeking, I never took the time to consider that my worth, value and significance were never meant to be defined for me.

As I have shared on my About Page, my traumatic brain injury occurred when I was 10 years old in 1967. Because my external wounds healed and I was able to achieve very well on some fronts, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was never factored into why I could not achieve on other fronts. Subsequently, I bought into a denial system that minimized the impact of my traumatic brain injury.

Because I bought into a denial system that minimized the impact of my traumatic brain injury I found myself being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted. With ongoing minimization, marginalization, dismissal and discounting, I found that many of my efforts proved to undermine my feelings of worth, value and significance. In the process, I experienced an ongoing sense of inadequacy.

Although I experienced an ongoing sense of inadequacy, I attempted to overcompensate for my low self-esteem, self-worth and for my feelings of insignificance. I strove to prove my worth, value and significance as an individual by attempting to be enough. I did so because I bought into the notion that if I just did enough, I would be enough and in the process, prove my worth, value and significance.

## What is defining our Worth, Value and Significance? Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 13, 2011

In my struggle to do enough, to be enough — to feel as though I was enough — I found myself up against one proverbial wall after another proverbial wall. In my experience, I interpreted that my best efforts were never quite good enough. Consequently — as I found myself up against one proverbial wall after another — I found myself buying into the notion that I was of little worth, value or significance.

To better understand my process, you may like to read my article series, [My Journey thus Far](#)

### **Through my process, I experienced a spiritual awakening.**

Because I lived in my denial and the denial that other people had for me I was unable to comprehend, much less accept how my traumatic brain injury impacted my life. Consequently – and because I was unable to connect the dots — I spent much of my time and energy defending the denial that kept me bound to the expectations outlined by the definitions to have worth, value and significance.

Because I found that I was unable to meet the expectations – to maintain a career and an affiliation (s) with various churches, groups and organizations to gain a sense of worth, value and significance – I experienced ongoing discouragement, disillusion and depression. I found that I continued to experience these feelings until I realized that I could no longer deny or rationalize away my traumatic brain injury.

As I began to realize that I could no longer deny or rationalize away the impact of my traumatic brain injury, I slowly started to experience spiritual awakenings.

In my struggle to find peace, I found that I fought against myself as I attempted to fulfill what I thought was required of me – to meet prescribed definitions and standards. I found that I continued to fight against myself until I began to realize that my worth, value, meaning, purpose and significance were never meant to be defined from outside of me by a set of definitions and / or standards. I began to realize that my worth, value, meaning, purpose and significance were to be found with in.

**“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, a very famous painter**

## What is defining our Worth, Value and Significance? Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on May 17, 2011

Below are several of the spiritual awakenings that I began to experience once I stopped denying the reality of my traumatic brain injury.

Through my experience I began to realize that I was never meant to live in denial. I was never meant to fill another person's mold for me. I was never meant to be defined by a career or by an affiliation. I was never meant to be a human doing. Instead, I began to realize that I was created to be a human being. I began to realize that I was created to be a conduit of the passion that a loving God breathed into me.

Through my experience, I began to realize that I was created to have a relationship with a loving God. I began to realize that I was created to do the footwork – by turning my will and my life over to the care of a loving God and by praying for the knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out. I began to realize that I did not have to lean on my own understanding or rely on specific outcomes.

Through my experience, I began to realize that I could experience my life through a set of different eyes. I began to realize that I could let go and let God. I began to realize that I could view my daily circumstances as a gift, instead of as a daily gauntlet given to me to endure. I began to see life through the eyes of lessons, experiences and opportunities given to point me in the direction of my destiny.

Through my experience, I began to realize that I could replace my need to do, by learning to be. I began to realize that I could follow the beat to my own drum. I began to realize that I no longer needed to earn my worth, value or significance. I began to realize that I no longer needed to have my worth, value or significance defined for me. I began to realize that I define my worth, value and significance.

Through my experience, I discovered that I could trust the process, the care of a loving God and my ability and willingness to learn from events, circumstances, experiences and opportunities.

**“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.” Henry David Thoreau**

## **I am available to be of service**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 5, 2011

My name is Craig Phillips and I would like to be of service to both you and the individuals that you serve. I am an individual living with a brain injury, a master's level rehabilitation counselor, an author, an educator, a coach, an advocate and a motivational speaker. I am an expert on addressing, handling and overcoming adversity.

My brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. For more information please read my About page. On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live to share the strategies that have enabled me to succeed far beyond all reasonable expectations.

To date I have written and published **1322 articles** for Second Chance to Live. I write articles from the power of identification. Please read my article, The Power of Identification. I have created video presentations of my articles. Currently I have **250 video presentations**. I have also create an archive and categories of my articles. These can be accessed through this link: [Archives and Categories](#).

My focus is to encourage, motivate, empower and provide hope to individuals impacted by trauma, abuse and adversity. To read how Second Chance to Live has impacted lives please read my [Testimonial / Endorsement page](#). Articles from Second Chance to Live have been included in international publications. Please see my [Publications / Honors page](#).

To empower my readers I have created several features for Second Chance to Live. [How to Increase / Decrease Font Size page](#), [How to Translate Second Chance to Live](#) into your Language and [How to use Second Chance to Live](#).

Second Chance to Live is being used as an educational resource by several consortium's [Intute](#) and [The Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa](#) for both educators and students. Please consider using Second Chance to Live as a resource on your website to serve the individuals that you serve. To see a list of organizations using Second Chance to Live as a resource, please click: [Several Organizations – Past and Present — Using Second Chance to Live for Peer Support](#)

In the event that you would like to include an article in your upcoming newsletter or other publication, please let me know. In the event that you would like me to present in a work shop or give a keynote presentation, please contact me: [Contact Page](#)

For more information, please consult my [Public Speaking Page](#)

I look forward to being of service.

Have a simply phenomenal day.

Craig

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Second Chance to Live

[www.secondchancetolive.wordpress.com](http://www.secondchancetolive.wordpress.com)

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 18, 2007

During my lifetime, I have been confronted with challenges, obstacles, and disappointments. In the scope of this brief autobiography I will share some of these events and circumstances. The purpose of sharing my experiences with you is not to blame, shame or to point a finger in anyone's direction. I have found that little benefit comes through such behavior. Living life on life's terms, to me, means that I deny the notion that I am a victim of my circumstances.

I have also arrived at some simple but profound conclusions. It is my belief that I cannot hope to know until I have learned the lesson. These lessons have often come through the pain of struggle. I have also come to believe that life is best understood backwards, and that is good enough for today. I also believe that perfection is a myth that if sought after will only bind one's soul. Pursuing excellence on the other hand encourages creative expression and creative expression gives meaning to all life.

With this being said, I will begin. I learned at an early age that good was not quite good enough. I was also led to believe that my meaning and purpose was connected to what I accomplished. Because my best was seldom good enough, I rarely believed that I was quite good enough because I did not live up to expectations. In the context of measuring up to expectations, I was led to believe that it was my responsibility to take care of other people emotionally before I could hope to have a sense of well-being. If someone was out of sorts emotionally, I internalized responsibility for their distress. Consequently, I would attempt to fix them emotionally. If I could not appease or "fix" them emotionally, I would be blamed for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment. I would then in turn shame myself for not being able to "fix" them emotionally. These combined messages kept me confused, bewildered and anxious, as I was rarely able to meet their expectations and/or able to "fix" anyone emotionally.

A significant event occurred when I was 10 years old that further complicated my ability to grasp social cues and be consistently successful inter-personally. My family was in a motor vehicle accident. Upon impact — the Cadillac hitting our Volkswagen Beetle — I was catapulted from the back seat to the windshield. On the way forward, I fractured my left femur (thigh bone) on the back of my Dad's bucket seat and then hit the windshield. As a result of making contact with the windshield, I sustained an open skull fracture. The consequences of my skull being fractured resulted in damage to my right frontal lobe (executive center functioning), a severe brain contusion (bruising of my brain as it was jostled against the inside of the skull), and some brain stem involvement/damage.

I was in a coma for 3 weeks, traction for 6-7 weeks to set my femur and then placed in a spica or full body cast for 4-5 months. Shortly after being placed in the full body cast, I was transferred to another hospital where I underwent brain and skull surgery. In follow-up to the brain surgery, I underwent a battery of tests (EEG's and cognitive/ psycho/social) to determine the damage to my brain, my cognitive skills and my social function capabilities. The results from these tests were given to my parents.

## My Journey Thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 25, 2007

My parents were told, that due to the extent of my brain injury, I would probably not be able to succeed beyond high school. My parents made the decision at the time, not to reveal the findings of these tests results. I did not become aware of the results from these tests until after I obtained my Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, some 29 years later.

The accident happened in 1967. At that time, there was a limited understanding into neurological rehabilitation, at least in my circumstances. Consequently, I was on my own. I taught myself how to walk, talk, speak in complete sentences and was mainstreamed back into elementary school. I went on to graduate — on time — with my high school class in 1975.

Because I was able to perform and succeed academically and was able to overcome many obstacles, the impact and significance of my brain injury would lie dormant for many years. From the age of 10, I sought to resolve having an unknown invisible disability (being an individual living with a brain injury) with a belief system that convinced me that I had to be perfect to prove my worth and value. Needless to say, the injury to my brain consistently impeded my ability to be perfect.

Consequently, I developed a pervasive sense of shame, a low self-esteem as well and a boat load of insecurities.

My belief system — at the time — led me to believe that I was intrinsically defective at the core of my being. Because I bought into the notion that I was defective — I did not believe that I could be loved unconditionally by anyone — much less the God of my understanding. Because of the come close — go away conditioning I did not believe that I could trust anyone. Consequently, although I was told that I could trust, I believed — on a core level — that I had to figure things out for myself.

In the process, I experienced alienation and isolation. I felt alienated and isolated from other people — and myself — because I could never quite figure out why I was unable to measure up to the expectations. In my striving to measure up to the expectations — to avoid being blamed, shamed or scapegoated — I found myself caught up in perfectionism. In my efforts to live up to being perfect, I developed a grandiose sense of responsibility as I attempted to overcompensate for not being perfect. The cycle to be perfect — yet not being able to measure up to expectations — set me up to be what I have heard called a human doing.

Perfectionism — believing that I had to be perfect to be OK — fueled my low self-esteem, my insecurities, the impact of living with a brain injury and an invisible disability and my ongoing ability to trust anyone, including the God of my understanding.

In addition to over achieving, I resorted to people pleasing and approval seeking. When people pleasing and approval seeking proved to be ineffective, I tried to anticipate what others expected, wanted or needed through mind reading. Needless to say, I found out that I could not read minds. Consequently, all too often I found myself saying, “I am sorry” for everything under the sun. In the 6th grade my English teacher gave me an assignment to write, “I am sorry” 500 times thinking that would somehow stop me saying, “I am sorry”.

## **My Journey Thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 3**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 25, 2007

I also tried to control outcomes and force solutions, so that I could avoid the pain of being shamed, blamed and scapegoated. The reason why I dreaded being shamed, blamed and abandoned was that to be abandoned meant that I was inherently bad and defective. At the bottom of the spiral of believing that I was bad and defective was a dread of self-annihilation — not suicide — but the feeling that I simply did not matter. The fear of abandonment — emotional and physical — drove me in my attempts to avoid feeling as though my life has NO meaning, value or significance.

My attempts to ward off my fear of abandonment and my fear of annihilation only seemed to reinforce these fears. The strategies only seemed to reinforce what I had been conditioned to believe — that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake and that there was nothing that I could do to change that reality. In my anguish and desperation — to find out why I was unable to measure up to the expectations that were set for me, to rid myself of the fear of abandonment and annihilation and to prove my worth and value — I set out on a personal crusade.

In this pursuit, I became obsessively involved with various churches. I spent countless hours saturating myself in bible study, scripture memory and listening to a wide array of teachers — from charismatic, full gospel, fundamental, non-denominational, and denominational churches — and their leadership. I attempted to apply what I was learning, but continued to fall short. Some would say that I just did not do enough: pray, read, or believe. To that notion, I would say, “You have no idea what you are talking about my friend”.

My interest was to do whatever it took to become a victorious over comer and at the same time to be of maximum service to the God of my understanding and to my fellow-man. In this pursuit, I went on to obtain my undergraduate degree in theology from Oral Robert’s University. I attended Asbury Theological Seminary for 1 year and then went on to obtain my master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Kentucky.

As part of my journey I have had the opportunity to grow in my awareness. Prior to the writing of this article, I have worked in a variety of positions that have enhanced my awareness — of both myself and the people who I have been graced to work with and serve.

In practical application, I have worked as a mental health aide/counselor within a 28 day residential chemical dependency treatment center for dually diagnosed individuals. I have also assisted families and individuals while working within the field of nursing, grief counseling, and within both the funeral and cemetery industries.

As a masters level rehabilitation counselor and a certified rehabilitation counselor I have assisted individuals living with disabilities in both the private and public sectors — for Insurance Companies and for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

I have also assisted individuals living with mental illness in a day treatment and partial hospitalization program.

## **My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 4**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 26, 2007

During the past 23 years I have been actively involved in a recovery process from the effects of inadequate modeling, the impact of living with a brain injury and an invisible disability and for my own distorted perceptions.

My varied life experiences — through my educational pursuits, my vocational endeavors and my recovery process — have given me a strong foundation to build upon. I began building on this foundation through my first book — Table Topics for the Soul — Journey to the Heart – which is registered with the Library of Congress Copyright © 2006 Registration #: TXu1-330-434, but not yet published.

I continued to build upon that foundation on February 6, 2007. With the encouragement of a friend, I created Second Chance to Live to share my experience, strength and hope through the life of a blog. Second Chance to Live presents information in such a way to encourage, motivate, empower and provide hope to anyone who has been touched by trauma, abuse or adversity. Articles are written on a wide variety of topics with practical applications.

Second Chance to Live provides practical solutions and strategies for living our lives one day at a time as we move toward our destinies.

My hope is that as you read articles from Second Chance to Live as listed with in my Site Map you will be led to the light of hope. My hope is that as you see the light you will be led to experience a renewed sense of faith and hope in your process, a loving God and in yourself.

My hope is that you will be encouraged, motivated and empowered in your process. My hope is that as you read articles from Second Chance to Live you will be inspired to consider the possibilities and that you will find a new zest for living. My hope is that you — as I am — will learn to trust the process, a loving God and yourself.

Shortly after I created Second Chance to Live on February 6, 2007 — approximately 3 1/2 years ago — I wrote and published an article for Second Chance to Live, My Journey thus Far. Later, I decided to divide the article into 3 Parts.

My Journey thus Far was written as a short condensed autobiography to chronicle the events that took place in my life prior to the time that I took the risk to create my web log.

Over the past week or so, I have felt led to bring My Journey thus Far forward. To bring the article forward I have decided to add parts to the existing article. In the subsequent parts of the article I will share with you what Second Chance to Live has experienced during the past 78 months. My motivation in bringing the article forward is to encourage you – my friend – to take the a risk.

I want to encourage you to learn how to use your gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for you. I want to encourage you to pursue your passions and to follow your dreams.

## My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 5

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 18, 2010

I am so very grateful that I listened to my friend — who encouraged me to start a blog when he said, “Your material is ripe for a blog”. In my experience, I am so glad that I took the risk to learn to use and then develop my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. In my experience, I am so glad that I took the risk to pursue my passions and to follow my dreams.

### In Practice

Approximately 40 months ago I took the risk to start Second Chance to Live — at the encouragement of a friend. At first, I thought I had gotten in over my head. Plenty to learn about how to run and manage a blog, in addition to writing articles, answering emails, responding to comments / concerns and making myself available to individuals, organizations and associations both domestically and internationally.

First of all I would like to share a conviction with you. I have come to believe that gifts, talents and abilities are a gift from God. I believe that gifts, talents and abilities are on loan from God and that those gifts, talents and abilities are subsequently not of us, but through us. Consequently — by the grace of God — we as humans are given the privilege and opportunity to participate in the...

implementation of those gifts, talents and abilities.

### In Practice

For the first 7-8 weeks – once I created Second Chance to Live — I spent between 60-75 hours a week becoming familiar with the world of the blog, creating, writing articles, answering emails, responding to comments and sharing the message of Second Chance to Live — domestically and internationally. During the past 38 or so months I have spent between 50 – 60 hours a week – at my own pace...

learning about the world of the blog, continuing to create, write articles, answer emails, respond to comments and sharing the message of Second Chance to Live with organizations and associations — with in the United States and through out the world.

To clarify, my motivation in sharing the amount of time that I have spent learning to use and develop the gifts, talents and abilities that I have been given — through Second Chance to Live — is to encourage you with a reality. The reality is found with in time and effort. Being successful in anything requires a commitment to learning how to use time and energy in an efficient manner.

Success is a product of time and energy. Success is found in experience, and experience is found with in time and commitment. In the experience of time, commitment provides a firm foundation by which we are able to build upon the gifts, talents and abilities given to us.

During the past 51 months, I have seen God open doors that have led to wonderful opportunities. Opportunities that have both encouraged my process and empowered my journey. The most significant of these doors has been the door that has open and allowed me to walk with you as we have walked down a road that is –sometimes — less traveled. I have been both honored and humbled by your time and kindness. Thank you.

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 6

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 24, 2010

During the past 82 months, I have seen God open many other doors which have enabled Second Chance to Live to be introduced and incorporated by domestic and international academic institutions, hospitals, service organizations and brain injury associations. Among these institutions, hospitals, organization and associations God has opened the door for articles from Second Chance to Live to be published. You may do so by clicking on this link to my [Publications / Honors Page](#).

With the publication of these articles – both domestically and internationally — God has opened the door for me to be able to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways far beyond my wildest imaginations. With the publications and the incorporating of Second Chance to Live — by academic institutions, hospitals, service organizations and brain injury associations – has been given huge opportunities.

God has given me a huge opportunity to be involved in the lives of individuals both domestically and internationally — who like me — are living with a brain injury. God has given me a huge opportunity to be a part of recovery process of families who have been impacted by a brain injury. God has given me a huge opportunity to be involved in the lives and service care provision of professionals who serve...

During the past **82 months**, God has opened doors that have encouraged, motivated and empowered my gifts, talents, abilities and my process. Because of the doors that God has opened and my diligence I have been able to follow my dreams. Because of the doors that God has opened and my diligence, I have been able to live the life that I have imagined. Because of the doors that God has opened and my diligence I am meeting with a success unexpected in common hours.

In April of 2013 I had the opportunity to present a workshop at the **Alaskan Peer Support Consortium Conference** in Anchorage, Alaska. In May 2013 I had another opportunity to present a workshop at the **Embracing Life and Living Well after Traumatic Brain Injury Conference**. In October 2013 I gave a keynote presentation at the **2013 Southwest Conference on Disability** in Albuquerque, NM before 600 attendees.

During the past 82 months, I have written a total of **1322 articles** for Second Chance to Live. To view a list of the articles that I have written and published on Second Chance to Live, please visit my Site Map to my Articles. Here is a link to my [Site Map to my Articles](#). By clicking on the title of each article (s), you will be taken to that complete article where you can read the article. While on the Site Map, click any of the titles, the article will open for you on Second Chance to Live.

I have also created a You Tube Channel where I have uploaded video presentations that I have created of some of my articles. I also create video presentations of my articles to individuals who learn better though watching and listening. To date I have created **250 video presentations**. I have also created a Site Map for my Video Presentations. Here is a link to my [Site Map for my Video Presentations](#). Once on my Site Map, you can scroll down the page and click on any presentation. The presentation will open for you on my 2dogbull You Tube Channel.

You have my permission to share my articles and or video presentations with anyone you believe could benefit, however please attribute me as being the author of the article (s) video presentation (s), and provide a link back to the article (s) on Second Chance to Live.

## My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 7

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on January 12, 2015

In the spring of 2014, to aide in accessing my articles on specific topics I created an archive of my articles and video presentations. I placed these archives in categories. These categories can be accessed by clicking on the following link: [Article and Video Presentation Categories](#).

On January 6, 2015, I published my 1<sup>st</sup> e Book; [Living with a Brain Injury e-Book — Putting the Pieces in Place — 60 Video Presentations](#).

On January 12, 2015, after 3 years in the planning; I am publishing this 2<sup>nd</sup> e Book, **Being Your Own Hero through Overcoming Adversity -- Tools for Rebuilding Your Life e Book**;

In combination with Second Chance to Live and these 2 eBooks, I look forward to being of continued service. As you read, watch or listen to my articles and questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact me with those questions. All questions are good questions. You may contact me through the use of this link: [Contact Page](#).

I look forward to continuing to have you on my journey.

Before I end this e Book, I would like to share several quotes that have inspired me in my process and on my journey.

### Inspirational Quotes

“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 some thing 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

“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 some day my chance will come.” Abraham Lincoln

## **My Journey thus Far – A Look into My Process Part 8**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 25, 2010

### **More Inspirational Quotes**

“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 Ghandi