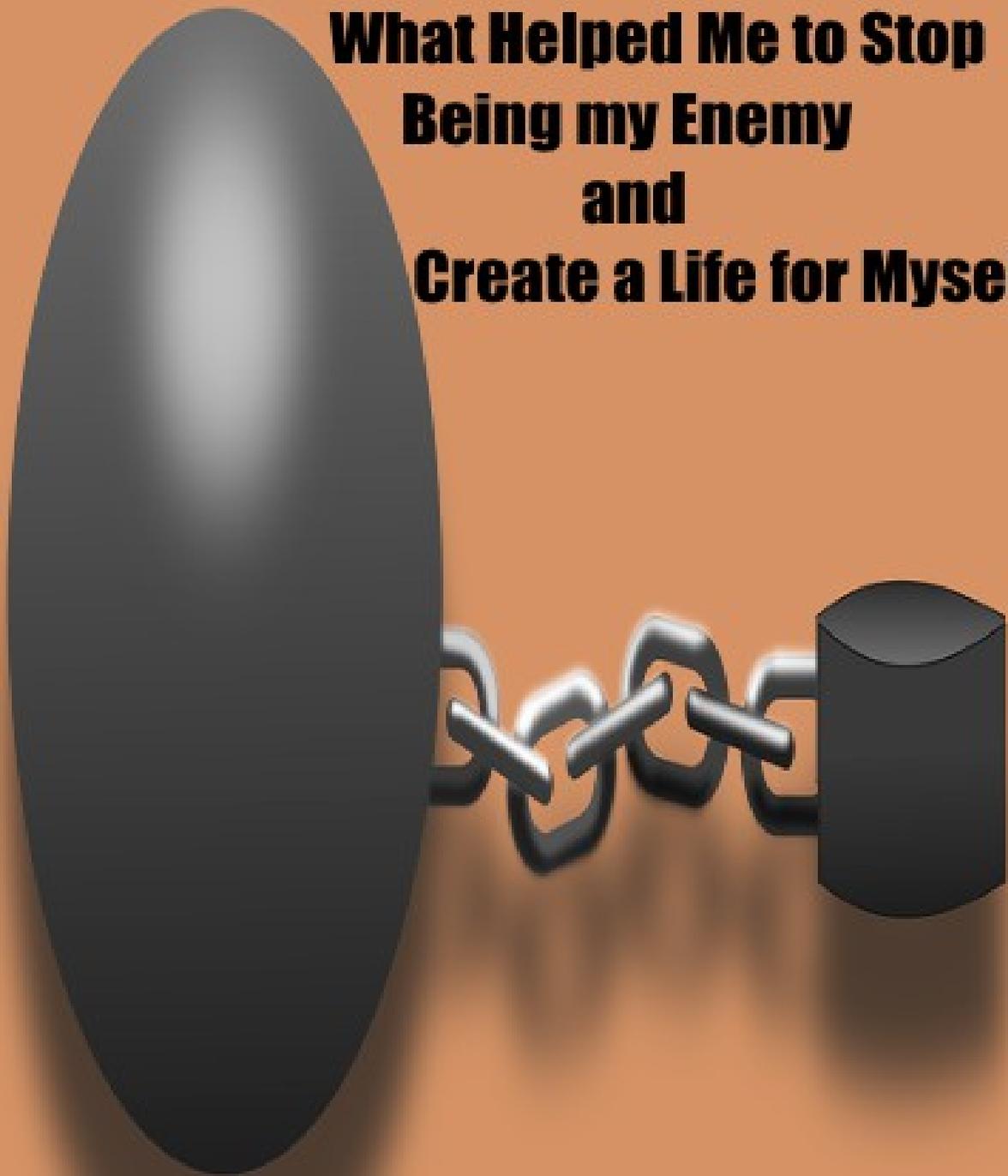


**Living with a Brain Injury  
What Helped Me to Stop  
Being my Enemy  
and  
Create a Life for Myself**



**Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

## Introduction

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 1352 articles and have created 259 video presentations that I have uploaded to my You Tube channel. I create video presentations to make the information from my articles 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. All that I share through my e Books is birthed out of my own struggle to grow in my capacity to be my best self through using my mind, body and spirit to create with my being, and in the process be of service.

In January 2015 I published my first 2 e Book's:

**[Living with a Brain Injury e-Book — Putting the Pieces in Place — 60 Video Presentations](#)**

**[Being Your own Hero through Overcoming Adversity – Tool for Rebuilding Your Life e Book.](#)**

I did so to make information even more accessible to my readers. The information that I present through my articles and video presentation can benefit anyone, regardless of their particular set of circumstances or specific adversity. The message that I share through my articles is universal.

Since the writing and publishing of my first 2 e Books, I have published 2 additional e Books. Here are the links to my 3rd and 4th e Book.

**[Living with a brain injury and Building Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance e Book](#)**

**[Living with a Brain Injury, Making Sense of Why and What is my Destiny? e Book.](#)**

In this my 5th e Book, **Living with a Brain Injury, What Helped Me to Stop being my Enemy and Create a Life for Myself**; I will share what I discovered that kept me fighting against myself, what helped me to stop being my own enemy and what helped me to create a life for myself.

“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

## Preface

In my experience and through my recovery process I discovered that there have been and are factors that hinder me. I am not suggesting that there was evil intent, however I discovered that these factors undermined and distracted me, In my experience, I discovered that I needed to examine these factors and how these factors undermined and distracted my recovery process.

In this e Book, I would like to share with you what I discovered in my search to find freedom and gain my focus. The information that I present with in the articles in this e Book are designed to share awareness, not to point the finger in anyone's direction. Pointing or blaming anyone for anything does no one any good and keeps the individual in a victim mindset.

In my experience, what I discovered was that as I became aware, I grew in acceptance. As I grew in acceptance, I was able to take a different course of action. Through taking a different course of action I discovered a new set of tools that empowered my ability to find a freedom. A freedom that I never knew existed. A freedom from factors that once distracted and undermined my recovery process.

### **A freedom to stop being my own enemy and a freedom to create a life for myself.**

As you read through this and my other e Books and questions come to mind, please send those questions to me. All questions are good questions. Please send your questions and comments to me by clicking on this link [Contact Information](#). I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

This e Book, as well as my other e Books are free to download; however I have 2 requests. My first request is that you cite me as being the author of the articles and that you provide a link back to Second Chance to Live <https://secondchancetolive.wordpress.com/>. Although I am granting permission to share my articles freely, I am maintaining copyright of my intellectual property Copyright 2007-2015.

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## Painting your Portrait {aka} This is Not a Dress Rehearsal

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

What an odd title. *Painting your Portrait {aka} This is Not a Dress Rehearsal*. The title sounds like a mystery novel made into a movie. However, I am not talking about something made in Hollywood. Look a little closer. That is right. I am talking about your and my life. Our lives are precious. We get to choose how we experience the journey. Choice gives us the responsibility to get involved with our lives. Wow. You mean I get to choose. *Most definitely!*

You may say to yourself or to other people, “You don’t know what I have too...” or “You don’t know how I...” or “If you only knew I ...” To be honest with you, I have made similar statements during my life time. My challenge was to stop making excuses and begin living life on life’s terms. I would also encourage you to stop letting your “what”, “how”, and “only” be the reason why you hesitate.

If you believe you are stuck in a box, learn how to be happy in that box. If you can not find contentment in that box, use your creative energy to use the box to your advantage. Let gratitude be the vehicle you use to explore beyond the box.

### Gratitude

Throughout much of my life, I minimized the “small things” as being insignificant. The idea of finding joy and wonder each day seemed pointless. Because I believed that my good was never quite good enough, I would not allow myself to find the joy that came through being grateful. I allowed myself to be persuaded that being grateful could only be experienced through achieving perfection. Consequently, I believed that achieving the spectacular was the only way that I could find satisfaction and contentment. I allowed myself to be distracted, rather than relishing what I could learn on my journey.

In my attempt to overcompensate (to be more than I could be), I was unable to recognize that life was a process and I was on a journey. The principle of progress not perfection was obscured by grit determination. In reality, I desperately needed to have my existence stamped by the approval of others. Pursuing approval and validation consequently obscured my intrinsic ability to celebrate life itself. My permission to be grateful became dependent on matters that were out of my control.

Through identifying and addressing limiting scripts, I came to understand that the above attitude pervasively undermined my ability to find delight. I now realize that gratitude can be experienced in each moment. As I decide to use all my senses, I find myself resonating with this present moment. My being comprehends wonder and I am in awe. I find myself celebrating in the now. Exuberance no longer needs to be reserved for the spectacular, nor do I need to wait for the applause from anyone.

Through making this decision, I find delight. When I look for the obscure, the shutter of my soul opens and I am enlightened. The eyes of my heart are able to behold what was once hidden from my awareness. Gratitude takes on new meaning and purpose. I find myself ushered into the light of living. As I continue in this light, I dedicate myself to the process of being. Being grateful adds true meaning to my life, whereas seeking approval and validation from others will only cultivate disillusionment.

“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

## Why can't you be more like... Part 1

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

Society throws that the notion at us all the time. Advertising, commercials, magazines, movies and so on. Geesh. And the sad reality is that these messages can be very subtle and alluring. I believe what makes this message insidious is that someone, somewhere wants to make you and I into a clone — somebody other than who we were created to be in this life.

**A clone by definition is a exact replica of another figure or state. The motive of such conditioning becomes obvious with time. Those who seek to make us into a clone want to use and exploit us — for their purposes.**

By nature, such conditioning discourages and shuns unique expression while being a clone is held in high-esteem. Consequently, the status quo becomes the norm and mediocrity attacks excellence. Go along to get along is heralded as the banner of life, while the human spirit slowly dies. Living through doing — rather than being — becomes the rat race to bolsters who we are in the eyes of our peers.

What other people think and believe — in the process — become more important than what we think and believe. Acquisition of “toys” become the measure of status and success. Clamoring to prove our worth substitutes who we are in an attempt to justify our worth and being. In the process, self-expression and creativity are dashed on the rocks of conformity and compliance.

**I have come to see the above conditioning and subtle persuasion as an enemy to the life that God breathed into — my life. With my awareness , I made several decisions.**

I decided to separate myself from the notion of, “Why can't you be more like...” I made the decision to start celebrating who I was created to become in this life. I made the decision to start pursuing excellence, rather than perfection. Consequently, being became more important than doing. In the process, I broke free from the notion that my security could be found in the pursuit of conformity and compliance. With my choice, I decided to start thinking outside of the box.

**Consequently, I stopped listening to the notion that I was to be more like anyone. In the process I have discovered what it meant to be perfectly me.**

“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

## **Why can't you be more like... Part 2**

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

### **Perfectly Me**

As I reflected upon my own uniqueness, I was reminded that each person contains his or her own inherent brilliance. Like the snowflakes that fall from the sky, none are alike. Each crystalline shape is set with intricate wonder. Although their beauty lasts for a brief moment in time, a lesson can be learned.

Each person is created with specific greatness, waiting to be revealed in time. Through accepting this reality, I find delight. I accept the wonder that defines my being. I am a thriving prodigy. As I breathe, my precise essence is revealed. Anticipation calls to me. I behold the distinction that is taking shape and I revel.

My pursuit of excellence motivates me to work in tandem with the God of my understanding. Together we see a metamorphosis, resplendent with dignity and poise. Through staying the course, I perceive that change is not of me, but through me. I am a work in process, but in this very moment, I am perfectly me. I am perfectly free.

“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

## Who is limiting you? 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.

“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

## Who is limiting you? Part 2

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

### More Life Limiting Scripts

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...

“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

## **You mean, I get to choose...**

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.

“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

## **Whose life are you Living?**

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

Earlier today, I was reminded of an injustice that most of us learned starting at an early age. Society assigns more worth to titles than qualities, to status than value, to position than to kindness. This injustice sets each one of us up to become what I have heard described as a human doing. The underlying motivation is to declare our worth. In essence, we are conditioned to believe that what we do is more important than who we are as individuals.

The pursuit of an identity then becomes a driving force. Once that identity is found, our worth and value unconsciously becomes tied to the functions of that identity. In the event that a person becomes disabled and can no longer function in that identity, they may believe their worth as an individual no longer matters. As a result, they may find themselves becoming increasingly despondent and withdrawn. But there is hope!

If for some reason, you are no longer able to maintain the identity, you or someone else gave you, rejoice. You are not that identity. You are You. Wonderfully you. Revel in that inherent reality! You do not have to be defined by any societal stigma or identity. Follow your heart. Follow your passions. Follow your inspiration. Find out what makes you smile and gives you joy. Learn how to play again and you will find the answers you are seeking. Life is not about fulfilling any identity. It is about living from your unique creative energy and from the hope that resides deep inside your heart. Trust that you are being led by a power greater than yourself. Follow your bliss. You are a Gift to your World!

“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

## Being of Service — Am I Helping (Empowering) or Enabling (Perpetuating)? Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 25, 2015

### Introduction

What I have come to realize is that when I say I want to be of service, here on Second Chance to Live and social media, is that I am saying I want to share with my readers what has worked for me and given me the ability to accomplish things that I never dreamed possible. When I say that I want to be of service, through Second Chance to Live and social media; is that I want to share what has helped me to learn how to fish, so that others may benefit from what I have learned.

**“Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime” Author unknown**

In my experience. I had no idea, that although I thought I was being of service; I was in actuality perpetuating behaviors that limited and enabled. In my experience, I had no idea that in the process of enabling; I was in fact going hungry. In the below article, I would like to share with you what I discovered that helped me to begin to see and serve in a different way. In the below article I would like to share what helped me to stop participating a “dance” that kept me hungry.

### Article

Through my recovery process, I discovered some thing that changed the way that I look at and seek to be of service. What I discovered changed and empowered my life. For many years I unknowingly participated in a dance that undermined and sabotaged my life and relationships. The dance conditioned me to believe that I was responsible for the person who had the problem (their feelings, needs and wants) and thus responsible to fix their problem and to make them OK. My motivation was to make them OK, so the we would be OK, so that I could be OK.

Through my recovery process, I came to realize the my motivation for doing this dance was out of my fear that they would go away. My fear of abandonment was driven by not knowing how to take care of myself. The dance led me to believe that if I “fixed” people and made them OK, then I could be OK with myself. By making them OK, I could feel safe and secure. The dance led me to believe that I needed to care take the people with whom I felt responsible. The dance resulted in my feeling responsible for, instead of responsible to other people. The dance motivated and fostered me to engage in behaviors that limited, instead of providing solutions for empowerment.

“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

## **Being of Service — Am I Helping (Empowering) or Enabling (Perpetuating)? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 25, 2015

### **Questions that need to be Considered when Serving:**

What I discovered — through my recovery process — is that I need to check my motives. These are several questions that I need to ask myself. They will help me to determine why I am seeking to be of service. Am I seeking to be of service out of my fear that people will go away, if I do not do...? Am I doing for people, that need to do for themselves? Am I doing for other people, in an attempt to keep their side of the street clean; so that I do not have to focus on my side of the street? Am I striving to meet the other persons needs, while neglecting my own? Am I being manipulated into serving by guilt or shame? Am I giving out fish (es) or am I showing how to fish?

Below are 2 article series, along with the video presentations of the article series. By reading and or watching the presentations, you will gain further insight into what I have briefly shared in the above article.

### **1st Article series**

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I being Manipulated? Awareness Part 1\*\*](#)

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I Being Manipulated? Impact Part 2\*\*](#)

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I Being Manipulated? Solutions and Strategies Part 3\*\*](#)

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I Being Manipulated? Awareness Part 1 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I Being Manipulated? Impact Part 2 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury — Am I Being Manipulated? Solutions and Strategies Part 3 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

### **2nd Article Series**

[\*\*How to get Past and Keep from Being Pulled Back Into a Victim Mentality Part 1\*\*](#)

[\*\*How to get Past and Keep from Being Pulled Back into a Victim Mentality Part 2\*\*](#)

[\*\*How to Get Past and Keep from Being Pulled Back into a Victim Mentality Part 1 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*How to Get Past and Keep from Being Pulled Back into a Victim Mentality Part 2 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

“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

## How fast are you running?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 20, 2007

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 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 dolled 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 in my attempt to protect myself.

I reached an emotional bottom, when a relationship ended 16 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 myself. I began to see myself as an empowered individual, who no longer needed to be jostled about by events or circumstances.

Pain now is my friend, because I chose to learn from my experiences. I am being empowered to live life on life's terms through the lessons I am learning.

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## What is keeping you Stuck? Part 1

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 the tools that are used to perpetuate the need to deny what exists. Overtime all the members of the family unknowingly assume different roles in an attempt to mask the pain or secret. Unknowingly, each family member — through the role that they are given or assume – absorbs the unresolved pain, conflict or secret. Denial then acts as a buffer that keeps the family system intact.

Denial perpetuates the drama that contains the conflict. Each member within the family system unconsciously denies their authentic self to avoid conflict. Maintaining the role becomes more important than becoming a separate and autonomous individual. The role 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. With my awareness, I was able to:

Stop saying, "I am sorry" for everything under the sun. With my change of behavior, I slowly was able to make the 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. In the process, I found myself breaking free from the yoke that once controlled my world. In the process, I discovered that I no longer needed to identify myself with the role that I unknowingly sought to identify with for many years.

In the process, I discovered that I could break free from the denial system that sought to keep me in a role — in a family system role – in an attempt to contain unresolved conflict and pain.

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## What is keeping you Stuck? Part 2

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

In the process, I discovered that by changing my behavior, I was able to break free from the drama and family system role. I discovered that I could stop acting out the role and subsequent drama in each of my relationships – beyond the nuclear family. I discovered that by breaking free from the role, the drama and my denial, I was able to start living life on life's terms. I discovered that by breaking free from the role, the drama and my denial, I was able to start trusting the process, a loving God and myself. I discovered that by breaking free from the role, the drama and my denial, I found hope.

### Today's Thought

In the event that I find myself slipping back into the role, drama or denial, I now realize that I can make changes. In the event that I find myself buying back into the illusion that I can control the drama, I can choose to remember that I can get off of the merry-go-round called denial at any time. Through my awareness, I realize that I no longer have to fight the drama. Instead, I can step back from and detach myself from the drama. By detaching from the drama, I am able to use that energy – that I previously used to maintain the role, the drama and the denial system – to empower my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me.

**Note:** For more information on Family System Roles, please read Virginia Satir's book: Conjoint Family Therapy

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## What Helped me to Form a Healthy Relationship with Hope Part 1

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

**My hope is that if you have given up on hope, 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.

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## **What Helped me to Form a Healthy Relationship with Hope Part 2**

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

**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.

To access the articles that I have written on having and creating hope, please click on this link: [Articles on Having Hope](#)

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## Self-righteousness Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 22, 2007

As I have observed this attitude, certain truths have become evident. The insidious nature of this condescending behavior seeks to justify contempt, while maintaining a guise of innocence. This shame-based perception challenges the genuineness of other people, while defiantly judging their motives. The sad reality is that individuals who practice self-righteousness often hide behind a cloak of denial. Their denial is cultivated by ignorance and is often guided by arrogance. Ignorance is justified through criticism.

When people in positions of authority use self-righteousness to control, manipulate and dominate a spiritual abuse occurs. Emotional and spiritual abuse are used to hook the individual into subverting themselves and submitting to the leadership system. Spiritual abuse instigates and promotes alienation. Creativity is stymied and motivation is hindered. Fear drives individuals to believe that the self-righteous leader (s) alone holds the answers.

**As a bi-product, faith is subjected to the agenda of leader. Faith outside that agenda is discouraged. The ability to trust the process is traded for the judgment of the leader. Compliance is expected. Those who question the leadership are considered rebellious. Independent thought is chided and scorned.**

Once the individual complies with such a leadership system, shame is deployed to motivate performance. When such a relationship is established, the individual will be encouraged to “obey” or suffer more abuse. More, becomes the active motivation to appease the onslaught of shaming messages. Striving becomes the way of relating to oneself and to the self-righteous leader.

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## Self-righteousness Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 22, 2007

I have encountered these types of leaders throughout my life. When I became aware of the abuse, I made the decision to discover why I found myself hooked into these types of leaders. After I did my research it became apparent that these leaders did not have my best interests in mind. Instead they sought to manipulate and exploit me to fulfill their own agendas. Once I realized that shame was at the foundation of their motivation, I sought to understand how shame was impacting my life.

I came to recognize the difference between guilt and shame. Through my research, I discovered that guilt occurs when someone has made a mistake. This sense of guilt can be relieved through making an amends or changing a behavior. Shame on the other hand, gives the message that the person does not make mistakes, but is a mistake. When one feels as though they are a mistake, a lingering sense of despair is experienced.

**When leaders seek to practice self-righteousness, the impact upon those under their leadership can be devastating. Not only will they have to carry their own sense of shame, but also the shame of the self-righteous leader (s).**

With time, I began to understand that my sense of shame was based upon a lie. This lie told me that my good was not good enough. Through my process, I have come to believe that my good is good enough. This has been accomplished through a lot of hard work and by separating myself from people (including leaders) who live by a shame script. Therefore, I am able to avoid shame transfers that are used to control, manipulate and dominate.

**In the final analysis, I have come to realize that — self-righteousness and self-righteous behavior — does little to encourage, motivate, empower or provide hope to the individual.**

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## **Are you hiding? Part 1**

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

I have been thinking about what happened in Blacksburg, Virginia last week. The news was heard around the world. An individual had made the decision to vent his displaced rage on to unsuspecting students and faculty. At the end 33 people were dead and many more wounded.

News anchors and talk show hosts speculated about the reason for the rampage. Some said it was due to his fixation with video games and others declared that he had been abused and tormented. During this time period other crime scene professionals were examining the area to add to the conjecture.

Interviews with fellow students focused on how shooter was shy and how he had been abused and mistreated by many throughout his life. According to the shooter, the abuse prompted the killing spree. He declared, "You made me do this..." The sad reality is that the shooter did not have to go on his rampage.

**I believe he had a choice to seek help, however for whatever reason he chose to hide.**

Hopefully the events that occurred on the campus of Virginia Tech will motivate personal responsibility and accountability. In the event that you are hiding please seek help. You no longer have to carry the weight of your pain. There is a way out. Although you may not see a solution now, trust me. I have found a way out of the pain. Reach out to God and He will reach back to you. You will find a way. You will be led. Trust the process. Your life matters to me.

**Being Controlled by Others**

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## Are you hiding? Part 2

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

Our society seems to foster and even encourage irresponsibility. The concept of accountability is often practically dismissed. The buck is passed, the beat goes on, but actual resolution is avoided. People behave in ways, thinking that if a matter is not confronted, it will simply go away. Denial (or as I have heard it put, Don't Even Know I Am Lying to myself) presents itself as a warm blanket. In actuality, denial is simply like a bandage that only covers a deep wound, so that it can not be seen. Although the wound may not be seen, underneath grows a toxic infection. Untreated, this infection will slowly drain life from those involved.

In families where unresolved pain is denied, roles are given to the various members to create a distraction away from the pain. One of these roles has the function for carrying the pain of the family. Consequently, they may be blamed as the reason for the difficulties in that family. The impact to the individual is devastating, while the underlying trouble continues to fester unchecked. As this roost continues, nothing gets resolved and the disease of perceptions continues to jade the individual. In these dynamics, blame and shame are common denominators used to control. When control is used to manipulate another person into carrying or being responsible for emotional pain, a toxic relationship is established.

**The mechanisms used to control may be very subtle in nature, but the results are similar.**

As I became aware of these subtle messages the eyes of my understanding were opened. In order to heal emotionally, I needed to stop taking on other people's emotional pain. Through my process, I have been able to let go of my need to assume responsibility for anyone but myself. I have sought to apply this understanding to all of my relationships. Being accountable for my part in a relationship does not mean that I need to absorb anyone's pain. I no longer will allow myself to be actively involved in relationships with people who chose to blame me. When I am wrong, I seek to make amends. Beyond that gesture, I will not carry anyone's emotional pain. In this awareness, I can allow others the dignity to process (if they chose to) their own unresolved histories. Through making this decision, I avoid being pulled under emotionally by someone who may be drowning.

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## **How to Love and Accept Myself as a Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury Survivor Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 1, 2013

Through my experience, I have discovered several things that have helped me tremendously in my ability to love and accept myself as a traumatic brain injury survivor. I discovered that I had to grieve my reality before I could begin to accept my reality.

“I had to reach a point in my life that denying my reality was more painful than my need to deny my reality in an attempt to prove that there was nothing wrong with me.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

In my experience, I found that I had to grieve my reality through the process of moving through the 5 stages of grieving – Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. I needed to grieve my reality so that I could begin to:

- Stop buying into both mine and other people’s denial systems, so that I would not feel like a mistake because of the residual deficit and limitations from the injury to my brain injury.
- So that I could recognize when I was being bullied.
- So that I could break free from the denial system that kept me feeling like a mistake – because I was unable to not be affected by the residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain injury.
- So that I could stop fighting against myself, while defending the denial system that kept me believing that I was bad and defective because of the residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain injury.
- So that I could begin to love, accept and celebrate who I am as an individual who is living with residual deficits and limitations from the injury to my brain.
- So that I could live and explore outside of the box that societal stigmatization sought to keep me in through minimization and marginalization.

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## How to Love and Accept Myself as a Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury Survivor Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 1, 2013

In my experience, I found that I had to grieve my reality through the process of moving through the 5 stages of grieving – **Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression** and **Acceptance**. I needed to grieve my reality so that I could begin to (continued)

- So that I could accept my inability to do some things because of my deficits and limitations and stop berating myself for my inability to do those things.
- So I could find ways to use what I could do through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me for people who would want what I had to give.
- So that I could see that disappointments and disillusionment that I experienced for many years as an important parts in my process — to move me from one piece of the puzzle to another and in the direction of my destiny.
- So that I could see that I am not my traumatic brain injury or my invisible disability.
- So that I could see that my circumstances are a way to build me up, not to keep me down.
- So that I could begin to trust the process, a loving God and myself.
- So that I could do the footwork and let go of the outcomes of my footwork.
- So that I could pursue excellence, instead of being driven by perfectionism.
- So that I could accept the things I can not change, change the things I can, have the wisdom to know the difference and then be at peace with that difference.
- So that I could make peace with a loving God and myself.

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## What is driving your Ship?

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

Several years ago I read a sentence that stood out to me, “We’re being good to ourselves when we help others, and when we fill our lives with pleasant and rewarding activities” p. 91 March 31, One Day at a Time. When I read this sentence I was reminded to watch my motives. As I thought about these two ideas, I had an awareness. Over much of my lifetime, I practiced people pleasing and approval seeking so that I could OK with me.

I allowed other people’s validation to drive me. What they thought of me was more important than what I thought about myself. Subsequently, I found myself (figuratively speaking) trying to take other people’s temperatures to determine how I should feel and what I should do. In the process, I became a human doing rather than merely being. Serving others became a part of this self-defeating behavior. Service became another way to seek validation. Through being consumed by others opinions, I found myself mentally, physically, and most of all spiritually depleted. Consequently, I had little time or energy to explore the idea of a pleasant or rewarding activity.

Through my pursuit of personal empowerment, I have discovered two very important lessons. First, in the event that I am helping others with expectations or specific outcomes attached I may become resentful. Instead of helping, I perpetuate unhealthy behaviors such as control and manipulation. When I am operating (consciously or unconsciously) in this mode, I am setting myself up to feel victimized, which in turn can only foster a martyr mindset. If I find myself holding onto a resentment, I need to check my motives. I need to ask myself a question. Was I attempting to validate my worth or value through doing rather than giving? If my answer to this question is yes, then I need to learn from my experience. Reality has shown me that giving without expectations keeps me from falling into the trap of premeditated resentments.

Secondly, “finding pleasant and rewarding activities” can be turned into a chore. If achievement has become the goal to qualify my worth and value as a man, then I have lost focus. If I am driven to produce or perform then I am unable to benefit from any pleasant or rewarding activity. Additionally, I have discovered that pleasant and rewarding activities are meant to enhance who God created me to become in this life. Pleasant and rewarding activities now enrich and rejuvenate my ability to use my gifts, talents, and abilities. Consequently, I am experiencing a new freedom because I am following my bliss. Work becomes play and labor becomes fun. I no longer need to be driven to produce or perform.

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## 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**.

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## Don't Talk, Don't Trust, and Don't Feel Part 2

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

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 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 by clicking on this link: [From My Heart](#)).

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## Whose Shame are you Carrying? 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.

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## **Whose Shame are you Carrying? Part 2**

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

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 a much better relationship for many years before he died. His acceptance of my disability came in the last 3-4 years of my Dad's life and he was able to accept that I was doing my very best. He also told me that he was proud of me on many occasions during those last years.

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.

“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

## The Three Rules Revisited — 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.

“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

## The Three Rules Revisited — Consequences Part 2

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

### The Consequences

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?](#))

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.

“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

## **Living with an Invisible Disability and Crazy Making Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on January 10, 2014

In August of 2007 I wrote an article. Today I felt led to share the article in an email that I sent to a friend. I would like to share the contents with you. In the event that you are living with a traumatic or acquired brain injury, or some other type of invisible disability I believe you will be able to identify with me. May you be encouraged.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Double Bind**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 28, 2007

I am a bit flustered today with what has been going on in my world. I am doing the best I know how to do with my set of circumstances. I make decisions that are based upon previous experience and I seek to live a life of personal responsibility and accountability. Nevertheless, over the past week I found myself being placed between a rock and a hard space. If I agreed I would be jeered along the way and if I disagreed I would be shunned. I found myself in an all too familiar double bind.

The double bind becomes apparent when I interact with individuals in group 2 and group 3 as explained in [My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability –Part 1](#). Although I attempt to educate people within those groups as to the nature of my disability, for some reason they can not or will not accept that I have legitimate deficits and limitations. Nevertheless, in many instances when I interact with people within groups 2 and 3 they still want me to function as a person without deficits and limitations. What makes matters more difficult for me is that when I interact with individuals in groups 2 and 3 I am held responsible for not being able to live up to their expectations. Often times I am blamed, shamed or put in the position of being a scapegoat for matters that are out of my control and thus the double bind.

Based on my awareness and acceptance I attempted to negotiate a win-win outcome. In the process of attempting to negotiate an amicable course of action the other person became incensed with me. My attempts to negotiate a win-win outcome were discarded as unacceptable. After I stated how a win-win outcome could be obtained, our conversation became heated. In the process of attempting to prove my point I got caught up in justifying, answering and defending my position. Angry words were exchanged before the conversation ended. Several hours later I contacted that individual and apologized for my part of the verbal exchange.

“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

## Living with an Invisible Disability and Crazy Making Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on January 10, 2014

Several nights later I attempted to process what I experienced during my negotiation process while attending a support group meeting. After the meeting ended, while talking with a friend he pointed out that I was focusing on the other person's behavior. At first I found myself experiencing shame over wanting to be heard. Reality became apparent as I thought about what my friend had told me. In my attempt to be heard I lost my focus. I forgot to remember that the person with whom I attempted to negotiate continues to believe that I am making excuses and using my traumatic brain injury as a tool of convenience. In essence, I am being given the message that I should not be limited by the injury to my brain.

Through the course of attempting to negotiate the win-win outcome I re-learned several valuable lessons. I am powerless over people's perceptions. I do not have the power to change anyone's perspectives. What other people say or think about me does not make it so. I am not responsible for fixing another person so that we can have a better relationship. I can not help open eyes that chose to remain closed. I need to accept people for who they are, rather than who I want them to be.

Because I have the power to make healthy choices, I am able to avoid being placed in a double bind. I no longer need to stay stuck in shame and guilt for not being able to measure up to the expectations of people within groups 2 and 3. I am an empowered individual because I choose to practice live and let live. I am responsible to people, but not for them or their choices. In the event that people, like the individual that I discussed above, choose to deny my reality then I need to practice healthy self care and limit the amount of time that I subject myself to their criticism. In my choice I do not judge people in groups 2 and 3 as bad or wrong, I merely recognize that I am unable to create a win-win outcome through our interactions.

“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

## How are you Framing your Life?

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

Through my experience I have come to value how I choose to “frame” my experience. What I mean by “frame” has to do with the way that I choose to perceive and define my experience. My experience has taught me that when I frame or assign negativity, defeat or a belief of victimization to my circumstances I internalize a sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

**Consequently, I have found that what happens to me is not as important as what I do with what has been given to me.**

On the other hand, when I frame or assign a position of empowerment — to each of my circumstances regardless of how they may look — I am emboldened to believe that my circumstances are designed to work together for my good. When I choose to see that my circumstances are designed to work together for my good, my process takes on a different meaning. A feeling of hopelessness and helplessness is replaced by encouragement, motivation and empowerment because I am free to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

**Consequently, I become solution focused — instead of focusing on what I may not understand or value at the present time — because I know that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but to build me up!**

“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

## **Stewing, Stuck and Frustrated — What to Do?**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on June 10, 2013

Life is filled with things that I do not like and would like to be different. Life, I have also found is filled with things that I am powerless over and can not change. Although I would like to change these things, I realize that attempting to do so only keeps me frustrated, stewing and stuck.

**“If you do not like some thing, change it. If you can not change it, change the way you think about it.” Mary Engelbreit**

In my attempts to change the people and situations in my life — that I do not like — I have spent a lot of time arguing with myself, ruminating about how to manipulate the situation to bring about different outcomes and obsessing about why I can not change what I do not like. In my struggle, I have found myself to be like a dog with a bone, that does not want to let go of the bone – not realizing that I had and could make other choices.

**“Take advantage of the ambiguity in the world. Look for some thing and think what else it might be.” Roger Von Dech**

In the early morning hours, I found myself fighting with myself, not being able to let go of several bones. In my struggle, I found myself praying and meditating. As I prayed and meditated, I realized that I had more power than I realized. Instead of continuing to feel frustrated, stewing and stuck, I began to see each bone in a new light. As I prayed and meditated, I began to see the benefit or silver lining that each bone contained.

**“Too many people miss the silver lining because they are expecting gold.” Maurice Setter**

In the process of examining each bone, I found a new freedom. In the process of examining each bone, I found the ability to let go. In the process of letting go, I found myself being empowered by what I discovered. By examining what I discovered, I was encouraged by the realization that I could make different choices. By examining the different choices I could make, I realized that I no longer needed to stew, be frustrated or stuck.

**When I let go of bones and my all or none, black and white thinking, I am able to see silver linings.**

In your life you may also be fixated on specific outcomes. You may also have a hard time letting go of bones. You may also be stuck in an all or none, black and white way of thinking. May I make a suggestion. Take some time to pray and meditate. By doing so, you may begin to see that you can make different choices. By making different choices, you may be able to stop stewing, being frustrated and feeling stuck.

**By praying and meditating, you may begin to see the benefit (s) or silver lining (s) with in each of your bones.**

“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

## Accepting Myself when Family and Friends Can Not Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 10, 2012

As I have shared before, my traumatic brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. In 1967 there was nothing in the way of traumatic brain injury rehabilitation. Consequently, once my external wounds healed from the car accident and no physical signs indicated that my life was being impacted by the ripples from a traumatic brain injury, my traumatic brain injury became an invisible disability to me.

Nevertheless, I found myself running into one wall after another wall. For many years I internalized my running into walls as an indication of my inadequacy and inability to get along with people and be successful in life. Little did I know, there were other factors beyond my traumatic brain injury and my invisible disability that contributed to my running into one wall after another wall. In my exasperation and pain of running into walls – because of what I did not understand or fathom – some one I knew encouraged me to start attending 12 step support meetings.

**He told me that attending meetings had helped him and thought that attending meetings might also help me.**

Through attending meetings, listening to other people's experience, strength and hope, working with a sponsor, working through the 12 steps and being honest with myself I discovered that there were other factors that contributed to my running into walls. Although I was still in denial concerning the impact of my traumatic brain injury, attending 12 step support meetings, listening to people in the meetings, working with a sponsor, working through the 12 steps and through being honest with myself I began to realize that the difficulties that I had and was experiencing were not all about me. I began to realize that I was not alone in my struggle to accept myself. I began to realize that I had the power to choose.

In my experience, I found hope — that I did not know existed — as I started to attend meetings. In my experience, I found the courage and the ability to accept myself for myself, as I started to attend meetings.

Through my involvement with 12 step support group meeting, listening to other people's experience, strength and hope, working with my sponsor and being honest with myself I started to heal emotionally and spiritually. I started to identify with other people and realize that I was not terminally unique. I started to realize that I no longer needed to be responsible for other people, but that I could be responsible to other people. I started to realize where I began and other people ended. I started to understand concepts, ideas and principles that would encourage, motivate and empower my life.

“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

## Accepting Myself when Family and Friends Can Not Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 10, 2012

The concepts, principles and ideas that I learned through attending meetings, listening to people, working with a sponsor and by being honest with myself all helped me to begin to identify the realities that I was facing as a traumatic brain injury survivor. These concepts, principles and ideas helped me to recognize that other factors impacted the dynamics of my relationship with family members and society as a whole. These concepts, principles and ideas helped me to begin to identify the factors — beyond my traumatic brain injury – that contributed to the difficulties and walls that I ran into for many years.

These concepts, principles and ideas — that I learned through attending meetings, listening to people, working with a sponsor and by being honest with myself serendipitously helped me to begin to accept my reality and myself as a traumatic brain injury survivor, when family members and friends were unable to accept who I am in my reality. In May of 2008 I wrote an article to share what I learned through my experience. I would invite you to read that article [Second Chance to Live – Action Steps](#) and encourage you as a traumatic brain injury survivor to attend 12 Step meetings in your area.

What I have learned and continue to learn through attending meeting, listening to people, working with a sponsor / mentor and being honest with myself has radically changed my life.

“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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**By facing my denial, I began to heal.**

“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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“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

## 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.

“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

## More than a Survivor Part 2

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

### 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“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

### More than a Survivor Part 3

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

“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

“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

“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

## EEG's, Neuro Psychological Evaluations and Brain Injury Recovery Outcomes Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 24, 2014

**For your information, the blue links with in this article are links to previous articles that I have written. The articles will give further insight into what I discuss in the below article. Click on the blue links to open and read the article. Any questions, please ask.**

Over the weekend I engaged myself in a discussion that opened a door that I had kept closed. As the door opened, I realized that I needed to further engage myself in the discussion. As with each article that I write and publish on Second Chance to Live, my motivation is to share my experience, strength and hope from the [power of identification](#). I believe that identification empowers each individual to come out of shadows of isolation, by realizing that they are not alone in the struggle to understand and live their lives as an individual who experienced an injury to their brain.

A question was posited concerning the experience of individuals regarding neuropsychological evaluations. In **1968** I underwent **2 EEG's** and a neuropsychological exam. The results were shared with my parent, who decided not disclose the results with me. Some **29 years** later I found out the results, which showed that I would probably not be able to succeed beyond high school academically. In **1993** I underwent another **EEG** and a **neuropsychological evaluation**. The results were shared with me that showed that I had succeeded far beyond all reasonable expectations through sheer persistence and motivation. I was later deemed to be unemployable by a DVR evaluation.

For those individuals who are not familiar with my process and journey, I obtained my undergraduate degree in 10 years and my graduate degree in 3 1/2 years. I have a masters degree in rehabilitation counseling.

In preparation for a keynote presentation, I wrote an article to share some back ground information with individuals attending the presentation, being that I would only have 25 – 30 minutes to present. In this article, I share what I experienced since the **1st 2 EEG's**, a neuropsychological evaluation, through my **3rd EEG**, **2nd** neuropsychological evaluation and up to the date of writing the article in preparation to the keynote presentation that I gave at the [2013 Southwest Conference on Disability](#). I would invite you to read the article that I wrote in preparation by clicking on this link: [Article](#).

“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

## EEG's, Neuro Psychological Evaluations and Brain Injury Recovery Outcomes Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on November 24, 2014

**The reason why I share the above information with you is encourage you to live your life to the full, regardless of what the results / findings may show from an EEG (s) or a neuropsychological evaluation (s) that you may undergo as a result of your traumatic brain injury.**

### **Lessons Learned from my undergoing 3 EEG's and 2 Neuropsychological Evaluations**

An EEG (s) and a neuropsychological exam (s) can give us insight into how our brain and personality have been affected by the brain injury, but they do not have to define who we are my friend. We can live outside and beyond of the **box** that an EEG (s), neuropsychological evaluation (s) and reports may communication to us. We can succeed far beyond all reasonable expectations, through sheer persistence and motivation; by not giving up on our process, a loving God or ourselves. Move will be revealed to us in time. We can learn to use our **passions** — through our gifts, talents and abilities — in ways that will work for us, for people who want what we have to give. Consequently my friend:

We can run our own race, at our own **pace**. We can **celebrate** our efforts. We can map our own **course**, and be **ourselves**. We can live in **hope** and we can live our **dreams**.

“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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Today’s Thought

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

“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

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

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

### Some Quotes to Inspire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“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

## 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.**

“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

## 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](#)**

“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

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

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 26, 2013

In today's article I would like to share some thing with you that I have found that limits the ability of individuals to be individuals. Let me explain. As each person grows and develop, they learn patterns of relating to other people. Society reinforces these patterns and like sheep, people mindlessly fall in line with other sheep. These social patterns mandate and reinforce compliance to interpreting and adjusting the manner to which individuals relate to social environments.

### **Let me explain my thinking.**

As each person grows and develops with in society they learn patterns. These patterns for living and relating to other people help the individual to interpret and adjust to their specific social environment (s) – be it in the nuclear family, school, church, employment and career paths. To survive with in these environments, the individual may find themselves acquiescing to strong willed individuals within these social environments. Although individuals may see these strong willed individuals as having ulterior motives, going along to get along may be seen as a way to avoid alienation.

In the nuclear family, school, church, employment or career paths where the threat of emotional abandonment or reprisal is covertly or overtly used to both control and temper its members, a trigger pattern is set. With repeated reinforcement the individual becomes conditioned to a specific response. Such conditioning can occur gradually over a period of time. When compliance becomes the expectation, shame – through a fear of abandonment, reprisal or alienation — can be used to intimidate and manipulate individual into believing their well-being will be in jeopardy unless they fall in line.

Patterns of compliance and conditioning – to avoid the fear of abandonment, alienation and reprisal – may subsequently set the individual up to believe that they deserve to be used, manipulated and controlled by people and groups throughout their life time. In the process, these individuals may subsequently trade their judgment for the judgment of the group's leadership and for the group's judgment itself. In the process, the individual may find that their unique identity has been sacrificed to blend in with the identity of the group.

In the process, the individual may increasingly seek to find their identity with in the group. Consequently, the individual may consciously believe that apart from maintaining rigid control and compliance to the group's expectations, that they will never find their identity. To avoid a loss of self in the groups identity, the individual may actively seek to dismiss and discount parts of themselves in an attempt to find their identity with in the group. In the process, individual may increasingly give up parts of themselves that do not serve the group's expectations, dictates and / or agenda (s).

### **A question to consider — Are you being bullied by the group?**

“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

## Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 27, 2013

In the process, individuals may give up parts of themselves which make them uniquely qualified to be themselves.

Until pieces of the puzzle started to come together – that gave me the understanding that I shared in Part 1 of this article — I had no idea who I was as an individual. Instead, I found myself baffled and confused in my attempts to understand and anticipate what was expected of me. In the process of trying to make sense of my uncertainty, I experienced ongoing stress and anxiety. In my experience, when the pain and anxiety of going along to get along to avoid alienation, was superseded by the pain of alienating myself from myself I knew that I needed to make changes.

Although it took me a very long time to connect the dots – so to say – I now realize when compliant conditioning is being used – by any group, in any social environment — to control and manipulate its members, the members of the group are being bullied. The packaging of the bullying may be subtle and refined, but the impact of being bullied, by the individual or the group; is the same as when it occurred on the “playground”.

### **Anecdote**

Like frogs that are slowly cooked in a large pot of water — as the temperature of the water is gradually raised — if we do not pay attention to the dynamics of the group that we are a part of, we may find ourselves being “cooked” or duped into believing that our identity is in a group and not in ourselves. In the process, we may find that we have forfeited our birth right — to be uniquely ourselves. In the process, we may discover that we never took the risk to learn how to use the gifts, talents and abilities – that have been given to us — in ways that will work for us.

In my awareness, I came to realize that I had no idea who I was as an individual. With my awareness, I realized that I needed to make some changes. With my awareness, I began to embrace the parts of myself that I had readily discarded in my attempts to hold onto an illusion. With my awareness, I started to discover who a loving God created me to become in this life. With my awareness, I discovered that a loving God never intended me to be bullied by any group or individual. With my awareness, I discovered that I could happily own my own life and discover how to be fully me.

“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

## Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? — Are you being Bullied? Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 29, 2013

In my experience, I found the below to be true. I had no idea that I had been bullied in previous groups – through control and manipulation – with the threat of being abandoned, ostracized, ridiculed, rejected and alienated. Because I was unaware and did not know any different, I allowed myself to be abused by the repercussions of “compliant conditioning” (my term). That is why I explain what I discovered in Part 1 and Part 2 of this article.

And now for Part 3 of the article

### Some Additional Insights

More over, when individuals seek to integrate socially, similar contingencies – compliant conditioning — can be seen deployed. If the individual does not comply with the group’s covert or overt expectations, the previously set trigger is tripped. The individual — again — is led to believe that they must discard parts of themselves, in order to embrace what is expected of them. In the event that such expectations are used to control and manipulate the individual — with the threat of being ostracized, rejected, abandoned, or alienated — red flags appear.

The red flags need to be taken note of, if and when leaders or members of the group begin placing increasing expectations on you with repercussions — if you do not comply with their expectations. If you notice this dynamic occurring, with increasing frequency; the leaders and members of the group may not be good for you.

In my experience, I had to become aware of these dynamics before I could begin to separate myself from the emotional and spiritual impact of such dynamics. In my experience, I had to separate myself from these group dynamics before I could begin to learn to love and accept myself – as an individual. In my experience, I had to separate myself from such group dynamics before I could begin to see myself as valuable — as an individual. In my experience, I had to separate myself from these group dynamics before I could begin to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me.

**In my experience, I had to recognize when I was being shamed into “doing” by such group dynamics – subtly as it may have been — before I could begin to learn how stop “doing” and start “being” as an individual.**

In my experience, I have come to recognize that groups who use compliant conditioning to control and manipulate their members are not good for me. I have come to realize that these groups are not healthy for me. In my experience, I have come to realize that by physically detaching myself from these groups, I take care of myself. I do not place any judgment on the leaders or members of these groups, as judging benefits no one. Instead, I have come to realize that by practicing the principle of live and let live, I am able to keep the focus on myself and go about my business.

By keeping the focus on myself, I am able to attend to my business, as I feel led to by a loving God. By keeping the focus on myself, I am able to use my gifts, talent and abilities in ways that work for me. By keeping the focus on myself and attending to my own business, I am able to stay centered. By keeping the focus on my own business, I am able to stay committed to my mission and vision as an individual.

“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

## 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.**

“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

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

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

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.

**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**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Critical People

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

Last evening I attended a meet up event, which was a dance. I enjoy dancing and have been told that I am a very good dancer. When I dance, I combine different styles of dance – west coast swing, shag, disco and western country swing. I am a free spirit and the women who dance with me enjoy themselves.

**When I dance my goal is to have fun and create fun for the women who dance with me. Because I combine different styles of dance when I dance, I create as I dance.**

Because I do not stick to a prescribed set of steps, I find that there are critics among the people who prescribe to a specific style and steps. Last night – through out the evening of dance – I noticed a number of those critics among the individuals who were not dancing. This morning — when I woke up — I found that I was experiencing an emotional hangover. In my anxiousness and fear I decided to journal about my time at the event.

Through doing an inventory of my experience – during the dance – I began to recognize that I was being bullied by an old nemesis: shame. For more insight please read my article [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Bully](#)

Through doing my inventory, I was reminded of an awareness. In the process of my experiencing life there will be individuals who chose to be critical of me. Nevertheless, I do not have to take their criticism – spoken or unspoken – on as a reflection of me. People can have their opinions, but that does not mean that I need to make those opinions mine. Instead, I can practice live and let live and keep dancing like no one is watching.

“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

## Taking Care of Myself — How to Empower my Relationships Part 1

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

Over the past day and a half I spent some extended time with a friend who I had not seen and visited with in several years. It was good seeing him and catching up, however I began to realize that as the time went on, I became fatigued. In my fatigue, I found that I had been short with him several times. As I realized that I had been short with him, I asked him to forgive me for being short with him. He forgave me and our conversation continued. Although overall we had a good time visiting, I realized that in my fatigue, I needed to end our time visiting. Yesterday morning my friend called and left a voice message.

On the voice message he said that he wanted to get together for lunch, before heading out of town. Upon hearing his voice mail message, I realized that I had been taxed to my limit through the time I had already spent with him. I decided to not call him back, however during my quiet time, he called and I answered the phone. Knowing that he wanted to get together for lunch, I told him that I had become fatigued and needed some down time. He validated my need to take care of myself and I thanked him for understanding. Once I got off the phone and as I recharged my batteries, I realized that by taking care of myself, I created a win / win outcome and in the process, empowered the relationship.

When traveling on airplanes a familiar instruction is given by flight attendants,” In the event that pressure with in the cabin changes oxygen masks become available. Make sure to put the mask on yourself, before attempting to help anyone else”. These instructions are given to passengers to stress the importance of taking care of themselves before attempting to take care of anyone else. The reality of this illustration is that if we are not getting oxygen first, we will not be able to help anyone, including ourselves.



“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

## Taking Care of Myself — How to Empower my Relationships Part 2

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

In this illustration, I am reminded that if I do not first take care of myself, I will be no good to anyone. With this awareness, I am reminded that by practicing healthy self-care, I empower my relationships. Through being self-caring I am able to both respect myself and other people. Through being self-caring, I am able to honor my needs. Through being self-caring, I am able to honor and respect both my and other people's needs. Through being self-caring, I am able to keep my motives pure, while respecting other people's boundaries. Through being self-caring, I am able to keep the focus on myself, instead of expecting other people to meet my needs.

Through being self-caring, I am able to ask for what I need. Through being self-caring, I am able to be honest with myself. Through being self-caring, I am able to understand where other people end and I begin, and where I end and other people begin. Through being self-caring, I am able to be more aware when relationships are becoming unhealthy and enmeshed. Through being self-caring, I am able to recognize when I am practicing codependency in a relationship, in an attempt to get other people to do for me what I need to do for myself. Through being self-caring, I am able to practice personal responsibility, while giving people the dignity to meet or ask to have their needs met in the relationship.

**Through being self-caring, I am able to ask for what I need, while accepting what my relationships are able to give to me. Through being self-caring, I am able to accept what I can and can not give to my relationships. Through being self-caring, I am able to empower and be empowered by my relationships.**

**Note:** I like the [Acronym](#) — for **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired and Sick — H.A.L.T.S.** In my experience I have found that when I am hungry, angry, lonely, tired or sick I am more susceptible to being irritable, restless and discontent. During these times, I am more prone to negative or stinking thinking, than when I am not hungry, angry, lonely, tired or sick. With this awareness, I have found that I need to be self-caring during these times. With my awareness, I am able to be an actor in my life, instead of as a reactor to my life.

“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

## So that is the Culprit

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.

“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

## The Power of Identification 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 of alone and isolated. My hope is that as you read, listen to / watch articles from Second Chance to Live, you will be able to move beyond your struggle to accept yourself.

### The Power of Identification

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

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

“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

## The Power of Identification Part 2

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

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.

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.

“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

### **The Power of Identification Part 3**

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

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.

"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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient – Part 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

"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

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

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

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## Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient – Part 3

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

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

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

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

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## Traumatic Brain Injury – Making Peace with Unsettling Experiences Part 1

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

Last night I had an unsettling experience. This morning I decided to write about what occurred to sort through and process my feelings. Through writing about what I experienced during the unsettling situation, I was able to objectively examine what transpired. In the process of writing about the unsettling experience, I remembered several valuable lessons that I had learned through past experiences.

**The unsettling experience occurred when I felt led to share a word of encouragement with an individual after a meeting. What occurred was rather than being appreciative of my word of encouragement, the individual became angry and indignant towards me.**

When the individual became angry and indignant towards me, I initially felt a tinge of shame. I felt a tinge of shame because I was caught off guard – as people usually respond positively when being encouraged. I felt a tinge of shame because for the thought that I had done some thing wrong or bad – because they became angry and indignant towards me. I felt a tinge of shame, because I internalized the individuals anger and and indignance as being my fault.

**When I felt the tinge of shame I experienced a “knee-jerk” response. I apologized for what I said and told the individual that my intention was not to offend them. The individual nevertheless remained indignant toward me, even after I made amends for what they experienced when I gave them a word of encouragement. As I wrote about the unsettling experience, I became aware of some tell tale signs of my attempt to control their response to my good intentions.**

During the interaction, I attempted to fix their discomfort by apologizing for how the individual responded to me. Although I may have “triggered” uncomfortable feelings or insecurities in the individual, I realized that I was was clearly not responsible for their anger and indignant attitude towards me. Although I could have compassion because of their reaction – knowing that the reaction was more about them than about me – I found myself taking their reaction to me personally.

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## Traumatic Brain Injury – Making Peace with Unsettling Experiences Part 2

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

Through writing about my experience, I reminded myself that I could learn from my unsettling experience, instead of berating myself for the unsettling experience. These are the lessons that were reinforced through the unsettling experience. When my intent is not to do harm, I can remember, how people react to me is more about them than about me. People are entitled to have bad days, however I do not have to take responsibility for their bad days. I can not know until I know, but when I know I can choose to make healthy choices. I can honor other people's boundaries, while detaching with love.

I can pray for people and I can practice the principle of live and let live. I can keep the focus on myself, while allowing the other people to be where they are in life. I don't have to struggle to fix people. I can let people own their moods and reactions. I can be responsible to people, but I do not have to be responsible for their moods or reactions. I can give people a wide berth of space and allow them to be right where they are in their lives with out trying to change or control them. I can keep my side of the street clean, while allowing other people to own their side of the street.

I can seek to make peace with unsettling situations by writing about and owning my uncomfortable feelings. I can make peace with unsettling situations by being responsible to people, but not for people. I can seek to make peace with unsettling situations by making amends and then by letting go and letting God. I can make peace with unsettling situations by keeping the focus on myself, my actions and my choices. I can seek to make peace with unsettling experiences by being willing to learn from unsettling experiences. I can seek to make peace with unsettling experiences by minding my own business.

**“Realize that life is a school and that you are here to learn. Problems are life lessons from which you learn.” author currently unknown**

**“Make peace with your past so you won't ruin your present.” author currently unknown**

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## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — 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 with in 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.

“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

## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — 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.

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## My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — 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 last 2 posts, I have shared some of my struggles living with an invisible disability. 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.

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## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 4**

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

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 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.

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.**

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## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 5**

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

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.

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.**

“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

## 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.**

“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

## 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 fiance 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 been 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](#)

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Extreme Makeovers

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on January 11, 2008

Earlier today, while eating lunch I was surfing through some TV Stations and came across a reality based program...Extreme Makeovers. From what I understand, a person is selected to receive an extreme makeover. Once the person has been selected to receive the makeover, camera's show up and the individual is surprised by being told, "You have been selected to receive an Extreme Makeover."

Once the individual learns that they have been selected, a short vignette is shown introducing why the individual needs the makeover. After the vignette is shown, the extreme makeover is shown in stages. Towards the end of the program, the individual is presented to their friends and the TV audience. After the applause and the encouraging words are shared the TV program ends, and the audience is led to believe that the individual has been "fixed" and "made whole" by the makeover.

I am not disparaging an external makeover, because I could benefit from a new wardrobe. Nevertheless, if I am waiting for a wardrobe change or some other external makeover to somehow magically make me to be OK with myself and other people I may never be OK with anyone. If I base my quality of life on my external presentation, I may find myself disheartened or discouraged when I do not quite measure up to an expectation.

My experience has taught me that when I base my worth or value on external validation I set myself up for failure because the proverbial bar for approval invariably gets raised. Perfection then becomes the illusion that is often measured outside of me. When I seek to qualify my worth by external validation, doing rather than being then becomes the measuring stick for my success and well being.

Through my experience, I have learned to place my value on my being rather than on my doing. External presentation then becomes an extension of who I am as a person, rather than as a representation of my being. My being defines who I am as a person. Having this awareness frees me from the task of needing to be made over to be made whole. As a unique being I do not have to be more than I am.

Having a disability does not limit or diminish our worth or value my friend. In essence, our disabilities become the very abilities that set us apart. When we experienced our traumatic brain injuries we entered a supernatural dimension. We were given a tremendous opportunity to grow in ways that will enable us to be a blessing to those individuals who have yet to experience a traumatic brain injury.

We can grow where we are planted and we do not have to be made over to be enough. We can be comfortable in our own skin. We can run our own race and we can make the most of what remains. Be encouraged my friend, because your circumstances are not meant to keep you down, but they are meant to build you up! More will be revealed.

"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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and the Peg

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 12, 2008

I have been thinking about the topic of identity. For many years I allowed my identity to be defined out side of me. Status and monetary qualification was the measuring stick that I sought to measure up to so that I could establish my self-worth and self-value as an individual.

Because I focused on status and money – the status of an identity and the financial security that would attract a mate – my life stayed in turmoil. The turmoil arose from my inability to secure my status in the world, which was trumpeted and reinforced by my financial insecurity. My financial security forever seemed to be out of my reach because of my inability to maintain gainful employment.

Over time and through my struggle to fit into societal and family expectations I had a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening revealed to me that for many years I was trying to fit my life into a round hole when I was created to be a square peg. Through my spiritual awakening I began to realize that I could no longer base my value, worth or identify on my ability to fit into a round hole.

**I could no longer base my value, worth or identity on my ability to fit into a round hole because I was created to be a square peg. I could not create my own identity until I was able to accept that I was created to be a square peg.**

As a square peg I began to accept that my financial security could no longer be dependent upon a round peg system. I had to begin to think like a square peg. I had to think out side the box. With my awareness, the obvious became apparent. I could no longer find my security or my identity in a system that celebrated and rewarded round pegs. I had to find a system that worked for me.

Over time I have come to accept, but more so to celebrate the beauty of who I am — a square peg. I have come to not only celebrate who I am but to excel as a square peg through my gifts, talents and abilities. I am not suggesting that I have arrived – because I know that I have not – but I no longer fight against myself. I no longer attempt to be something that I am not – a round peg.

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## **Brain Injury, Self-Esteem, Self-Respect and Significance Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 3, 2009

Over the past several days I have been thinking about the concept of significance. As a traumatic brain injury survivor I have struggled to find my place of significance in the world. In my attempts to establish my significance I sought to define my meaning and purpose through the identity of a career, through my participation with various churches / groups / organizations and through what I achieved in my doing. Each of my efforts to establish my significance appeared to be thwarted by my traumatic brain injury. But not everything was as it appeared to be.

**In my experience I found that none of these pursuits proved to secure my place in this life or my significance.**

When I failed to establish my place of significance I experienced disillusionment, despair and depression. My disillusionment, despair and depression continued for many years — as I struggled to find my place of significance and meaning. Through my struggle I reached a point in time where I surrendered to the notion that my significance could be secured through a career, affiliation or achievement. As I surrendered to the notion that I needed to have my significance validated from outside of me I found a new freedom. My freedom arose as I realized that my significance no longer needed to be validated by my doing through a career, affiliation or achievement.

**When I reached point in my life where I surrendered to the idea that I could not find my significance through an identity, affiliation or achievement, I slowly stopped fighting against myself.**

When I made the decision to stop fighting against myself I had a spiritual awakening. I realized that I no longer needed to have my significance defined for me. With my awareness my focus slowly changed from an external need of approval to an internal sense of validation. Consequently, my need to have a significance in life shifted from a need to do to a need to be. With my awareness, my motivation began to shift from having to do to needing to be. Through being, I discovered that my significance evolved naturally as I expressed who I am. Subsequently, as I have allowed myself to be, I have been able to learn to create with the seeds of my significance — apart from the need to perform to have a significance.

“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

## **Brain Injury, Self-Esteem, Self-Respect and Significance Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 3, 2009

**Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant. Robert Louis Stevenson**

Subsequently, as I plant with the seeds of my being I am set free from the need to have significance, because significance no longer needs to be my goal. Because significance no longer needs to be my goal I am able to let go of my need to be significant. Significance, therefore no longer needs to be the bench mark to validate my meaning, significance or self-esteem. With my understanding I no longer need to dependent upon the harvest — that is brought about by the seeds that I plant — because I no longer need to be invested in the harvest or outcomes. By letting go of the outcomes I am able to accept that my being is simply enough. Through accepting that my being is simply enough I am able to surrender to my process.

**By surrendering to my process I am able to cease from my striving because I no longer need to judge who I am. Because I realize that I no longer need to judge who I am, I am set free from a need to prove my significance.**

**I am only one, but still I am one. I can not do everything, but still I can do something. Helen Keller**

**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**

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

“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

## 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. Thank you.

### 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.

General	Food	Savings	Gas	Rent	Auto/Renter's Insurance
800 This amount is not going to change each month. To avoid financial	I live with in my means and do not purchase items that I do not need, just	I add to this section, as I am able to each month from my general	I approximate this amount from previous gas expenditures from the previous month. Deduct each gas purchase from this	Contact your area Programs for Accessible Living. They helped me get	I have this amount drafted from my checking account. Check with your

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insecurity be prudent. Do not spend money that you do not have and Do NOT use credit cards unless you already have money saved up and budgeted for that purchase. When making purchases to pay for miscellaneous purchases, make sure to keep your receipts. By keeping your receipts from your purchases you can check for discrepancies when balancing your check book / register when you receive your bank statement.

because I may want them.

section – for a rainy day.

amount and pay attention to how much money is left for gas for the rest of the month.

connected to an agency called the Neighborhood Development Program which helped to assist me with my rent. Apply for Housing Assistance with the Housing Authority in your area.

insurance company – for your car – to see if bundling your car and renter’s insurance will save you money.

In the General section I put my monthly SSDI check. From that check I deduct my monthly expenses and the items that I budget for as I have a need. For sake of an example, say that I receive \$800 SSDI check each month. When I have added together each of the amounts as shown below — to pay for bills and my budget — I then deduct the total from the monthly SSDI check that I have listed in my General section. Below is an example of how I add up my monthly bills and the money I allot for different budgets.

<b>Bills</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Food	Toiletries

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Gas	Automobile
Rent	Shoes
Car / Renter's Insurance	Clothes
Utilities	Sneakers
Cable	Whatever else you would like to budget for to purchase in the future my friend

Gym Membership

Savings

Total Amount                  Total Amount

Once I add up my bills and my budget expenses, I then deduct the total amount from my General Section and my SSDI check. Once I deduct the combined bills and budget items from my SSDI check amount, I then place the figured amounts that I will need to pay for those expenses under the designated column to pay for my expenses and budgeted items. When a bill comes due or is automatically deducted from my checking account, I then deduct that amount from each of the designated sections.

After I deduct my bills and my budget items from the General section – My SSDI Check – the left over money is used to pay for miscellaneous items during the month. With all my food, toiletry and miscellaneous purchases made during the month, I save all of my receipts and place them in an envelope. I started this practice to check for errors that I may have made in my calculations when I receive my bank statement from the bank. By saving the receipts — if there is a discrepancy — I can check my records.

As a note, although I may not be able to budget only \$5 or \$10 each month for such things as toiletries, shoes, sneakers and clothes, ect., by budgeting some thing each month – over a period of months – I am able to budget enough money to pay for those items.

**Planning, Prudence and being Frugal minimizes financial insecurity.**

Utilities	Cable	Gym	Toiletries	Automobile	Shoes
I approximate this amount each month, based on the previous month's bill. If it is more I take	Basic cable and internet. No frills, movies or services. I can watch TV shows online	The YMCA that I work out at has a program to help individuals with low incomes.	When you go to purchase these items and you are also buying food items, when you get to		

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the amount from my general section to make up the balance.	through Hulu, Fancast or other similar free services.	Check into similar programs that your local YMCA or YWCA. By doing so you may find that you can afford to work out at a gym on a regular basis. I am glad I checked into the program.	the register separate the toiletries from the food items. Then ask the person at the register / check out to put your food items on one receipt and your toiletries on another receipt. By doing so, when you get home, you will be able to deduct your food items from that section and your toiletries from your toiletries section.
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Sneakers

Clothes

Budget Item

Budget Item

Budget Item

Budget Item

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## Traumatic Brain Injury, Family System Roles and Learning to Thrive — Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 9, 2009

Today I want begin to share something with you that forever changed my life. For many years I had no idea that there were other factors that contributed to my confusion as I sought to interact with my world. Consequently, as a traumatic brain injury survivor living with an invisible disability I bought into the notion that there was some thing wrong with me. As a result I found myself being sorry for every thing under the sun. Consequently, I found myself merely seeking to survive life instead of learning to thrive in life.

Because I was completely unaware of how my brain injury impacted my world and my relationships, I spent much of my life internalizing my limitations and deficits. As a result of my fear of being misunderstood — which was one of my greatest fears growing up — I found myself attempting to answer, defend and explain myself. In addition to my fear of being misunderstood I found myself being blamed for my — unbeknownst to me — for matters that were out of my control because of my traumatic brain injury. In the process of trying to “get it right” I very often was blamed and shamed for “not getting it right”.

**Along the way I was given the role of a scape goat which conditioned me to believe that I was responsible for the conflicts in my family. In essence I was conditioned to believe that I was responsible for the unease with in the family and in my relationships with other people. In the process I also bought into the notion that I could control the conflict — if I could just got it right.**

Unconsciously I believed that I could avoid being the object of conflict by assuming my role as the scape goat — please read my 2 part series, [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient](#) — or through being perfect. Consequently, I found myself moving from one crisis to another crisis in my attempts to get it right. In my struggle I found myself living in a state of constant drama — as I moved from one crisis to another. With time in my recovery process I discovered that the drama — created by my trying to control the crisis (s) and conflict (s) in my life — unknowingly became the vehicle in which I experienced life.

**In the next several paragraphs I will share what I learned through my recovery process.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury, Family System Roles and Learning to Thrive — Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 9, 2009

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 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.

**In the process the family adopts three rules to avoid the pain brought about by unresolved pain / conflict / family secret and denial: Don't Talk. Don't Trust. Don't Feel. These rules are used to avoid having to address and confront the issue or "pink elephant" in the center of the room — that no one wants to address.**

In my family system, I was either given or assumed the role of a scapegoat. I stayed in that role because I was led to believe that I was responsible for people, places, and things. My role thrived with in the family system because of denial. Through functioning in the role of a scapegoat I was forced to carry the shame that other people with in the family could or would not carry or address. In essence I was given the responsibility of carrying the uncomfortable and unresolved feelings that other people with in the family choose not to deal with in themselves. The "dance" that was created by my role — and the roles of other people with in the family — kept my life in a constant state of drama.

**In essence I became the focus of the family and thereby the excuse for not addressing the pink elephant or the uncomfortable feelings associated with the pink elephant.**

What I discovered through my recovery process was that by being fixated and focused on the drama, my ability to individuate and live my life atrophied. At the time, my only course of action seemed to be one of survival. My time and energy subsequently were devoted to managing the conflict with in the drama. Consequently, I was duped into believing that the drama would somehow save me. It was only after I experienced an emotional bottom that I started to find my answers. Through my recovery process, I came to understand that the role that I had been given to me or one that I assumed at an early age was never meant to define the will of God for my life.

**With my awareness I was able to begin making peace with both God and myself.**

**By making peace with both God and myself I was able to do the following.**

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## Traumatic Brain Injury, Family System Roles and Learning to Thrive — Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 9, 2009

Through my recovery process, I had a spiritual awakening. I came to realize that I was not living my life, but merely surviving in order to maintain the conflict and the drama. The answers to my questions came from my willingness to be honest — with myself. Through my recovery process, I discovered why I felt the need to assume the role that had been given to me. I discovered that I had unconsciously assumed that I needed to take responsibility and carry other people's shame, irritability, restlessness and discontent. I also discovered why I sought to justify the role that I was living on a daily basis — because I was led to believe that I was the reason for the dis-ease.

**Through my struggle I discovered that I no longer needed to live in the drama, nor participate in behaviors that defined the role.**

By identifying the behaviors that kept me stuck in the role, I was able to slowly change those behaviors and in the process break free from the confines of the role. As a result, I was able to stop taking responsibility for matters that were clearly out of my control. By doing so I was slowly able to let go of my over developed sense of responsibility. With time I also learned to give people the dignity to be responsible for their restlessness, irritability and discontent. With this awareness and action I was slowly able to break free from the role and the yoke that once controlled my world.

**Through breaking free from the role of a scapegoat I was able to break free from the clutches of denial and in the process learn to live as a Traumatic Brain Injury Thrivor not merely as a traumatic brain injury survivor.**

### Today's thought

Family Systems Theory helped me to understand the concept of family system roles. Through my research and study I discovered that there are many different types of roles that each member of the family can either be assigned — through conditioning — or assumed for various reasons. My experience taught me that I needed to identify the role that I played with in the family system, in order to change my behaviors and break free from the yoke of the role.

**Some of these roles include being the “Family Hero”, the “Mascot”, the “Scapegoat”, the “Lost Child”, the “Pretty One”, the “Poet”. Each one of these roles — as previously discussed — are given or assumed to shield the family system from having to talk, trust and feel and thus address the “pink elephant”.**

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## Traumatic Brain Injury, Family System Roles and Learning to Thrive — Part 4

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 9, 2009

In your family system you may have also been given a role. You may have unconsciously assumed the role in an attempt to avoid being criticized or abused in other ways. You may have participated in the role in order to be loved or get love. In the process, the role may have conditioned you to believe that you are the role. Consequently, you may have no idea who you are in this life. You may believe that you are a victim to be victimized. You may feel trapped and isolated.

You may find that you were either assigned or you assumed a role within the family before or after you experienced your brain injury. The reality is that the role is not your identity or something that you wanted. Unconsciously you adopted that role in order to survive the chaos and uncertainty in your family. You like myself, may have stayed in that role to avoid both emotional and physical abandonment. Consequently, you may believe that you have to remain in that role even though you are an adult.

The good news is that you can break free from that role. You don't have to be alone in your struggle my friend. You can reach out to other people through various support groups. You can learn to talk, trust and feel. You can learn to accept yourself. You can break free from the role that once kept you in denial. You can find your true self. You can find the parts of yourself that you have discarded. You can learn to soar.

### **You can move from being a survivor to a thrivor in life.**

You can reach out to other people through various support groups and you can break from the role that has kept you in denial. You can find a safe place. You can learn to trust the process, a loving God and yourself.

Much of what I learned about this subject came from Virginia Satir and John Bradshaw, as well as other authors.

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## **Winning at the game of Solitaire, Life and Hope**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 10, 2015

Several years ago I started to play solitaire, on my computer; to further improve and enhance my hand-eye coordination. In my experience, I have found that I do not complete each game — because of card selections that I make — but through the process of playing many games I have learned a very valuable lesson. As the game continues, cards previously hidden to me, present themselves to me.

**A card — once hidden from me — becomes apparent. By clicking on or moving one card, another card appears.**

Life can be likened to a solitaire game. What may appear to be an end to the game, takes on new life. By staying committed to the process and by staying on course, a new card (solution) will appear to me. That is what hope is for me. Hope is likened to the game of solitaire. Although cards may currently be hidden to me, as I stay committed to running my race and staying on my course; new cards will be presented to me. These cards (solutions) will empower me to stay on course and win in life.

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

In life, you may feel as though you are playing a solitaire game, where cards are hidden to you. That you have played all the available cards given to you. As a result you may feel that little hope exists. My encouragement to you my friend, as I need to remember; is to hang in there. Keep playing with the cards that are available to you. Cards previously hidden to you, will become available to you. Cards that previously remained hidden — to help you and I — will become apparent and help us.

### **To access the game of solitaire on your computer.**

I accessed the solitaire game through my start button on my windows 7 operating system. If you have not played solitaire, I would encourage you to play as the game will help you to improve your hand-eye coordination and teach you other lessons. To do so, click on the start button. Click on open all programs, which will open the window with all programs listed. In the list scroll down to games. Click on games and then scroll down to solitaire.

**Click on solitaire and the cards and board will open for you. And as you play, remember that more will be revealed to you in time.**

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## Dealing with and Being Empowered by the Things We Can Not Change

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

I have been thinking about the topic of acceptance with action. I like the quote, by Mary Engelbreit; ***"If you do not like some thing change it. If you can not change it, change the way you think about it."***

By considering this quote I am reminded that I have choices in life. I am not a victim. I am empowered by what occurs in my life. I am give the opportunity to consider the possibilities in what is, regardless of whether I may like it or not. Consequently, I no longer have to feel isolated or defeated by what I may not like, as I live my life.

**With this realization, I am given hope to live my life without delay.**

Because I have the power of choice, I can look for alternatives to what I may not like or can not change. If no alternative or possibility exists, I can choose to look for the opportunity to learn from what I may not like or can not change. I can look to salvage any circumstance or situation. With my determination, I can be empowered by what I do not like or can not change. With this realization, I no longer need to feel victimized by whatever may become part of my life and experience. With my choice, I no longer have to buy into the notion that life is being done to me, but instead done for me. With this awareness, I can choose to be encouraged by hope.

With this realization, I am encouraged to trust the process, a loving God and myself. With this realization, I am motivated to do the footwork and trust a loving God with the outcomes. With this realization, I am empowered to see my circumstances as opportunities to build me up, not to keep me down. With this realization, I am able to pursue peace with myself. Instead of being anxious and fearful, I am given the grace and determination to no longer feel stuck. With this realization, I am able to embrace my experience and move forward. With is realization, I am able to see what I may not like and can not change as a set up, not a set back.

**With this realization, I no longer have to feel trapped by what I do not like, what I can not change or by what is out of my control.**

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## Traumatic Brain Injury — 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.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Why do I React the Way I do? Part 2

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

**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, etc. 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.

**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.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Why do I React the Way I do? Part 3

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

**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.

**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.

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## Traumatic Brain Injury — Why do I React the Way I do? Part 3

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

**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.**

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**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Facing Alienation and Isolation — Turning Confusion into Clarity Part 1

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

Merry Christmas and happy holidays to you and your family.

During this time of the year we may hear and maybe singing various carols. These Christmas carols / songs have become synonymous with this time of the year. One of these carols /songs is Rudolph the Red nose Reindeer. As a youth I heard this carol / song sung with the thought that, “This is a happy song”.

As I have grown older the words of this song have taken on a different meaning. As the song begins, we are drawn to the names of Santa’s reindeer: Dasher, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph. As the song continues special attention is drawn to Rudolph.

**The song tells us that Rudolph had a bright red shiny nose that some say even glowed. We are told that this trait distinguished Rudolph from the other reindeer: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.**

With the next several lines of the carol / song we hear that Rudolph finds that he is laughed at, called names and not allowed to join in reindeer games. Although the reason (s) for Rudolph being shunned, laughed at and called names is not made clear — what is made clear is that Rudolph’s bright red shiny nose made him different from the other reindeer.

**Although Rudolph is merely a fictional character in a Christmas song his plight can easily be identified with by individuals who have experienced similar rejection and ridicule — because they are different from the “herd”.**

As an individual with a disability I found that I could easily identify with Randolph’s position — in the herd. For many years, I found that I did not fit in nor was I accepted by the herd. As Rudolph, I too found myself being called names, laughed at and excluded from being included by the herd. Through my process I discovered that because I based so much of my self-esteem and feelings of self-worth on what other people thought of me I remained in a state of confusion.

**Although I attempted to go along to get along — to find my place and position in the herd — I experienced alienation and isolation.**

As we continue to listen to the song we hear, “then one foggy Christmas night Santa came to say...” . In this part of the song the obvious becomes clear. Santa recognized what the herd choose to laugh at and ridicule...the gift that Rudolph had to give... his bright red shiny nose. Upon reflection I can only imagine that when Santa asked Rudolph “Won’t you guide my sleigh tonight?” that Rudolph as well as the other reindeer were amazed. Could this be true — that Santa wanted to use what made Rudolph different?

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Facing Alienation and Isolation — Turning Confusion into Clarity Part 2

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

**At this point in the song, what became clear to me was that Santa recognized, valued and esteemed what made Rudolph different.**

**What made Rudolph different from the herd drew him to a unique place of service. Rudolph's gift empowered him to fulfill what none of the other reindeer could hope to do. What made Rudolph different equipped him to be of maximum service to Santa, to his fellow reindeer and as the song inferres, to many boys and girls.**

Because I allowed the herd to define my self-worth, self-esteem and value — for many years — I remained in a state of confusion. I had no idea who I really was, nor how my life mattered. My confusion perpetuated my dis-ease. I remained in this state of confusion until — through my recovery process — I had a spiritual awakening.

**My spiritual awakening revealed to me that I could no longer afford to be distracted by what the herd could not understand or accept. My spiritual awakening revealed that I could no longer wait for the herd to recognize or validate my vision and mission.**

My confusion turned into clarity when I realized that I no longer had to make excuses for being who I am. My confusion turned into clarity when I made the decision to stay committed to my mission and vision — regardless of how the herd or members of the herd chose to react or respond to me.

**My confusion turned into clarity when I realized that I could trust a loving God to use me because of what makes me different. My confusion turned into clarity when I realized that I am equipped to be of maximum service to the God of my understanding, to the herd and to many individuals who are not accepted by the herd – because of what makes them different.**

**My confusion turned into clarity when I realized that my being different equipped me to be of maximum service to a Loving God, to the herd and too many other people.**

In your experience you may have found that – as Rudolph and I have discovered – there is something that makes you different. Consequently, you may find that the herd chooses to laugh at you, call you names and exclude you from activities and games.

**You — like I have — may find yourself internalizing the herds scorn as reality. In the process, you may find yourself buying into a lie. The lie may tell you that what you have to offer is of little value, worth and significance.**

Through my recovery process I discovered that the lie I was in fact a lie. I then discovered that the truth of the matter was the direct opposite of what the lie was telling me. What makes you and I different also makes you and me of infinite value, worth and significance.

**What makes you and I different empowers and equips you and I to be of maximum service to a loving God, to members of the herd, and too many other people.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Facing Alienation and Isolation — Turning Confusion into Clarity Part 3

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

### Today's Thought

Be encouraged my friend. If the “herd” chooses to laugh, reject or ridicule you can let the “herd” believe what they want to believe.

You no longer have or need to convince the herd or anyone of your value, worth or significance.

You can create your own reality because you are of great worth, value and significance.

You can rest assured that your life will be used to meet a much greater need than you presently may be able to imagine.

You can go about doing your footwork – by developing and using your gifts talents and abilities — in ways that work for you.

You can trust the process — while letting go of the outcomes — because you no longer have to worry about the Big Picture.

By letting go of outcomes you and I can rest assured that we will be used by a loving God to be of maximum service — because we are different.

You and I can trust that our lives will be used to empower and give hope to individuals living with in the “herd” — because of what makes us different.

You and I can trust that our lives will be used to empower and give hope to individuals living outside of the “herd” — because of what makes us different.

You and I can trust that our lives will be used by a loving God — because of what makes you and I different — as Santa used what made Rudolph different.

Be encouraged my friend. What you have to give to the world is of great value, worth and significance.

“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

## What are We using Our Energy to Believe?

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on December 19, 2012

Yesterday, while working on my computer I listened to several speakers. As I listened to these individuals several points stood out that I would like to share them with you through the prism of my experience. Faith and fear both expect you and I to believe some thing. Fear and faith both make plans to... Fear and faith both require energy too... Fear and faith both result in...

**“There is nothing that fear and hope does not permit men (women – my addition) to do.”  
Marquis De Vauvenargues**

Fear tries to convince me that what I am experiencing is done to punish me. Faith reminds me that all things are working together for my good. Fear wants to keep me locked in a box of limitation. Faith helps me to see beyond the box. Fear wants me to cower in the corner of the box. Faith helps me to realize that I can find a way out of the box. Fear wants me to believe that I am spinning my wheels. Faith motivates me to use my circumstances, lessons and opportunities as a way to explore beyond the box.

**“The capacity of hope is the most significant of life. It provides human beings with a sense of destination and the energy to get started.” Norman Cousins**

Fear wants me to believe that a loving God has abandoned me. Faith ensures me that I can trust that a loving God will never, no never leave me. Fear wants me to believe that my plans will fail. Faith motivates me to make plans to succeed. Fear wants me to believe my situation is hopelessness. Faith empowers me to keep doing the foot work. Fear wants me to stay stuck in what I can not change. Faith inspires me to remember that I have choices. Fear wants to intimidate me. Faith encourages me to look for creative solutions.

Faith assures me that more will be revealed in time. Faith encourages me to be true to myself. Faith urges me to move confidently in the direction of my dreams. To endeavor to live the life that I have imagined. Faith motivates me to use my gifts, talents and abilities to find my path. Faith directs me to use what works for me. Faith motivates me to do that which is assigned to me. Faith resonates that by doing that which is assigned to me, I can not hope too much or dare too much. Faith crowns my effort with success.

**“In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.” Abraham Lincoln**

### Today’s Thought

My encouragement to you my friend – as I need to encourage myself – use your energy to nurture faith, not fear. Trust that a loving God will never, no never leave you. Use your energy to trust the process. Use your energy to remember that you have choices. Use your energy to look for creative solutions. Use your energy to grow in your gifts, talents and abilities. Use your energy to move forward in the direction of your dreams. Use your energy to live the life that you have imagined. Use your energy to succeed.

**“Be faithful in small things, because it is in them that your strength lies.” Mother Teresa**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Feeling Broken Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 19, 2010

### Introduction

Over the past 2 articles [Traumatic Brain Injury and Learning to Love and Accept Myself](#) and [Traumatic Brain Injury and Finding the Freedom to be Myself](#). I have spoken to issues that have involved brokenness. My process and my experience brought me to a place of brokenness. For this I am grateful.

My brokenness motivated me to ask for help and look for solutions. During my process I experienced anguish. I felt overwhelmed, insecure and inadequate. Consequently I had a hard time seeing the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. During these times I not only thought that I made mistakes, but I felt like a mistake. In my brokenness, I felt like someone all dressed up with no where to go. In my brokenness, I felt like no one wanted what I had to give and thus my life did not really matter.

**In my anguish I had a hard time seeing the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. My anguish motivated me to look for answers and solutions lest I die.**

In the midst of my quest for clarity I heard a parable that gave me hope. In the midst of my quest for clarity I found answers and solutions. In May of 2007 I wrote an article to share a parable. In July of 2009 I wrote a series addressing the parable. At this time I feel led to reprint the series to share what I have learned through my brokenness. My hope is that as you read through this series you will find courage — to ask for help and look for solutions — when you are feeling broken and unable to see the light at the end of your proverbial tunnel.

And now for **Part 1** of the series.

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 am honored by your presence. Earlier this evening I felt led to share the parable of the cracked pot with a group of my friends. The message of the cracked pot appeared to have a profound impact on several of my friends.

I am not sure who is the author of the parable of the cracked pot, however to the author I would like to say thank you. You are a very wise person.

Because the message of the parable is so very powerful I decided to share the parable of the cracked pot with you.

May you be encouraged to just be ... yourself.

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Feeling Broken Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 19, 2010

Because the message of the parable is so very powerful I decided to share the parable of the cracked pot with you.

As you read through the parable, may you be encouraged to just be ... yourself.

### The Parable of 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 not on the other pot's 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."

"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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Feeling Broken Part 3

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on February 19, 2010

### Today's Thought

We may have bought into the notion that our lives are too cracked to be of use. We may find ourselves comparing our vessels to other vessels. We may be experiencing shame and sadness because we see ourselves as failures. In the process we may have developed a fear of failure. Consequently, we may be thinking about giving up.

We may want to give up trying to make a difference. We may be saying to ourselves, "What's the use in me trying anyway and anymore?". To that I would say, please continue to read.

With out you and I being just the way we are, hope would remain only a concept. With out you and I being the way we are — to some — hope would be lost. Because of who you and I are vision (s) becomes reality. Because of you and I people's prayers are being answered.

Because of you and I, people are being set free. Because of you and I people are blooming and blossoming into creation. Because you and I those individuals will ultimately feed the masses. Because of you and I people believe in miracles. Because of you and I destinies are being birthed and dreams realized.

Because of you and I people have an advocate. Because of you and I people choose to get up...one more time. Because of you and I people learn to trust...again. Because of you and I people learn to love and be loved...again. Because of you and I people are inspired to pursue new opportunities and fresh possibilities.

Because of you and I, people take risks. Because of you and I people are be drawn to the light of God's love.

So when you remember or some one else reminds you of your crack (s) in your pot be encouraged my friend. Rejoice that cracks exist in your pot, for with out your cracks the flowers — people — along your path may never be watered.

And remember, **You are a Gift** to your world.

"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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Being Labeled Part 1

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

Through the process of writing the last several series I have had a spiritual awakening. As I thought about the words that I have been using in both my titles and articles I realized that I have been unconsciously participating in a gross misrepresentation. Let me explain.

When I was a young pup at a community college — early on in my academic pursuits — I took a course in sociology. Because I took this course over 20 years ago, I do not remember much of what I learned through that course. What I do remember from that course has stuck with me during the past 20 + years. Of late, I have been thinking more about...

**What I do remember from the course in Sociology is the concept of labeling. Labeling implies and assigns worth and value to the individual through the process of characterizing and stereotyping the individual based on preconceived notions.**

Over the course of the past 20 + years, I have become more aware of the subtle, yet profound impact that labeling has upon individuals. My awareness has grown through my professional and personal experience. In my awareness, I have found that labeling occurs each time that the individual is dismissed and discounted based on faulty assumptions.

**In my awareness, I have found that the labeling of individuals frequently occurs and is fueled by a contempt prior to investigation. In my awareness, I have also found that labeling frequently occurs because of ignorance and then perpetuated by arrogance.**

**In application, labeling stymies and discourages. Labeling manipulates the individual through placing conscious and unconscious constraints upon the individual. Instead of seeing and celebrating the individual as essential, labeling classifies and categorizes the worth and value of the individual based on faulty information, bias and prejudice.**

Although labeling in and of itself is harmless — because it is based on ignorance, bias and prejudice — the repercussions of being labeled can be devastating. If the individual (s) being labeled buy into and internalize the assumption of the label, the individual (s) may find themselves unconsciously identifying themselves with the label.

In turn, the individual may begin to believe that they constrained by the limits that the label places upon them. Over time and through ongoing conditioning the individual may in turn begin to believe that they can not do or be anything beyond the limits assigned by the label. Consequently, the maintenance of the label becomes more important than the individual.

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## Traumatic Brain Injury and Being Labeled Part 1

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

In the 1st part of this article, I shared with you that I had a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening revealed that I had unknowingly participated in the labeling process. My spiritual awakening revealed that I had unknowingly been classifying and categorizing individuals, such as myself who are living with brain injuries.

My spiritual awakening also revealed that I unknowingly assisted in perpetuating the notion of the label. In the process, I minimized and marginalized individuals, such as myself living with brain injuries. With my spiritual awakening, I made a decision to stop using a limiting and inaccurate label to describe myself and other individuals.

I made the decision to no longer refer to myself or to other individuals as traumatic brain injury survivors. I made the decision to start referring to individuals — such as myself — in an accurate and empowering manner. I made the decision to begin referring to people, such as myself — as **individual's living with a brain injury**.

I made the change from traumatic brain injury survivor to individuals living with brain injuries because neither you or I are our brain injuries. Reality is that you and I are unique individuals with passions, gifts, talents and abilities who are living with brain injuries. Reality is that you and I were never meant to be defined by our brain injuries.

**Reality is that you and I do not have to be subservient to the limitation (s) inferred by any label. Reality is that we can live and use our gifts, talents and abilities far beyond any inferred limitation (s).**

Reality is that individuals who have sustained or acquired brain injuries do not stop being individuals — to become a traumatic brain injury survivors. Reality is that as individuals, our brain injuries may change the way that we use our gifts, talents and abilities, but our brain injuries do not change the reality that we still have those gifts, talents and abilities.

The good news becomes obvious. You and I — as unique individuals living with brain injuries — no longer need or have to buy into or be limited by faulty information, bias or prejudice. You and I — as unique individuals — no longer have to remain boxed in by any label. You and I — as unique individuals — do not have to give up on our hopes, dreams or destinies.

Please read my article [Brain Injury, Self-Esteem, Self-Respect and Significance](#).

“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

## Living with a brain injury and Feeling like a Broken Toy

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 13, 2010

Several weeks ago I wrote a series in which I shared with you that I had made a decision to take greater risks. In that series, I shared with you how I took the risk to use the principle of asking for help. I took the risk to ask for help to improve upon my skills when interacting in social settings.

During the past several weeks, I have had an opportunity to attend other meet up group events. On these occasions, I have been able to add to my skill set through continuing to take the risk to ask for help. Consequently – in the process of taking these risks – I have grown in awareness. In the process, I have gained a whole new perspective through interacting with other individuals in social settings.

In the process, I have grown in self-awareness. In the process, I have grown in my ability to accept myself in social settings. In my process, I have begun to experience a new freedom.

As a recovering perfectionist, I have a tendency – at times – to think in black and white / all or none extremes. One of these extremes has led me to believe that I am terminally unique. In the belief that I am terminally unique, I some times see myself as the only broken toy in the toy box. During the past several weeks I have had a spiritual awakening. I am not the only broken toy in the tool box.

My spiritual awakening has come, not by a judgment of other toys, but by realizing that I live among other broken toys. Other broken toys – like me – who are doing the best that they know how to do – just for today. With my awareness, I am discovering how to relax in social settings, while being myself. In the process, I am discovering how to work on skill sets with out buy into the notion that I am terminally unique.

Through realizing that I am not the only broken toy in the toy box, I am able to relax and be myself. I am able to grow in self-awareness and self-acceptance while I practice new skills sets in social settings.

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Overcoming Self-Sabotage

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 31, 2011

Yesterday I started a new chapter in my journey with Second Chance to Live. I created and published my first video on YouTube. Click [here](#) to view the presentation. Through my recovery process I have learned a life changing lesson: **With everything there is a learning curve.**

**In my experience, I have learned that life is about a process, not a destination. What I learn on my journey is more important than any destination. Consequently, as I allow myself to progress through my “learning curves” I give myself the permission to celebrate because of my process, instead of judging my efforts because I am not moving more quickly through my process.**

In the process of making the YouTube Video, I took approximately 7 “takes” before I decided to upload the one I did to YouTube. Although – at the time – I realized that the “take” to be uploaded to YouTube was not perfect, I was satisfied that the “take” was good enough. With my realization and though remembering the lesson of “learning curves” I accepted the reality that –with time – I will undoubtedly grow in my ability to produce better videos for the Second Chance to Live channel.

**By celebrating the lesson of the “learning curve”, I am able to celebrate the gains that I make – in my process — instead of fighting against myself. By celebrating the gains that I make through my learning curve, I am able to stop sabotaging myself.**

### Today’s Thought

My friend, I would encourage you to start on a new chapter of your journey – today. And as you start of that journey remember, you don’t have to do “it” perfectly. Instead, you can use the principle of the “learning curve”. By doing so you can give yourself the permission to explore, grow and mature in your process. By doing so, you can celebrate your gains. By doing so, you can stop judging your efforts. By doing so, you can stop fighting against yourself. By doing so, you can stop sabotaging yourself.

“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

## Living Life when Facing Walls

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on September 8, 2012

As I shared in one of my most recent articles, I have been sick for about 10 days. In my experience, I have found that when I am not feeling well I am more susceptible to bleak and stinking thinking.

During the past 10 days I have struggled with such bleak and stinking thinking. In my thinking I felt as though I had come up against a wall that I could not see beyond my friend. Yesterday, I called a friend and she encouraged me to write about the struggle that I found myself facing because of the wall.

As I thought about what she encouraged me to do, I remembered an article that I wrote almost 5 1/2 years ago. As I re-read my article, I found myself being encouraged. My hope is that you will also be encouraged as you read my article — Living my Destiny though Walls — when you are faced with a wall (s) as you live your life.

### Living my Destiny though Walls

Posted by Second Chance to Live on September 13, 2007

Sometimes life does not appear to be evolving in the direction of our dreams. We may find ourselves up against one wall after another wall regardless of our efforts to avoid the wall. During my lifetime, I have attempted to deal with each wall in a different way. I have spent time denying that the wall existed, I have attempted to push the wall over, climb over the wall, dig under the wall or just sit and wonder why a wall existed. In my effort to resolve my relationship with each wall, I experienced a wide range of emotions such as sadness, anger, frustration, betrayal, and depression.

### For many years I was not able to value or appreciate these proverbial walls.

Recently, I became aware of another one of these walls. Initially I spent some time being sad and then angry at the wall. After I accepted that the wall was not going away I determined to take some action. I sought to understand the nature and the validity of the wall. I then spoke with several trusted friends in order to process my sadness. Because I have a limited understanding of the wall, I set out to find suitable resources to facilitate my process with the wall. Through the kindness of some professional friends I was able to begin the process of determining how to proceed with my awareness and acceptance of the wall. Although I was initially unable to appreciate the value of the wall, I now recognize the importance of the wall. The wall in essence has kept me from going off a cliff.

My experience with my newest wall has reminded me of several realities. I am not a victim of my circumstances. Walls are merely guides on my journey, to direct my process. Walls are not an unjust nemesis provided to thwart my efforts to achieve my destiny. Walls are merely signs along the road of my life that give me the option to stop, or to turn to right or turn to left at the wall. I have discovered that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself in the decision to stop, to turn right or left when I meet a wall. Because I am now able to see in shades of gray, rather than in only black and white I have determined to learn from my decisions. As an empowered being I am able to live life on life's terms because I know that more will be revealed.

“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

## Accepting Myself when Family and Friends Can Not Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 10, 2012

As I have shared before, my traumatic brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. In 1967 there was nothing in the way of traumatic brain injury rehabilitation. Consequently, once my external wounds healed from the car accident and no physical signs indicated that my life was being impacted by the ripples from a traumatic brain injury, my traumatic brain injury became an invisible disability to me.

Nevertheless, I found myself running into one wall after another wall. For many years I internalized my running into walls as an indication of my inadequacy and inability to get along with people and be successful in life. Little did I know, there were other factors beyond my traumatic brain injury and my invisible disability that contributed to my running into one wall after another wall. In my exasperation and pain of running into walls – because of what I did not understand or fathom – some one I knew encouraged me to start attending 12 step support meetings.

**He told me that attending meetings had helped him and thought that attending meetings might also help me.**

Through attending meetings, listening to other people's experience, strength and hope, working with a sponsor, working through the 12 steps and being honest with myself I discovered that there were other factors that contributed to my running into walls. Although I was still in denial concerning the impact of my traumatic brain injury, attending 12 step support meetings, listening to people in the meetings, working with a sponsor, working through the 12 steps and through being honest with myself I began to realize that the difficulties that I had and was experiencing were not all about me. I began to realize that I was not alone in my struggle to accept myself. I began to realize that I had the power to choose.

In my experience, I found hope — that I did not know existed — as I started to attend meetings. In my experience, I found the courage and the ability to accept myself for myself, as I started to attend meetings.

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## Accepting Myself when Family and Friends Can Not Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 10, 2012

Through my involvement with 12 step support group meeting, listening to other people's experience, strength and hope, working with my sponsor and being honest with myself I started to heal emotionally and spiritually. I started to identify with other people and realize that I was not terminally unique. I started to realize that I no longer needed to be responsible for other people, but that I could be responsible to other people. I started to realize where I began and other people ended. I started to understand concepts, ideas and principles that would encourage, motivate and empower my life.

The concepts, principles and ideas that I learned through attending meetings, listening to people, working with a sponsor and by being honest with myself all helped me to begin to identify the realities that I was facing as a traumatic brain injury survivor. These concepts, principles and ideas helped me to recognize that other factors impacted the dynamics of my relationship with family members and society as a whole. These concepts, principles and ideas helped me to begin to identify the factors — beyond my traumatic brain injury — that contributed to the difficulties and walls that I ran into for many years.

These concepts, principles and ideas — that I learned through attending meetings, listening to people, working with a sponsor and by being honest with myself serendipitously helped me to begin to accept my reality and myself as a traumatic brain injury survivor, when family members and friends were unable to accept who I am in my reality. In May of 2008 I wrote an article to share what I learned through my experience. I would invite you to read that article [Second Chance to Live – Action Steps](#) and encourage you as a traumatic brain injury survivor to attend 12 Step meetings in your area.

What I have learned and continue to learn through attending meeting, listening to people, working with a sponsor / mentor and being honest with myself has radically changed my life.

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization Part 1

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

Thank you. 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 pre-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 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**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury, Labeling Theory and Societal Stigmatization Part 2

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

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.

“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

## How I Found Freedom from the “Box” and Societal Stigmatization

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 19, 2014

Yesterday, I wrote and published the article, In my article, [Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”?](#) In that article I spoke to the impact that a medical diagnosis and prognosis, as well as that of a societal stigmatization brought on by such a diagnosis and prognosis. I went on to share how I found that the medical model and societal stigmatization leave the individual — saddled with the diagnosis and prognosis — feeling as they have been placed in a “box”. A “Box” in which they may feel trapped. A “box” that creates secondary gains and secondary dependencies. A “box” that leads to a faulty identity. A “box” of little hope.

Through my process and experience, I needed to recognize the insidious nature of the “box”. I have written several series to share what I became aware of and what helped me to move beyond the confines of the “box”. I would encourage you to read these 2 articles. The 1st is a **2 part** article [Traumatic Brain Injury and Societal Stigmatization Part 1](#) and the 2nd, an **8 part** article [Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 1](#). Although the article has brain injury in the title, the principles that I share in both articles can benefit anyone who may find themselves stuck in the “box”, that I speak to in my article, **Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”?**.

In the event that you learn more effectively through listening and watching, below are links to video series of the 2 articles.

[Overcoming Societal Stigmatization Video Presentation](#)

[Overcoming Societal Stigmatization Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 1 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 2 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 3 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 4 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 5 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 6 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 7 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a brain injury and being Misunderstood, Maligned and Manipulated Part 8 Video Presentation](#)

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## **Beyond Brain Injury Awareness Month — Why Are Brain Injury Survivors Told to Sit in the Back of the Bus? Part 1**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 10, 2014

Several days ago I wrote the above article. In the article I shared some of my thoughts surrounding what I need to keep in mind. In my experience, I have found that many “professionals” who work in the field of “helping” individuals living with brain injuries, practically patronize the individuals whom they are charged to empower.

Instead of seeking to learn from our experience, strength and hope – actually living with and succeeding – they practically dismiss, discount, minimize and marginalize who we are as brain injury survivors. It is as though they tell us to sit in the back of the bus, while they take their seats in the front of the bus. It is as though they are telling us to sit down and shut up. My question is why can we not all sit up in the front of the bus?

Instead of seeking out how they can benefit from — who we are and what we have learned through — living with brain injuries and invisible disabilities, they seek to keep us silent. It is as though these professionals see us as less than and unworthy to be heard. I do not know why this is my friend. Do they see us as a threat to their fostering dependence? I do not know why they do not see us as beacons of hope? Do they see us as a threat to their bottom line? I do not know why they do not see us as agents of empowerment? Do they see us as a threat to their agendas?

**To me, this just does not make sense.**

The professional community says that we as brain injury survivors are the experts, however they practically show little credence to what we have to offer to the brain injury communities recovery and rehabilitation process. I do not know why professionals serving brain injury survivors do not see the benefit and value of our experience, strength and hope in living and recovering from — which is an ongoing process – the impact and effect of living with brain injuries and invisible disabilities.

“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

## **Beyond Brain Injury Awareness Month — Why Are Brain Injury Survivors Told to Sit in the Back of the Bus? Part 2**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on March 10, 2014

### **With the above in mind, I have 5 questions:**

Can some one in the professional community — charged to empower and give hope to brain injury survivors – please tell me, Why Are Brain Injury Survivors being told to Sit In the Back Of the Bus?

Can some one in the professional community please tell me, Why are beacons of hope and agents of empowerment being dismissed, discounted, discredited, minimized and marginalized by the professional community?

Can anyone in the professional community please tell me, Why does the professional community seek to divide and separate us from the individuals working with in the professional community?

Can anyone in the professional community please tell me, Why are we as assigned experts, not listened to, valued or heard?

Can some one in the professional community please tell me, Why are professionals communicating — by their behavior — to brain injury survivors that we need to ride in the back of the bus?

### **Today's Thought**

Knowledge plus experience equals wisdom. Professional may have knowledge, but we who live with brain injuries and invisible disabilities have real life experience. Why don't we work together?

“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

## 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 judgment 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 judgment 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](#)

“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

## 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

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. 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.**

“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

## 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.

“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

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

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

**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.

**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**

“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

## 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.**

“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

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

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

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.

**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.**

**[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](#)**

**[Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — On the Road to Healing — Action — Part 4](#)**

**[Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — Coming out of Isolation — Part 5](#)**

**[Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day — Breaking Free — Part 6](#)**

**[Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers Me to Make it a Good Day — No Longer in the Shadows — Part 7](#)**

**[Traumatic Brain Injury — What Empowers me to Go and Make it a Good Day — Exchanging a lie for the truth — Part 8](#)**

**[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](#)**

“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

## 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.

**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.

“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

## Who Am I? Part 2

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

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.

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.**

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## **Learning How to Be at Peace with Myself**

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

I have been thinking about a conversation that I had with a friend the other night. During our conversation he shared with me that there are people with certain traits that really annoy him. He went on to share that he recognizes that he himself once had those similar traits. As we spoke, I shared something with him that I had learned about myself.

I shared with him that unless I make peace with the traits that I see in other people — that I do not like or did not like in myself – I will not be at peace with myself. Consequently, when I recognize traits that I do not like in other people, I need to examine why I do not like those traits. In my experience, I discovered that I needed to be honest with myself to be at peace.

Several years ago I wrote a 2 Part article to share what I discovered that has helped me and continues to help me to have peace in my life. I would like to share the 2 Part article with you. Below the 2 high lighted links, I will share some of what the Action Steps have revealed to me about myself. To read both parts of the article, simply click on the below 2 high lighted links.

**[Second Chance to Live — Action Steps Revisited — An Overview Part 1](#)**

**[Second Chance to Live — Action Steps Revisited — A Synopsis Part 2](#)**

What I discovered was that I shamed myself for having those traits. The shame kept me bound to those traits. I discovered that I subsequently transferred the shame that I experienced onto people who demonstrated those traits. What I discovered was that I needed to do the work so that I could stop shaming myself for having those traits, so that I could stop shaming other people.

In my experience, I discovered that by working the 12 Action Steps I was and am able to stop shaming myself and other people for traits. In my experience, I discovered that by working the 12 Action Steps, I grew in my capacity to be at peace with myself and with other people. By working the 12 Action Steps, I experienced compassion toward myself and other people.

By working the 12 Action Steps I was and am given the ability and courage to change my thinking and my behavior. By working the 12 Action Steps I am given the ability to embrace, accept and learn from both my traits and the traits that I recognize in other people, as teachers. By working the 12 Action Steps I was and am given the ability to both recognize and have serenity in my life.

By working the 12 Action Steps, I have and am accomplishing things with my life that I would have otherwise not dreamed possible.

“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

## Not Judging my Insides with Other People's Outsides

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

Last week I shared that I had been struggling and frustrated. I also found myself angry as a result. I knew that the problem existed with me and not because of some one else. I was the one who was restless, irritable and discontent. I knew that I needed to examine the root. I wrote in a journal and spoke with a mentor of mine. Nevertheless, I still had a difficult time putting my finger on what what was at the root of my funk.

Yesterday in my morning meditation I began to receive some clarity. I realized that I needed to get back to basics. You see I had fallen into the trap of comparing my lot in life with other peoples lot's in life. By doing so I had allowed the expectations surrounding other people's lots to be the expectations for my lot in life. In my awareness, I found that I had been judging my insides with other people's outsides. In my awareness, I found that I had been experiencing a sense of shame for not being enough on my lot. In my awareness, I found that I had judged my being.

What began to be clear to me was that I needed to stop judging what I was doing with my lot. What began to be clear to me was that I needed to focus on what I am doing with my lot. What became clear to me was that I needed to celebrate what I am building on my lot. What became clear to me was that I needed to stop judging my efforts by the expectations of what I perceived other people were building on their lot. What became clear to me was that I needed to see the value of what I am building on my lot, apart from what I perceived other people were building on their lots.

With this renewed awareness, I refocused my attention to my mission and vision. With this renewed awareness, I began to see the value of what I am creating on my lot. With this awareness, I saw the reality of my strengths. With this renewed awareness, I reminded myself of my being and my great value. With this renewed awareness, I was able to stop judging my insides, with the values that other people place on their lots. With this renewed awareness, I found the freedom to once again build on my lot. With this renewed awareness, I was able to root out of my funk.

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

### Today's thought

What other people build on their lot in life is none of our business. What we are building on our lot in life is none of their business. If I find myself judging my lot to another person's lot, I need to re-focus. I need to re-focus my commitment to my mission and vision. I need to stay committed to building on my lot. By keeping the focus on my lot, I am able to keep from falling into the trap that occurs when I judge my insides with / to other people's outsides.

“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

## **Living with a brain Injury and Dealing with Stress during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 1**

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

In October 2009 I wrote an article series to share what I discovered about dealing with stress during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. What I share in this article may also help you to deal with stress as you interact with family and friends during the holiday season. If the information helps you, please let me know my friend.

To make read / watching and listening to the article more manageable, I have divided the article into 4 parts. I will included links to the additional **3 Parts** of the article to read below, as well as links to the **2 Parts** of the video presentation series of the article below. I would encourage you to read and / or listen to / watch each of the 4 parts of the article to gain the full benefit of the article series. As questions arise, send those question to me.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years 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. A few days ago I received a request to write an article addressing stress related to the holiday season. In the following article I will address several of the factors that I believe impact the lives of brain injury survivors during the holiday season.

**In 2 weeks Thanksgiving will be upon us, then 3 weeks later Christmas and a week later New Years Eve and New Years Day. For many families these 5-6 weeks — with the anticipation and preparation for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years — can be laden with anxiety and stress.**

For many traumatic brain injury survivors the filters with in their brains — that monitor impulsive behavior and mood changes — are damaged at the time of their brain injuries. With increased stress and sensory overload — during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years — the brain injury survivor filters are taxed. Consequently, the brain injury survivor is more susceptible to impulsive behavior and unexplained mood swings. Consequently, the brain injury survivor may feel shunned and shamed around family and friends because of the invisible nature of their disability. The brain injury survivor may subsequently experience feelings of isolation and alienation.

“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

## **Living with a brain Injury and Dealing with Stress during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 2**

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

My suggestion here would be to love and accept yourself and be your own advocate. Rather than feeling shame and shunned — because of your deficits and limitations — be honest and share your struggles with family members and friends.

Below are links to the other **3 Parts** of the written article:

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 2\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 3\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 4\*\*](#)

Below is a video presentation of the article. I have combined parts 1 and 2 in one presentation and parts 3 and 4 in the 2nd presentation. Click on the links and the video presentation (s) will open on YouTube.

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 1 and Part 2 Revisited Again Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury — Stress, Anxiety and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Part 3 and Part 4 Revisited Again Video Presentation\*\*](#)

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Finding Peace through A Bird, A Window and A Spiritual Axiom Part 1

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 24, 2011

Recently, I was sitting in a meeting where the topic of detachment was being discussed. The meeting room – where the discussion was taking place – was bordered by two exterior windows. As I sat listening to the discussion, my concentration was interrupted several times.

The interruption occurred each time I heard a bird hit the window. Initially I realized that this is what birds do from time to time. However, when the bird continued to hit the window for a 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and then a 6<sup>th</sup> time I found myself becoming increasingly annoyed. And then in the midst of being annoyed, I experienced a spiritual awakening. As I reflected upon the bird's behavior my eyes were opened and I became aware.

**The bird was determined to come through the window – time and time again – even to its own hurt. The bird attempted to exert its power over that which it was powerless. The bird's focus got in the way of its ability to recognize what it was doing was simply not working.**

Although the bird eventually gave up on trying to get into the room — through the window — the lesson became clear. The topic of detachment was put into perspective for me. I like the bird can repeatedly find myself doing behaviors — over and over again — to my own hurt. I like the bird can persistently attempt to exert my will – by trying to force a solution – over something that I have no power. I like the bird can participate in behaviors that cloud my ability to see what is clearly not working for me.

**Through my process I have found a way to stop hitting those same windows over and over again.**

In my experience I have found that when I am out of sorts about anything, I need to look to and keep the focus on myself. Being out of sorts” can be likened to having a trigger or a button. If I did not have a trigger or button — to potentially be pushed – I would not react. Consequently, when I react or when I am disturbed, I need to take the steps to quiet myself in order to find out why I am disturbed.

**“It is a spiritual axiom that whenever we are disturbed no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us and our first task is to quiet the disturbance. Then we need to take the focus off of others and find out why I am disturbed and then what do I need to do to take care of that disturbance. That is the solution to getting beyond the way we feel”. From the book 12 and 12.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury — Finding Peace through A Bird, A Window and A Spiritual Axiom Part 2

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on April 24, 2011

By detaching myself from and stepping back from that which disturbs me, I am able to examine what I am doing to myself and in the process to my relationship (s). Once I have detached – or stepped back from the situation – I then need to call my sponsor (mentor) or a trusted friend who will help me to sort out what I am reacting to / in my life. I have also found that writing in a journal or diary about the situation — while keeping the focus on myself — can be helpful in determining why I am disturbed.

**I have found that what I may be reacting to presently may be more connected to some thing I have not made peace with from my past. Consequently, I may need to look at the reason why I am reacting to my present situation, by doing an inventory of how I have reacted similarly to past situations. Reality may be that my reaction may not have anything to do with my present situation.**

After determining what I reacted to and why I am disturbed, I need to take steps to make an amend (s) for my part of the disturbance. By doing so – by first talking with your sponsor about how to make these amends so as to not injure the parties involved or other people – I am able to clean up my side of the street. In my experience, I have found that by keeping the focus on myself — by not blaming anyone — and through cleaning up my side of the street, I am able to see what I am or have been doing to myself – to my own hurt.

**By detaching myself from the situation, examining why I am disturbed, talking with my sponsor or trusted friend and through making direct amends I am able to stop hurting myself and start working toward changing behaviors that clearly are not working for me. After completing these steps I am encouraged to use to my gifts, talents and abilities to be of service to my fellows. Through being of service I am able to practice new behaviors to get out of myself.**

For a more detailed explanation on how to work through issues as they crop up in our lives, please read my article [Traumatic Brain Injury – What Empowers Me to Go and Make it a Good Day – On the Road to Healing – Empowerment](#) by clicking on the title of the article.

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## How are We Teaching People to Treat Us

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

In the past several articles and a video presentation, I have shared what I believe is limiting and undermining individuals who are presented with diagnosis' and prognosis'. I went on to share, how coupled with a label and a societal stigmatization, a diagnosis' and prognosis' serve to place people in "boxes", that often become their identities. I went on to share that the medical model, a label and a societal stigmatization create secondary dependencies and secondary gains that keep people trapped in the "box" through a combined belief system.

Through my recovery process, I began to realize that I needed to look beyond a diagnosis, prognosis and what I experienced as a result of societal stigmatization. With my awareness, I began to realize that I was not a diagnosis, a prognosis or a label. I began to realize that my identity lied in the road before me. I began to realize that how I treated myself and allowed other people to treat me strongly contributed to how I saw myself. With my awareness, I realized the I needed to examine the beliefs that I held about myself.

Through my recovery process, I discovered that I had been using huge amounts of time and energy to maintain beliefs that both limited and undermined. Through my recovery process, I discovered that these limiting beliefs held me hostage in the "box". Through my recovery process, I discovered that these limiting beliefs served to undermine my self-esteem, self-worth and self-value. Through my recovery process, I discovered that these limiting beliefs taught me how to treat myself. Through my recovery process, I discovered that the limiting beliefs that I held about myself, also taught other people how to treat me.

Through my recovery process, I discovered that I needed to change these limiting beliefs, so that I could re-teach both myself and other people how to treat me. Through my recovery process, I discovered that I needed to change these limiting beliefs, so that I could stop believing that I needed to remain in the "box" given to me by a diagnosis, a prognosis, a label and a societal stigmatization.

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## When People Choose To Distance Themselves From Me

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on July 24, 2012

I have been thinking about some thing of late that I wanted to share with you in this article. As part of my experience I have grown in my ability to trust a loving God. I do not do this perfectly, but there are certain aspects in life that I trust Him with unequivocally.

This particular aspect involves praying and then trusting that He will bring the right people into my life and keep those people who are not good for me out of my life. Recently, I have found that people who I thought I wanted to be more a part of my life distancing themselves from me. This distancing has become progressively evident over the past 3 or 4 weeks. In the process of my recognizing the apparent distancing, I examined the dynamics.

What I discovered was that I was being told one thing, but based on the behaviors I was seeing some thing different. With the awareness that there were incongruities, I continued to listen and watch. Although I wanted to ignore or deny the reality – because I was sad about the reality – I remembered that I had prayed and pray that God would bring the right people into my life and keep and move the people who are not good for me out of my life.

By remembering that prayer, I found peace in the midst of what I found to be sad. By remembering the prayer, I could celebrate the people who are in my life and let go of the people who choose to distance themselves from me. By remembering the prayer, I could be thankful for the people who choose to distance themselves from me. By remembering the prayer, I could celebrate who I am as me, as people choose to come in and out my life.

By remembering the prayer – that God would bring the right people into my life who are good for me and remove those people who are not good for me — I remembered that I can trust the process to a loving God. By remembering the prayer – for God to bring the right people into my life and move those who are not good for me out of my life – I remembered that I can practice the principle of live and let live and I can let go of what I do not know.

By remembering the prayer – that God would bring the right people into my life and move the people who are not good for me out of my life – I am reminded that I can rejoice in the reality that I can trust the process to a loving God. By remembering the prayer, I am able to trust a loving God to move the pieces of the puzzle – which make up my destiny — in the correct order, in the right positions, with the right connectors and at the right time.

**By remembering the prayer– that God would bring the right people into my life and move people that are not good for me out of my life — I am able to trust the process and a loving God when people choose to distance themselves from me.**

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## **Second Chance to Live, Steve Jobs and the Crazy Ones**

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on October 6, 2011

I received the below in my email in box — from [Akash](#) — and was so moved to reprint what the individual said about Steve Jobs – the creator of Apple Inc.. I am not sure who is the author of the statement — as the email did not specify who made the statement — other wise I would credit the individual with the statement.

As we read the statement, may we be inspired to be uniquely ourselves. May we be encouraged by Steve Jobs legacy and leadership to live beyond the “box”.

### **Steve Jobs and the Crazy Ones**

...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. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify, or vilify them. About 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 people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do. (Apple Inc.)

### **Steve Jobs was a great leader and communicator. He will be missed.**

May we surge forth in the face of any societal stigmatization that we may experience. May we not be dissuaded when we find ourselves being misunderstood, devalued, discounted, ridiculed, maligned, scoffed at, excluded, shunned, snubbed, reproached, denigrated, ostracized, hindered, blackball(ed), scorned, spurned, chastised, reprimanded, berated or rejected. May we be considered to be among the crazy ones, who take the risk to be innovative, to live beyond our box of fear and insecurity. May we be among the crazy ones, who believe that we can change our world through our passion.

**May we be inspired to use our passion(s) in such a way to encourage, motivate, empower and instill hope in our world.**

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

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Support — Part 1

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

In life you and I may have been presented with matters that are out of our control. We may have been impacted by a brain injury, a disability or some other life challenging change. In the process of our awareness we may find ourselves angry with the world and ourselves. We may want to blame our station in life on God, an organization, another person or a group of people. Consequently, we may have isolated ourselves from other people.

You, like myself may have sustained a traumatic brain injury that has presented you with various challenges to overcome. Your brain injury may have led you to develop a learning disability or a mental health challenge. I am also confronted by and challenged with a learning disability as well as other neurological limitations. These obstacles and challenges can leave us feeling very alone and overwhelmed. Consequently, we may be confused, discouraged and despondent by our present circumstances. In our frustration, we may want to isolate and cut our selves off from other people.

The good news is that you and I do not have to be alone in our struggle to accept our reality. We can reach out to other people who — like ourselves — are or have struggled with similar frustrations and concerns. We can reach out to individuals who can identify with us. We don't have to be alone. Consequently, our ability to accept our brain injuries no longer has to be limited by our isolation. We no longer need to suffer in silence — because of what we do not understand. We can reach out to a community of individuals who will help to empower our process. We can come out of isolation.

Through being involved with a brain injury support group or another support group we can learn from the members of that group. We can talk about whatever we are experiencing or struggling to accept with the members of the group. By listening to other members we can learn to accept ourselves. We may just want to sit and listen to what other members share during the meeting. We don't have to say anything or be anything when we attend a support group meeting. We can experience, [The Power of Identification](#). Through our process with the group we can learn to accept ourselves. We can learn how to move beyond merely surviving to thriving in life.

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Support — Part 2

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

In my experience — as I have attended different support groups meetings during the past 21 years — I have found solutions for living life on life's terms. Through interacting with a myriad of members and by listening to their experience, strength and hope I have found a new freedom. I have been able to confront and break free from my denial and the denial systems that once sought to deceive and delude me. Through my involvement in support groups I have found the courage to face my fear (s) and in the process learn to trust. I have grown in awareness, which in turn has given me the ability to take positive actions to find solutions. I have learned to practice acceptance.

Consequently, I have been able to process my anger, my disappointment and my frustration. I have been able to work through my sadness and depression — in a safe place. I have been able to ask questions and find answers. I have discovered how to use my energy in ways to enhance and empower my process. I have discovered that my circumstances were never meant to keep me down. I have discovered that there is no such thing as a happy victim. I have discovered that circumstances are merely a switch on the railroad of life used to veer me in the direction of my destiny.

**I have discovered that I can be a proactive participant in my life. I have discovered that I can take risks. I have discovered that I can practice a spiritual principle — progress not perfection. I have discovered that I can let go and let God. I have discovered that I can come out of isolation.**

I have discovered that I am a gift to my world just because of who I am not because of what I do. I have discovered that being is more important than doing. I have discovered that I can live my destiny in the NOW. I have discovered that I do not have to wait to be happy or content. I have discovered that I can seize the moment — and I do not have to do that perfectly. I have discovered that I was created to be a human being, not a human doing. I have discovered that I do not have to go along to get along. I have discovered that I do not have to make sure you are OK, before I can be OK with myself. I have discovered how to be responsible to, but not for other people. I have discovered that what I think about myself is more important than... I have discovered that I can be at peace with myself and that I can truly trust the process, a loving God and myself.

**I have discovered that I am not my traumatic brain injury, my disability, deficits or limitations. I have discovered that I can learn how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. I have found people who want what I have to give...because they too understand what it is like to live as a brain injury survivor.**

“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

## Traumatic Brain Injury and Support — Part 3

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

### Today's Thought

Get involved! Find a support group in the area where you live or participate in an online support group and make it a priority to attend meetings. You no longer need to be in isolation. As I have heard it said over the years, just suit up and show up and you will see miracles happen

And please remember that life is a journey, not a destination. Our process will reveal what we need to know when we are ready. By being involved in support group you will have the opportunity to gain experience, strength and hope. With time, you will gain clarity — so be gentle with yourself.

You will find that your traumatic brain injury and your disability has become your ability. You will move beyond believing that you are your limitations and deficits. You will find your answers; you will gain hope. You will begin to notice silver linings amidst what you now see as dark clouds.

**And if you have a hard time believing, believe because I believe.**

Be encouraged — my friend — because I hear the sound of abundance for your life. You are making wonderful progress, so don't give up on your process, a loving God, or on yourself. Although you may not understand how your circumstances are going to be used for your good, they will be my friend.

With time, clarity will come and you will behold what has been being worked out in and through your life. Take comfort in this reality my friend. Your brightest days are yet to be revealed. Be encouraged my friend because you have a future and a hope.

“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

## **Biographical Information About the Author**

My name is Craig J. Phillips. The reason for my writing to you is to share a little about myself and to also encourage you to not give up on your dreams. My hope is that my experience will encourage you to not give up on your process or your self. My hope is that you will not let disappointment to keep you from pursuing your bliss and your destiny. My hope is that you will not give up on hope, because – as I have found – more will be revealed in time. My hope is that as you read a little about my story, you will see your circumstances and experiences in a new light, you will find a way to follow your bliss in ways that will work for you and that you will be encouraged and empowered to follow your dreams.

I am a traumatic brain injury and survivor. My injury occurred as a result of a motor vehicle accident in 1967 when I was 10 years old. I sustained an open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damage, a several brain bruise with brain stem involvement. In 1967 there was not much known about brain injuries or neurological rehabilitation. Once my external wounds healed my traumatic brain injury was never again considered to be a factor in my development or my difficulties. Because I was able to teach myself how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences the effects of the injury to my brain became invisible and hidden.

Although I was not expected to succeed beyond high school academically, I was able to graduate on time with my high school class and then go on to obtain my undergraduate (4 majors, 2 universities and one junior college in 10 years) and graduate degree (3 1/2 years and 2 different grad schools). I later discovered that the difficulties that I encountered during both my undergraduate and graduate degree programs were due to the residuals from my brain injury. In addition to having difficulties in both my undergraduate and graduate programs I had a long history of getting and losing jobs. While working as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, I became a client of the Dept. of Vocational Rehab.

After becoming a client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and completing their evaluation process, I was deemed to be unemployable. Because I had been able to obtain my undergraduate and graduate degrees I found myself in a very frustrating predicament. Although I had diligently applied myself – both academically and vocationally – I felt like some one all dressed up with no where to go and with no one seeming to want what I had to give, despite my efforts. After all of my struggles to succeed I found myself unable to succeed and was declared disabled by the Social Security Administration in 1999 and began receiving monthly SSDI benefits.

Although I had diligently applied myself both academically and vocationally for many years, I found myself being effectively discounted and dismissed. Although I felt discounted, dismissed and like some one all dressed up with no where to go, I still had a desire to follow my dreams and my destiny. Although I felt minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted by people who did not want what I had to give, I still had a desire to encourage, motivate, empower and share hope. In my process of finding a way that would work for me I wrote an autobiography, a book and then on February 6, 2007 at the encouragement of a friend, I found my way to share hope through my web log Second Chance to Live. I began writing and publishing articles on Second Chance to Live.

To read a more detailed About Page concerning my process and journey, please click on this link: [Detailed About Page](#)

“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