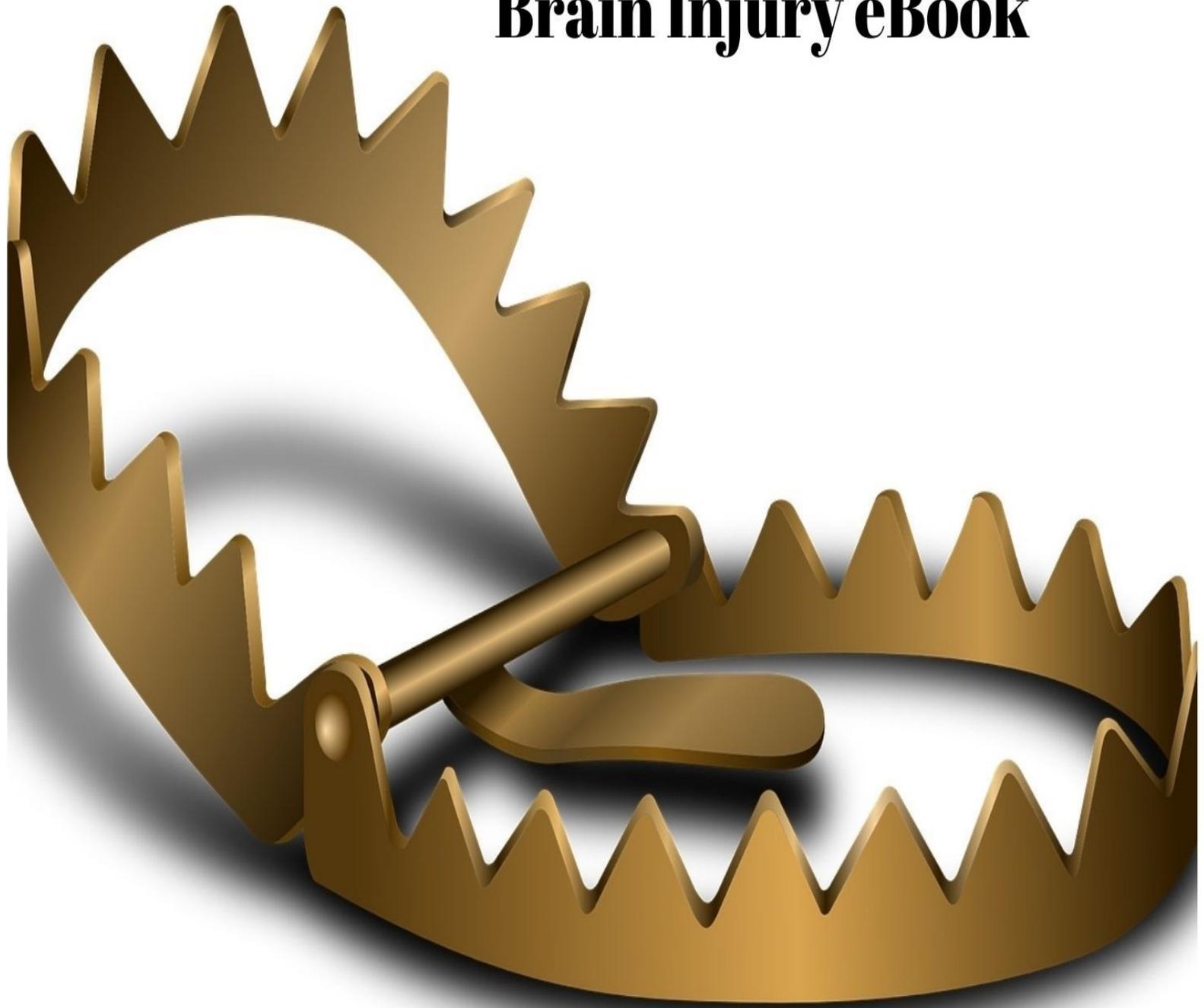


# **Avoiding the Trap of Our Brain Injury eBook**



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

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## **Preface to Avoiding the Trap of Our Brain Injury e Book**

The reason for my writing this e Book is share what I discovered that was getting in my way. Getting In the way of my being able to heal physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually after my brain injury. By understanding and addressing what was getting in my way, I was able to stop focusing on other people. Focusing on what other people were or were not doing so that I could focus on my ongoing brain injury recovery. So that I could get on with my life.

**Note:** With the articles of this e Book there are highlighted article titles. These highlighted titles are links to related articles on Second Chance to Live. Clicking on these highlighted and underlined titles will open the article on Second Chance to Live. If you chose to click on and read that article on Second Chance to Live, please be sure to continue to read this e Book.



**“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**

## **Introduction to Avoiding the Trap of Our Brain Injury e Book**

Living with a brain injury can leave us feeling baffled and confused. In our confusion we may be led to believe things about ourselves that are simply not true. These beliefs can lead you and I to believe that we are limited because of our limitations. We can be led to believe that we are our brain injuries. We may also be led to believe that labels, stereotypes and societal stigmatization justifiably define who we are as individuals.

In these beliefs we may be led to believe that we have limited choices. Because of these limiting beliefs, we may not realize that we can find freedom from these traps. Traps that have unknowingly gotten in the way of our ability to create possibilities. Create possibilities that will enrich and enhance both our lives and the lives of the people who touch our lives. In this e Book and my other e Books I share information that has and continues to help me to be aware of, avoid and move out of the way of these traps.

**Traps that I unknowingly bought into and found myself in for many years. Traps that kept me stuck in the problem, instead of in the solution.**

I would invite you to read through the pages of this e Book. The information may also help to free you from traps that you may have unknowingly bought into and embraced.

**Below are title links to the PDF files of my other 10 e Books.**

**[Living with a Brain Injury eBook Putting the Pieces in Place 60 Video Presentations](#)**

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

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

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

**[Living with a Brain Injury, What Helped Me to Stop being my Enemy and Create a life for Myself eBook](#)**

**[It's Never too Late to Create Hope eBook](#)**

**[Moving Forward Following a Brain Injury eBook](#)**

**[Living with a Brain Injury and Taking Care of Ourselves eBook](#)**

**[Having a Relationship with Myself and Other People after a Brain Injury Video Presentations eBook](#)**

**[Celebrating Success after a Brain Injury Video Presentations eBook](#)**

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Facing Denial — Part 1**

For many years I remained in denial. Denial of the impact of a traumatic brain injury that I sustained when I was 10 years old in 1967. A denial that was reinforced by family and friends once my external wound healed. A denial that kept me distracted. A denial that reinforced my inability to accomplish because of what I was unable to accept. But thank God that He helped me to find keys that opened doors to hope for me. Keys that opened my “eyes” to “see” that I could excel and thrive beyond my denial. Keys that opened doors to a world of hope.

Opened my eyes to realize that my limitations no longer had to define who I am as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury. Opened my eyes to discover what I could accomplish, instead of continuing to be frustrated by what I could not accomplish. In May 2008 I wrote an article series to share the keys that I discovered that opened doors to hope for me. The article, **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance**.

As an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability, I remained stuck for many years. I remained stuck because of what I was unable to accept.

In this 7 part series, I want to share with you what helped me to grow in the power of acceptance. In the power of acceptance that opened doors to hope.

Through my ongoing recovery process, I surrendered to a life changing awareness. As I surrendered to this awareness, I was slowly able to stop fighting against myself. Fighting against myself, by trying to prove that my life and well-being was not impacted by my traumatic brain injury.

**In my experience, as I grew in awareness, I grew in acceptance. As I grew in acceptance, I grew in my ability to take action. As I grew in my ability to take action I found hope.**

In my experience, I became aware that I could not grow in acceptance before I first made peace with myself. Made peace with myself because of what I could not change. Made peace with myself for the losses that I experienced because of what I could not change. The impact of my traumatic brain injury.

In my quest to make peace with those losses I needed to address my sadness. In my experience, I could not just “get over it” without first doing the necessary work. I needed help to be able to identify and address my sadness and frustration, so that I could move beyond my sadness and frustration.

I needed to identify what I was experiencing so that I could move beyond what could not be changed. In my experience, I needed to stop denying my reality, so that i could do something different.

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Owing Sadness — Part 2**

In Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's book **On Death and Dying**, Elisabeth elaborates on the stages of grieving. In her book, she introduces the 5 stages that people go through as they grieve their loss (s). The first of these 5 stages is denial. Denial is a defense mechanism that protects the individual from having to confront the shock of their loss. Denial manifests itself in various ways. I have heard denial explained as a warm blanket that insulates and shields the individual from having to face their reality.

**Denial can also be used as a door to shut out, that which is just too painful to address.**

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

Before I began my grief work, I saw denial as an ally. When anguish motivated me to begin my grieving process I began to see denial as an active adversary. As my eyes slowly opened I saw that denial was seeking to keep me trapped in a system that would or could not allow me to realize or accept my reality.

**In collusion with my fear (s), denial shamed me for not being enough even though I sought to do my very best. Denial also sought to keep me distracted so that I could not see a way to my destiny. Denial led me to believe that I was my disability, deficits, and limitations.**

Denial minimized my passion and discounted my gifts, talents, and abilities. Denial — in practice — sought to silence my voice. Denial kept me shrouded by a societal stigma that devalued my worth because of my traumatic brain injury. Denial kept me subservient to what other people thought of me. Denial undermined my self-worth and self-esteem.

Denial kept me crouched in the shadows of isolation. Denial told me that what I thought and felt were of no accord. Denial sought to keep me distracted so that I could not see the truth.

Denial sought to disparage my value and worth because I did not live up to denial's expectations.

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

### **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Denial Systems -- Part 3**

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

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

Through my experience of confronting my denial, I have become more accountable to myself. As I have continued to be accountable to and for myself I have been able to own my process. As I have been able to own my process, I have been empowered to move beyond my denial.

In the process, I have broken free of a denial system that sought to justify its position by denying my reality. By confronting my denial I have been able to open the door that denial sought to keep shut to me.

**In the process, I have been able to move on with my journey towards the acceptance of my loss (s). In the process, I have given myself permission to be present for myself.**

When I decided to confront denial, I became aware of how my life had been infected by a lie.

As I examined the strategies that denial used to avoid the truth I started having spiritual awakenings. One of these spiritual awakenings revealed that denial had been acting as a door, in that denial denied access to any and all unwanted thoughts or feelings.

In effect, whenever any unwanted thoughts or feelings sought to be heard or experienced, denial would discount and minimize the relevance of those thoughts and feelings. Denial imposed a code of avoidance to mask what needed to be addressed.

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

#### **What I Discovered about Denial Systems**

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Anger and Resentment – Part 4**

In a denial system that seeks to maintain that reality does not exist, feelings are considered a threat, especially those feelings that trigger a sense of shame. Shame is different than guilt, in that shame is a being wound. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame are very similar in that the individual is led to believe that they don't just make mistakes, but they believe they are a mistake.

As a traumatic brain injury survivor – with an invisible disability — I was led to believe that because I did not live up to expectations I was a mistake. For many years I internalized my inability to live up to expectations.

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

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

**In the process of discarding parts of my reality, I discarded parts of myself.**

### **Confronting Denial**

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

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

Once I realized that I needed to address my shame, negativity, and critical nature I found myself back in a familiar anxiety. Upon further examination, I found that my anxiety stemmed from my fear of physical and emotional abandonment. In the process, I discovered that my fear of abandonment was firmly attached to my core belief that I did not just make mistakes,

but that I was a mistake. As I have shared throughout this series — for many years — I believed that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was not a mistake. Consequently, I lived in a state of shame.

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance — Awareness – Part 5**

### **Struggling to Prove that I was Not a Mistake**

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

### **A Codependent Dance**

For many years I engaged in a dance with other people that involved these steps. If I detected that you were not alright with me (feeling blamed and shamed) then it was my fault. Because I bought into the notion that what you were upset about was my fault, I set out to make you OK.

Essentially to “fix” you so that I would no longer feel blame or shame, because you were upset. I sought to fix the individual so that they would not go away. I did so because I believed if the person went away “abandoned me” that there was something wrong with me. My goal in these interactions was to make “you” OK., so that I we could be OK in order to believe that I was O.K. This “dance” in all my relationships created a “crazy making” experience in all my relationships.

### **When I Became Sick and Tired of Doing the Dance**

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

### **Freedom from Self-Reproach**

In part 6 of this series the concept of resentments being the key to open the door to isolation and self-reproach will be explored. My resentments in effect held the key to the door of my isolation and my self-reproach.

### **Freedom from Isolation**

In my experience, I found that I needed to determine who I held resentments towards and why I sought to maintain those resentments towards those individuals –family, places, churches, significant relationships, and institutions — so that I could come out of my isolation.

**So that I could come out of isolation and be free of self-reproach.**

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Acceptance – Part 6**

### **Free of Resentments**

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

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

### **A Strategy that Helped Me to Stop the Crazy Making**

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

### **Identifying Patterns**

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

For a guide that helped me to process my denial, anger and resentments, (see) click on this link: [Action Steps](#)

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Action – Part 7**

I wanted to share a few of the personal awakenings with you. Personal awakenings that I have experienced through being present in my own process. Personal awakening that have empowered me to get into action. As I have grieved, I have grown in the awareness of my reality. In the process of becoming aware, I have grown to love and respect myself. I have been able to address, confront and understand the impact of my denial, anger and resentments.

### **The Impact of my Denial, Anger and Resentments**

I discovered that denial, anger and resentments produce a “spiritual and emotional plaque” that insidiously attached itself to the channels of my creative capacity. The affect of which blocks the flow of my spiritual and emotional energy.

### **Making Peace with Other People and Myself**

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

### **As I have been able to examine the roots of my anger and resentments I have been able to experience peace. In the process, I have gained focus.**

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

### **By Growing in the Power of Acceptance**

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

-

## **Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance Video Presentation Series**

To offer the information in the 7 Part article series to individuals who learn through watching and listening I have created a 7 part video presentation series.

If you are interested, click on the below links to the presentation and they will open on YouTube. As you have questions, please send those questions to me.

### **The Video Presentation Series**

Click on each of the below links to watch and listen to the article series.

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Facing Denial -- Part 1 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Owing Sadness -- Part 2 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Denial Systems -- Part 3 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Anger and Resentment – Part 4 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Awareness – Part 5 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance — Acceptance – Part 6 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

[\*\*Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Action – Part 7 Video Presentation\*\*](#)

## **Are You Living Your Truth or Trying to Live Someone Else's Truth? Part 1**

**Through my process and for many years I attempted to fit into a truth that other people wanted me to own.**

With my awareness, I started to ask myself, "Are You Living Your Truth or Trying to Live Someone Else's Truth?" In asking myself this question, it dawned on me that I could live my own truth.

As I asked this question I realized that I was attempting to use what other people wanted me to believe about myself and my reality. In the process, I discovered that I was attempting to make work, what would not work for me. After many years of attempting to fit into that "TRUTH", I found myself frustrated and bewildered. Nevertheless, I tried all the harder, until I reached a point in time.

**A point in time when I realized that I could no longer live someone else's "Truth" for me.**

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

When I reached that point in time I set out on a quest to learn how to live my truth and find out what would work best for me. Through the process, I began to realize that only I could create, own and live in my truth. Through my process, I began to realize that what worked for me did not have to work for anyone else to matter.

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

With the realization, I began to understand the difference between what was the truth and what was a lie for me. What worked for other people was the truth for them, but not truth for me. With my awareness, I began to understand that I needed to find my own truth. I also began to understand that no one could define my truth for me — what would work best for me.

**What I also began to understand was that I was the only one who could create, own and live my truth.**

## **Are You Living Your Truth or Trying to Live Someone Else's Truth? Part 2**

### **You are Not Alone**

In the event that you find yourself asking the question of whether you are living your truth or trying to live someone else's truth, you are not alone. For many years I had no idea that I was living a lie. Not that their truth was a lie, but that their truth was a lie for me. I am glad that I reached a point in my life. A point in my life when I realized I was struggling, unsuccessfully; to make work what was not meant to work for me. Trying to make another person's truth work for me.

**Through my process, I discovered that finding my truth just took time. Time, effort, trial, error, persistence and tenacity. And I continue to hone and tweak my truth.**

In the event that you also find yourself asking the question, "Am I living my truth?", I would encourage you to sit down and answer the below questions. And as you answer the questions, answer them as though nothing is holding you back. The answers to the questions may help you begin to create, own and live in your truth.

### **Questions**

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

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

## **What Helps Me to Have a Healthy Relationship with Hope Part 1**

My hope is that if you have given up on hope, that this article will help you to have a new experience with hope. An empowering relationship with hope that will encourage you to follow your dreams.

In **December 2014** 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 something that has and continues to help me. Help me to have a healthy relationship with hope and encourages me to follow my dreams. What I discovered through my process and share below forever changed my relationship with hope.

### **Let Me Explain**

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 "sidelines".

With my spiritual awakening, I began to see hope as a coach. A coach who encourages me to get and stay in the "game".

**With my spiritual awakening, hope helped me to realize that I needed to learn.**

## **What Helps Me to Have a Healthy Relationship with Hope Part 2**

### **Hope Helped Me**

What my spiritual awakening, hope helped me to realize that I needed to have an active role in the process of hope. An active role by learning from my each of the circumstances that touched my life.

Hope also helped me to realize that as I learned from each circumstance, I would be given opportunities. These opportunities would be part of learning process. The learning process that would teach me about hope.

**The learning process that would teach me how to create hope in my life.**

### **Creating Hope**

Hope helped me to realize that as I learned from my circumstances and took advantage of my opportunities that I would become a team player. Hope helped me to realize that as I learned and took advantage of circumstances and opportunities, I would learn how to create hope. I would learn how to use them to create active and practical hope.

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

### **My Encouragement to You**

Don't Despise the Day of Small Beginnings. Create Hope a Little at a Time.

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Lao Tzu

"By taking the first step of a journey and by not giving up on the process before long we will be able to look back and see how far we have come." Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

## **What Helps Me to Have a Healthy Relationship with Hope Part 3**

### **What Happened**

With my spiritual awakenings, I engaged in a healthy and functional 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 past 13 years I have written **1872 articles**, created **419 video presentations**, **11 eBooks**, **30 slide show presentations**, and **32 inspirational posters** to share what has helped me to create hope in my life.

**Below are links to information that have helped me to create hope in my life.**

**[Healing — 11 Free eBooks — After Traumatic Life Events and Major Physical Injuries](#)**

**[1872 Article/Video Presentation Links within 12 Peer Support Categories](#)**

**[Navigating Life After a Traumatic Brain Injury 419 Video Presentations Playlist](#)**

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

Through my experience living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability I needed to ask myself a question. "Does brain injury awareness make me better or bitter?"

### **Mere Awareness**

Awareness, in and of itself; can leave the individual angry and stuck. Angry and stuck if that awareness does not lead the individual to accept what that awareness has revealed to them. That was my case for years after I became aware that I had experienced a traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old.

You see, I had the awareness of my brain injury but did not know I could do anything about that awareness. Because I did not know that I could do anything about "it", I wanted to deny my awareness. Not only did I want to deny my awareness I did not want anyone else to know.

### **What I discovered about my awareness**

Without getting to a place of acceptance my "mental ascent" or "awareness of my traumatic brain injury" seemed irrelevant. Because I had not grasped the significance of my awareness I bought into denial systems. Both my denial and the denial of other people, who wanted or needed me to remain in denial, Wanted or needed me to stay in denial for whatever reason.

What I discovered through my process was that I needed to grieve my awareness to be able to move from being bitter to better in my life. I needed to grieve my awareness, to come out of isolation.

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

### **Groundhog Day Movie**

Last night I watched a movie that illustrated moving from bitter to better through becoming aware, grieving the awareness (moving from bitter to better) to being able to create a good life for the character. The movie, **Groundhog Day**; with Bill Murray. If you have not seen this movie "Murray plays Phil Connors, an arrogant Pittsburgh TV weatherman who, during an assignment covering the annual Groundhog Day event in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, finds himself in a time loop.

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

### **In a never ending loop**

In a loop repeating the same day again and again. After indulging in hedonism and committing suicide numerous times, he begins to re-examine his life and priorities." Wikipedia. In the movie, we see that Bill Murray's character, Phil Connors; is not a happy person to begin with in life. As the movie continues we see that Phil Connors appears to be bitter and angry as he relates to his co-workers and the town's people of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania in his role as a news anchor in the movie. He also appears to be all alone in his self-absorption.

### **Dumbfounded**

Initially, Bill Murray's character seems to be dumbfounded and in denial to what is occurring, as he wakes up each day to the same song and announcement on his clock radio. This denial continues until he realizes that the same events are occurring day after day a phenomenon in which he finds himself powerless to change. With this awareness he initially becomes increasingly angry at the similar events that are occurring every day, which leads to him to realize that there does not appear to be consequences for his behavior. As a result, he begins to exploit the vulnerabilities of the small town atmosphere of the town in which he finds himself stuck and unable to leave each day.

### **Disregard**

He does this through taking a money bag out of an armored truck, using his acquired knowledge of people and events by taking of advantage a town's woman and then of Rita, his coworker played by Andie MacDowell as well as some of the other towns' people. In his exasperation and desperation, Phil then attempts to commit suicide in many ways on different days, only to wake up the next morning at 6:00 am with the same song playing on the clock radio. As the movie continues, he then uses information gained through asking questions of the television crew and the towns people to continue to exploit the information for his gain.

### **Spiritual Awakening**

After this behavior goes on for many days, with repeated slaps from Rita (television crew member) played by Andie MacDowell; Phil begins to have spiritual awakenings. He realizes that each day never changes and begins to recognize that being angry at the events that he can not change, changes nothing. His behavior (through his mistreating of others), attempting to bargain his way out of the situation (through manipulating, exploiting and taking advantage of both his fellow crew members and town's people) and by being depressed (resulting in multiple suicide attempts and failures) does not work, Phil arrives at a place of acceptance.

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

### **Using What Works to Enhance**

The movie's plot reveals that once Phil arrives at a place of accepting what he can not change, that he begins to use what he has been given (events and circumstances) that he can not change; in ways to empower and enhance both his, his crew's and the town's people lives. As the movie continues we see how Phil's behavior toward both himself and other people changes from being exploitative and manipulative to being genuine.

### **Making a Decision**

As we see in this movie, Bill Murray's character; Phil Connors could have remained trapped by the awareness of his being stuck in one day. He could have continued to be angry at his set of circumstances. In his anger and frustration, Phil; could have continued to exploit and take advantage of his fellow television crew members and the town's people. He could have stayed focused on being depressed over the things that he could not change.

### **Developing**

Instead, Phil reached a point in his experience where his awareness became an acceptance of what he could not changed, so that he could begin to enrich both his life and the lives' of his television crew and the town's people. And so he did, by learning to ice sculpt, play the piano and go about helping various town's people to enhance their lives and well-beings. Although the movie's plot is fictional, what is shown to have been learned by Phil can be a benefit to all of us.

### **From Awareness, to Acceptance, to Action**

As illustrated in the movie, **Groundhog Day** and through the character of Phil Connors as played by Bill Murray, awareness in and of itself can lead the individual to becoming bitter in life. Instead of being empowered by the awareness through the process of reaching a place of acceptance, awareness can leave the individual feeling like they are a victim. A victim of their awareness. Awareness that can lead the individual to believe that exploiting other people is justified. Awareness, can then lead the individual to believe they are helpless of what can not be changed.

## **Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better? Part 4**

### **Taking a Different Course of Action**

On the other hand, awareness; through the grieving process -- moving beyond denial through anger, bargaining and depression to a point of acceptance can lead the individual living with a brain injury to be empowered to take a different course of action. A course of action, as Phil Connors took once he arrived at a place of acceptance for what could not be change. A course of action that helped Phil to choose to take a different course of action to create a good life for himself.

### **Discovering Choices**

Choices that would empower, enhance and give him the ability to be of service to the people who were part of his life. As with Phil, we can choose to use our place of awareness to move us through the grieving process of what we can not change; so that we can change the things that we can by taking action through acceptance. Action that can lead us to create a good life for ourselves instead of being caught in a "time loop" by mere awareness.

### **Acceptance and action that will enrich and empower us to be victors in life.**

Victors, instead of reinforcing the notion that we are victims of a traumatic brain injury or other brain injuries. And as with Bill Murray's character, Phil Connors; our transition from being bitter to better will occur through a series of awareness'. Awareness' as we transitioned through being angry by trying to change the things we can't (bargaining) and surrendering to what we can't change (acceptance).

**Acceptance of our realities so that we can learn how to celebrate our lives. Celebrate our lives as we learn to use our gifts, talent and abilities in ways that work for us. By doing so, we will enrich both our lives and the lives that our lives touch.**

## **Why I Needed to Challenge My Brain Injury Awareness Part 1**

While speaking with some one whom I respect earlier today, he helped me to see some thing that I believe needs to be clarified. In **Enough with Brain Injury Awareness** and **Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better?** I spoke about the issue of denial. In this article I would like to make a distinction.

**I am making this distinction to further clarify that I am not referring to denial in terms of a personality disorder, as describe by Wikipedia “wrecked by success”; experiences “victory through defeat”; gratified by personal misfortunes, failures, humiliations, and ordeals; eschews best interests; chooses to be victimized, ruined, disgraced.”**

Although there are individuals, who find themselves stuck or encouraged to remain in denial, I am not referring to this type or designation of denial in either **Enough with Brain Injury Awareness** or **Will Brain Injury Awareness Leave you Bitter or Better?**. In both of my above articles surrounding brain injury awareness, my focus in sharing what I did in those articles was from a recovery approach that encourages holistic healing. Healing in my mind, body, spirit and emotions as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury.

**To encourage individuals who may be having a difficult time, as I did; moving from being aware, to being able to accept and move forward. Move forward to create a good life for themselves as individuals living with the impact of a brain injury.**

In my experience, I remained in denial to the significance of the impact of my traumatic brain injury because I did not know that I could do anything otherwise. In my experience, I remained in denial because I had no idea how to “connect the dots” concerning the impact of my traumatic brain injury. How to accept my deficits and limitations and how to take a different course of action to enhance my life as an individual living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury. What I discovered, awareness, in and of itself; left me out in the cold with little hope.

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

In my experience, I found that my brain injury awareness only reinforced what the medical model of treatment offered and wanted me to believe about myself, which offered little hope.

Little hope beyond the “awareness” of my brain injury which resulted in being labeled, stereotyped and stigmatized. Little hope, which led me to believe that I was limited by my traumatic brain injury. A “limitation” that i was led to believe that I needed to embrace.

## **Why I Needed to Challenge My Brain Injury Awareness Part 2**

Not only was I led to believe that I needed to embrace these “limitations” encouraged by the medical model and the brain injury industry, but that my identity as an individual was now tied to the diagnosis, label, stereotype and stigmatization.

The medical model also led me to believe what I could hope for was based on the findings and results from what their studies and agendas had validated. The medical model of treatment and the brain injury industry subsequently offered little hope beyond what they led me to believe about myself.

What I discovered through confronting the “awareness” provided by the medical model and the brain injury industry was that my worth, value and identity was not “limited” their study results. What I discovered was that my worth, value and identity were not tied to a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype or a societal stigmatization.

The hope that I discovered through confronting “the awareness” that I was led to believe about myself, helped me to realize that I was not my brain injury. The hope that helped me to realize that “the awareness” the medical model of treatment was selling was not my identity as a tbi survivor. What the hope helped me to realize was that I did not have to play by the “rules” of “their awareness”. The rules of “the awareness” that the medical model of treatment and the brain industry led me to believe. Led me to believe, that I needed to adopt to go along to get along. The “awareness” that led me believe that I was limited because of my limitations.

**That is why I needed to confront the denial, perpetrated by the identity of being limited by my limitations and deficits. To confront the denial of what I was led to believe.**

By doing so, I found that I was able to move from being bitter. Move from being bitter to becoming better because of the way my life had been impacted by my traumatic brain injury. Through moving from being aware to being able to accept what I could not change, I was able to get into action. Action that helped me to create beyond a “belief” that I was limited.

**I was able to get into action to create my own identity, beyond the identity of a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype and societal stigmatization.**

Through moving from being aware, by challenging the identity given to me by a medical model and the brain injury industry and by accepting how my life had been changed because of the impact of my traumatic brain injury I was able to get into action. Action that helped me escape from the “box” and the identity given to me by ” the awareness”.

## **Why I Needed to Challenge My Brain Injury Awareness Part 3**

### **Be Aware of What People may Be Telling You**

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

### **In Conclusion**

In the process of challenging my brain injury awareness, my denial, the identity sold to me by the medical model of treatment and the brain injury industry, I have been able to move from being bitter to being better. By accepting my deficits and limitation and through taking a different course of action, I have been able to move from being bitter to being better.

Through taking action to move beyond the designed "box" of "limitations" meant to contain me, I have learned how to use my passion. Use my passion to encourage, motivate, empower and share hope through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. In ways that work for me for the individuals who want what I have to bring to the table of life.

### **Share your Thoughts with Me**

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

### **Questions of Reflection**

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

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

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

To share your experience with me, you may do so through a comment or confidentially by using my email address: **secondchancetolive1@yahoo.com**.

I look forward to hearing and learning from you my friend.

## **Living with Limitations Can Leave you and I Believing that We are Stupid**

To watch and listen to a video presentation of this article, click on this link: [Living with Limitations Can Leave you and I Believing that We are Stupid Video Presentation](#)

Living with limitations can leave you and I believing that we are stupid. That we are less than and insignificant because we do not fit into a prescribed “mold”.

### **How Did this Happen to Me**

In life you may have sustained a debilitating illness or you may have been in an accident that has left you with a disability or disabilities. These disabilities and limitations may prevent or interfere with your ability to fit into a “prescribed” societal mold or expectation. Consequently, you may find yourself frustrated by your set of circumstances.

### **Because of Our Circumstances**

Because of our circumstances and frustrations we may find ourselves focusing on our limitations and inabilities. In the process, we may feel stuck in a system that reinforces our feelings of inadequacy and insignificance. In the process, we may be led to believe that they must be “right”.

### **In the process, we may begin to or continue to doubt ourselves.**

Growing up you and I may have been told that we will never amount to anything. Such lingering messages may reinforce our feelings of inferiority.

### **Be Aware**

You may have a “system” that is telling you that unless you fit into their “mold” for you, you can not and will never be enough. Consequently, you may find yourself feeling stupid, less than, inadequate and insignificant because of what you are unable to do or accomplish with your life.

You and I Don't Have to Fit into Their “Mold” for Us

### **The Good News is that We can Create our Own Mold.**

The good news is that you and I do not have to fit into other people's molds to feel good about ourselves. By realizing that we don't have to fit into their “expectations” or “molds”, we are given a new freedom. A freedom to create and build our own “mold”.

**“Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb trees, it will live it's whole life believing that it is stupid.” Albert Einstein**

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 1**

**I recently was interviewed by a professional who works within the brain injury industry. During the interview, he asked 26 questions.**

Among the questions, he asked me, “What comes to mind when you hear the term ‘new normal’ after experiencing a brain injury?”.

**Below is the answer to that question with details. Because of the length of the article, I divided the article into 6 parts.**

### **My Experience with Brain Injury**

As you may have read in my about page, I sustained an open skull fracture in an automobile accident in 1967 when I was 10 years old. The open skull fracture resulted in right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. I also fractured my left femur (thigh bone).

I remained in a coma for 3 weeks and was not expected to live the night of the accident. I was also not expected to succeed beyond high school academically. This expectation was shared with my parents after I underwent 2 EEG’s and a battery cognitive, social and psychological testing at the age of 10. My parents did not share the expectations of these cognitive, social and psychological testing with me.

### **What I Shared with the Professional when Asked About the Term “New Normal”**

I believe that life is likened to being on a train. The train runs down what I envision as the track of life. Along the track, I come to various places that look familiar to me. And then the day came when I experienced my traumatic brain injury. On that day, unbeknownst to me, a “switch” was pulled and my life headed down a different track of the railroad. The railroad of my life.

### **Experiencing a brain injury is likened to being on a new and different set of railroad tracks.**

The track that once looked familiar no longer looks familiar to me. Although being switched to a different track wasn’t my choice, I now find my life traveling in a different direction. Although what I now see myself traveling on is unfamiliar, I realize I that can’t get back on the other track of the railroad. The track before my brain injury.

### **Accepting Something Does Not Mean I Like “IT”**

After 20 years of getting and being fired, terminated and “let go” from many jobs, I reached a “bottom”. A “bottom” in my life when I realized I could no longer deny my reality.

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 2**

**Although I was able to obtain my undergraduate degree in 10 years and my master’s degree in 3 1/2 years I could not keep a job.**

After applying for SSDI (twice in Florida and once in North Carolina) and completing 2 Department of Vocational programs (one in Florida and one in North Carolina) I was deemed unemployable my third SSDI application was approved in 1999.

In my experience, even after my third application was approved by the Social Security Administration I still had a difficult time accepting the impact of my traumatic brain injury. How could I be able to obtain my undergraduate degree and master’s degree and not be employable?

But there was nothing I could do to change that reality.

### **To Be Able to Accept My “New Normal” after My Brain Injury**

In my experience to be able to accept that I was traveling down a **train track** that I did not like, I **had to grieve what I could not change**. What I found was that I needed to confront what I could not do (my **denial**). I needed to allow myself to be angry for what I realized I could not change. I needed to try to disprove several more times that I was not impacted by my brain injury (**bargain**).

Finally, I needed to allow myself to be in a place of despondency (**depression**). I needed to be despondent until I became sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Sick and tired before I could begin to confront my denial and begin the grieving process.

In my experience, I had to move through the stages of grieving (denial, anger, bargaining, and depression).

Move through the grieving process before I could begin to accept what I could not change.

### **Brain Injury, Re-birth and New Normal**

Re-birthing, Re-framing and Seeing My Life’s Experience in a New Way after my Brain Injury

While answering the professional working within the brain injury industry, I used the term “re-birth”. Re-birth in place of the term “a new normal”. I used the term “re-birth” to illustrate the need to own our power.

**Own our Power after experiencing a brain injury.**

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 3 “Re-Birth”**

**I shared the term “rebirth” with him because I believe new opportunities exist apart from the “old me”.**

By framing my experience as a “rebirth” I am able to start fresh. I am able to start with a “clean slate” or a clean “canvas”. I am able to “create in ways that work for me“. Create in ways that work for me instead of “being distracted. Distracted by what no longer works for me“.

### **Trains, Train tracks, Switches, Railroad of Life and Rebirth**

Using the metaphor of the train, train tracks, switches on the railroad of life and a rebirth, I am able to own my power.

### **Owning Our Power**

Owning my power instead of feeling like I had been “cheated” out of something because of my traumatic brain Injury. Through owning my power I am able to move forward with my life, instead of being stuck by comparing the “old me” with the “new me“.

By re-framing (looking at “what is” instead of looking at “what isn’t”) I gain hope.

### **“What Is”**

Instead of comparing the “old me” with the “new me“, I am able to see my experience “what is” as an opportunity to create anew.

By owning my power, what no longer “works” or for that matter, never worked (after sustaining my brain injury) I no longer have to see myself as limited.

### **Moving Forward with My Life**

### **Moving Forward with my Life after a Brain Injury**

By re-framing, my experience and letting go of what can not be changed I am able to move forward with my life. Through seeing my experience as a “re-birthing” I am able to create with “what is“, instead of looking back to “what could have been”. By building on “what is” I am able to create my dreams in ways that work for me.

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

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 4**

### **Strategies that Have Helped Me in my Re-birthing Process after my Brain Injury**

Through my recovery process, I became aware that I am much more than my brain injury. I am made up of a mind, body, soul, spirit, and emotions. With this realization, I became aware that I needed to include my mind, body, spirit, soul, and emotions in my ongoing brain injury recovery process.

By examining how to involve my **mind, body, spirit, soul**, and, **emotions** in my ongoing brain injury recovery process I developed strategies.

### **Strategies for Discovering Our New Normal after a Brain Injury**

Strategies that have Given me the Ability to Own My Power in my Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery Process

### **What Makes Me Who I Am In My Life**

**Mind** – Growing in wisdom and understanding of how to relate to ourselves, other people and the world around us.

**How We Learn** — Understanding ourselves and how we learn after our brain injury. How we learned before our brain injury may now be different. As a result, we may find ourselves frustrated with learning. Consequently, the way people (teachers) may be trying to teach us may not be the way we learn. Get tested to determine how you learn.

**Body** – Using the principles of neuroplasticity to improve your hand-eye coordination, balance, body awareness, coordination, focus, and agility. Create new neural pathways and brain reorganization through repetitive mirrored movements using both the dominant and non-dominant sides of our bodies.

### **Connections**

**Spirit** – My connection to God. My connection to myself. The importance of making peace with God so that I can learn to trust Him and His guidance, The importance of making peace with my past is so that my past does not spoil my present.

**Soul** – Growing in knowledge and wisdom of how to accomplish what I discovered through my process of acceptance. Learning to use my gifts, talents as I tap into my ability to live my purpose through my being.

**Emotions** – Learning how to talk, trust and feel with safe people. The power of identification. Coming out of the shadows of isolation and breaking free from feelings of alienation.

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 5**

**In the event that you experienced a brain injury and are seeking to discover the new you, I have several suggestions.**

Realize that a switch has been pulled and you are no longer traveling down a familiar railroad track.

Don't beat up on yourself because you can no longer do what you could do before your brain injury.

It is healthy to grieve what you can not change. Allow yourself to move through the grieving process.

### **Give Yourself Permission**

Give yourself permission to look at your life and experience in a new way.

Begin to “paint” on the canvas with your gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for you.

Understand that the way that you now learn (after your brain injury) may be different from the way you used to learn (before your brain injury).

The way people may be teaching you may not be the way that you now learn. Get tested to see discover the way that you learn best.

Develop an ongoing recovery strategy to include your body, soul, spirit, mind, and emotions in your ongoing recovery process.

**Below are Several Tools that Have Helped me to Own my Power through my ongoing brain injury recovery process.**

You may find these tools to also be helpful in owning your power after your brain injury.

**Click on Below Links to Open the Tools.**

**[Easy Translator into Your Language for Second Chance to Live](#)**

**[1866 Article/Video Presentation Links within 12 Peer Support Categories](#)**

**[Navigating Life After a Traumatic Brain Injury 419 Video Presentations Playlist](#)**

**[Navigating Life After a Traumatic Brain Injury 49 Video Presentation Series Playlist](#)**

**[Building Your Life After a Traumatic Brain Injury 30 Video Presentation Playlist](#)**

**[32 Posters to Inspire, Encourage, Motivate, and Empower](#)**

**[Second Chance to Live — 20 Brain Injury Recovery Slideshow](#)**

**Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 6**  
**[Healing — 11 Free eBooks — After Traumatic Life Events and Major Physical Injuries](#)**  
**[Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning/Relearning Skills and Skill Sets](#)**  
**[Nine Habits to Benefit from Using the Principle of Neuroplasticity](#)**  
**[How I Use Neuroplasticity to Create Neural Pathways/Brain Reorganization](#)**  
**[Childhood Stroke \(Brain Injury\) and Healing our Brain and Body](#)**  
**[Testimonies and Endorsements for Second Chance to Live](#)**

## **Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Video Presentation Series**

I wrote this series, Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury” in **December 2018**. I created a **3 part video presentation series** of the article series to share the information with individuals who learn through watching and listening.

To benefit from the series, please watch and listen to each part of the video presentation series. The **2nd part** builds on **Part 1** and **Part 3** builds on **Part 2** of the series. Click on each part of the video presentation and they will open on YouTube.

**[Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 1 Video Presentation](#)**

**[Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 2 Video Presentation](#)**

**[Discovering a “New Normal” after Experiencing a Brain Injury Part 3 Video Presentation](#)**

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

I wrote the article to share what helped me to recognize when I was/am being bullied.

I wrote the article to share what helps me to recognize if a group, organization, church or other venue is good for me.

### **Please let me know if the information within helps you.**

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. 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 what I discovered through my process.**

As each person grows and develops within 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 within 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 confrontation and 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 or pattern is set.

### **With repeated reinforcement, the individual becomes conditioned to a specific response, compliance.**

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, Compliance and Conditioning**

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/groups throughout their lifetime. 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.

**Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? -- Are you Being Bullied? Part 2**  
**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 within the group. Consequently, the individual may consciously believe that apart from maintaining rigid control and compliance with the group's expectations, that they will never find their identity.

**Abandoning Ourselves**

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, we may find that we have abandoned ourselves.

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?**

In the process, individuals may give up parts of themselves which make them uniquely qualified to be themselves to be a part of the group. In the process, they may find themselves (consciously or unconsciously) adopting the identity of the group.

**Identity**

Until pieces of the puzzle started to come together – that gave me the understanding – 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.

**Being Bullied**

The packaging of the bullying may be subtle and refined, but the impact of being bullied, by the group or by individuals within the group; is the same as when it occurred on the “playground”.

## **Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? -- Are you Being Bullied? Part 3**

### **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 given up our birth right. Our birthright 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.

### **Spiritual Awakening**

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 that my identity needed to be defined outside of myself.

**I bought into the notion that my identity needed to be defined outside of myself because I did feel like I had a self.**

With my awareness (that I had a self) 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 find my identity beyond the identity of the ‘group’.

### **Some Additional Insights**

Moreover, 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.

### **Discarding Parts of Ourselves**

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

## **Is the Group that You are In Hurting You? -- Are you Being Bullied? Part 4**

control and manipulate the individual — with the threat of being ostracized, rejected, abandoned, or alienated — the groups may not be good for the individual. 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.

### **My Experience**

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.

### **Compliant Conditioning and Manipulation**

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 group, as judging benefits no one. Instead, I take care of myself by practicing the principles of detachment and live and let live.

### **Keeping the Focus on Myself**

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.

**Through being aware, I am able to distinguish whether I am being bullied and if a group or groups are good for me.**

## **Dispelling the Notion of Dis-ability — I Just Do Things in Ways that Work for Me Part 1**

Recently a friend left a comment to one of my articles. I responded to his comment by writing this article, Dispelling the Notion of Disability — I Just Do Things in Ways that Work for Me.

### **The Article**

“I can definitely identify with you on this front. I attempted to prove that I was “not” disabled for many years. I did so in an attempt to prove that I was not “defective”, that there was not something “wrong” with me and as a result, I was worth loving and given respect.”

In my experience, I had to reach a point when the pain of denying my reality had to supersede my need to deny my reality. Deny my reality in an attempt to prove that there was nothing “defective” or “wrong”with me.

### **What I needed to Do**

In my experience, I had to confront my denial — despite feeling defective and as though there was some thing wrong with me. In my experience, I had to confront my denial before I could begin to love and accept myself as an individual.

### **The Process**

In my experience, I discovered that I needed to move through the **5 stages of grieving**, as spoken to by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book; **On Death and Denying**.

The five stages: **Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance**.

In my experience, I discovered that I needed to confront both my denial and the denial of family and friends before I could challenge the notion of dis-ability.

In my experience, I discovered that I needed to work through the stages of grieving before I could consider the possibilities of my ability.

### **Reaching a Point of Acceptance**

In my experience, I had to work through the 1st 4 stages, to be able to get to a place of acceptance; before I could stop defending myself for having experienced a brain injury.

In my experience, I needed to get to a place of acceptance before I could begin to see that I was not defective or that there was some thing wrong with me because I experienced a brain injury.

In my experience, I needed to work on learning how to accept that I am powerless over the injury to my brain, while at the same time understanding that I am not not helpless.

In my experience, as I began to realize that I was and am not helpless, I saw a “light” at the end of the proverbial “tunnel”.

## **Dispelling the Notion of Dis-ability — I Just Do Things in Ways that Work for Me Part 2**

The light helped me to realize that I could get into action to realize my capacity to do things (create hope in my life) in ways that would work for me.

### **Getting into Action**

The light helped me to realize that I could create a life for myself, within my reality.

The light helped me to realize that I could empower my life and, in turn; encourage other people to see the “light” at the end of their “proverbial tunnel”.

The light at the end of the proverbial tunnel that helped me to realize, that although I may have a disability; I am not dis-abled.

The light at the end of the tunnel that helped me to realize that I could create a good life for myself.

**“I am not disabled. I just do things in ways that work for me.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

### **Today’s Thought**

In the event that you are living with a disability, my encouragement to you my friend is to not give up.

Do not focus on the “dis” of disability but focus on “ability”.

Look for ways to use the ability that you possess.

The ability to use your passion through your skills, talents and abilities in ways that will work for you.

### **Time and Commitment**

Your search to find a way to use your ability may take time, but be encouraged. The process took time for me. Lots of time, but I am glad that I did not give up.

### **Try Something New**

My encouragement to you is to try something new.

Keep searching until you find a way that will work for you. .

Stay committed to your process and don’t give up. AND, you will see your life flourish.

## **Dispelling the Notion of Dis-ability — I Just Do Things in Ways that Work for Me Part 3**

### **Quotes that Empower Ability**

“Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential.”  
Winston Churchill

“Don’t give up at half time. Concentrate on winning the second half.” Paul Bryant

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” Alice Walker

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

“The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage.” Thucydides

“When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don’t adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.” Confucius

“Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it.” Bruce Lee

“Choose to focus your time, energy and conversation around people who inspire you, support you and help you to grow you into your happiest, strongest, wisest self.” Karen Salmansohn

“Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have. Make the Now the primary focus of your life.” Eckhart Tolle

## **You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Part 1**

I have also created a video **You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Video Presentation** of this article. To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, click on this link: [\*\*You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Video Presentation\*\*](#)

In the event that you are living with an invisible disability, I am writing this to you. To encourage you, as I need to encourage myself; to not give up.

Although there may be people who want or need to deny our realities, we can still excel. We can excel in our realities.

**Our invisible disabilities do not have to continue to make us crazy.**

We can own and accept our realities and we can move forward with our lives. We can be aware. We can create a good life for ourselves.

**We can pursue our dreams and our destinies. We can create hope.**

In my past three articles, [\*\*Denial and Brain Injury Recovery\*\*](#), [\*\*Brain Injury and Anger\*\*](#) and [\*\*Brain Injury, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance\*\*](#) I shared my experience grieving my reality.

A reality that remained hidden to me for many years. A reality that I needed to be able to accept, but discovered I could not accept.

Could not accept without confronting my denial, processing my anger, trying to change what I did not like and working through my depression and despondency.

**In these 3 articles, I shared what helped me to realize that I was not crazy. That I was living with an invisible disability.**

That although I could not change my reality, I no longer had to feel limited because of my invisible disability.

That I no longer had to feel stuck, because of my invisible disability. That I could succeed.

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

### **Did Not Have to Make Me Crazy**

What I began to realize was that I am not equipped to walk through certain doors.

What I also began to realize was that not being equipped to walk through certain doors, did not have to make me crazy. What I began to realize was that, although; I am not equipped to walk through certain doors, I am equipped to walk through other doors.

## **You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Part 2**

### **A New Freedom**

With this realization, I experienced a new freedom. A freedom to look for doors that would open for me.

With this realization came the sadness that no one wanted what I had to offer. With this realization came the challenge to believe or not believe that I was inept. Inept, because the department of vocational rehabilitation had deemed me unemployable and the Social Security Administration had declared me disabled.

### **A Choice**

With this realization came the awareness that I could either believe the department of vocational rehabilitation and the social security administration:

(and) do nothing, stay stuck and give up

(or) I could chose a different path.

A path that would equip me and lead me to walk through other doors.

A path that would empower my ability to follow my dreams, to pursue my destiny and to be of service.

### **Awareness: My Experience with Interest Inventories**

In my experience, I took many interest inventories in an attempt to find a career path. What I discovered was that interest inventories helped me to understand my interests but did not show me how I could **BEST** use my gifts, talents, and abilities.

What I discovered was that these interest inventories did not and could not factor in the impact of my invisible disability. An invisible disability that I had no idea was getting in the way of my ability to be successful in career paths.

### **My Experience Beyond Interest Inventories — Finding Out What Worked Best for Me**

In my experience, I would have never thought I would be using my gifts, talents, and abilities writing. In college English class, use of verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, semicolons, and the like were hard for me to grasp.

I now realize that my difficulties stemmed from my difficulties learning sequences of information. I share with you that I did poorly in English class. so as to encourage to not count out what you did poorly in high school or college. In my experience, I discovered that my ability to communicate through writing developed over years.

## **You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Part 3**

### **Your style of creating may take time too.**

What I discovered was that although I could not do some things, I could learn how to do other things very well. So, I spent 6 more years exploring how this could be accomplished. I wrote poems, an autobiography, a book (registered but not published) and then at the encouragement of a friend, a blog.

To read about my process and journey discovering what worked best for me, you are invited to click on these link:

[Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 1](#) and [Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 2](#).

### **Discovering What Works Just Takes Time**

The reason that I share with you that it took me 6 more years before I found a way, is to encourage you. To encourage you to not give up exploring how to use your gifts, talents, and abilities to follow your dreams. Persistence, tenacity, being intentional and maintaining focus were and continue to be part of my process and journey.

Persistence, tenacity, being intentional, focused and a commitment to developing my gifts, talents and abilities. And I need to stay encouraged with the process, knowing that more will be revealed to me, with time.

Below are links to articles that I have written to share what helped. Helped me in my process of discovery. Helped me to realize that I was not crazy because I needed to do things differently.

**The information with in these articles may also help you in your process of discovery.**

Click on each title and the article will open on Second Chance to Live.

[Answering the Call that Never Came Part 1](#), [Answering the Call that Never Came Part 2](#), [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 1](#), [Defining the Basics of a Successful Training Camp Part 2](#), [Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets](#) and [From Brain Injury Awareness to Brain Injury Acceptance to Creating Hope in Our Lives](#)

## **The Cracked Pot and Embracing the Beauty of Our Flaws Part 1**

I have been thinking about a parable. **The Parable of the Cracked Pot.** The parable helps me to embrace the beauty of my flaws.

In the event that you have a difficulty embracing the beauty of your flaws, I would invite you to read the **Parable of the Cracked Pot.**

### **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 master’s 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 master’s 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 master’s 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.**

## **The Cracked Pot and Embracing the Beauty of Our Flaws Part 2**

**For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."**

### **My Encouragement to You as I need to Remember**

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws and cracks to grace His Father's table.

### **In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste.**

My encouragement to you my friend is — as I need to encourage myself — do not be afraid of your flaws.

### **Embrace the Beauty of Your Flaws**

Embrace what makes you, uniquely you, and embrace your flaws. Surrender those flaws to the master (a loving God) and He will use them. He will use them to be a blessing to the people whom He brings into your life. He will use our cracks to water the seeds that He is planting.

**In so doing, He (a loving God) will use the beauty of what we perceive to be flaws to create an awesome and lasting legacy.**

## **Permission to Be Different Part 1**

In life, there are many forces that want to convince us that unless we conform, we are nothing. Going along to get along can leave us feeling as though we do not have a voice. Having and living with a visible or an invisible disability can further lead us to believe that being different needs to be denied or defended.

Being different and unable to change our realities can leave us feeling alone and isolated. Our disabilities can also leave us feeling depressed and dejected. Depressed and dejected, we may find ourselves among other people who are “different”. In response, we may feel as though we have no other options but to accept our lot in life.

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

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

But there is good news. We have more power than we may realize. We can bring about change, as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther Jr. did in the civil rights movement. We can speak up.

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

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

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

**Let me give you the permission to be different.**

**Let me give you the permission to be uniquely you.**

**Let me give you the permission to follow your dreams.**

## **Permission to be Different Part 2**

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

Below are several quotes that inspire, encourage and give me the permission to be Different.

**To be Uniquely me, to Follow my Dreams and to live my Life with a New Freedom.**

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

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

**Ernest Hemingway**

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

**John Quincy Adams**

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

**Aldous Huxley**

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

**Les Brown**

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

**Pablo Picasso**

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

**Helen Keller**

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

**Steve Jobs**

### **Permission to be Different Part 3**

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

**Theodore Roosevelt**

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

**Henry David Thoreau**

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

**James Trusdale Adams**

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

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

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

**Arnold Schwarzenegger**

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

**Nick Vujicic**

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

**Wayne Dyer**

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

**Mahatma Ghandi**

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

**Steve Jobs**

## **Permission to be Different Part 4**

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

**Ray Bradbury**

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

**J. K. Rowling**

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

**Tony Robbins**

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

**Denis Waitley**

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

**Dale Carnegie**

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

## **A Message for Parents — How to Empower Your Children Part 1**

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. No one is to blame. Pointing fingers in anyone's direction does no one any good. I am alone responsible for my choices.

The beauty of living is that we can make a decision to change our behavior at any time. The process of behavior modification usually begins with an awareness that is followed by acceptance. Acceptance opens the door to freedom. Freedom gives us the ability to take 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 then take provides the momentum that helps to resolve 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 their experiences.

**If they chose to avoid or deny the reasons for their irritability, restlessness, and discontentment, I no longer have to absorb their pain. What I have found is that debilitating guilt and debilitating shame can only be resolved through personal/rigorous honesty.**

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 who is willing to be abused.

**Transactional analysis sums up the last behavior as passing the "hot potato". This last option involves making someone else responsible the reason why they experience shame and guilt.**

## **A Message for Parents — How to Empower Your Children Part 2**

In my experience, my Dad's inability or unwillingness to accept that I had a disability motivated his behavior. He blamed me for not being able to be more and do more. His criticism of my best efforts made me responsible for his disappointment.

My Dad could not or would not accept that I was doing the best I could, given the fact that I was a traumatic brain injury survivor. I also believe that my Dad transferred his guilt and shame onto me for his driving the night of the accident that caused the damage to my brain. Because my Dad was unable to process his own guilt and shame, he transferred that guilt and shame onto me in the form of blame and criticism. In the process, I believe he made me responsible for carrying his guilt and shame for many years. Thank God I became aware.

I am not angry or bitter at Dad. I am glad I worked through a lot of my hurt and pain and was able to stop carrying my Dad's guilt and shame for not being more. I believe that I am more than enough, disability and all. I am not my traumatic brain injury, but my brain injury changed the course of my life forever. I wish my Dad could have accepted that I was doing my very best, rather than wanting me to be someone without a disability.

I am sad for both my Dad and myself because we could have had a much better relationship for many years before he died. Although my Dad had a difficult time accepting the impact of my traumatic brain injury and invisible disability, in the last 3-4 years of his life he told me that he was proud of me. Thank God that I became aware so I could let go of his guilt and shame.

### **In Conclusion – Encouragement to Parents**

As you become aware, stop passing the "hot potato". Own and work through your guilt and shame instead of making your children feel responsible for your guilt and shame.

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 their bliss.

One book that has helped me tremendously. **Shame and Guilt, Masters of Disguise** by **Jane Middleton-Moz**. The contents in this book opened my eyes and helped me.

## **Loving Ourselves Unconditionally after a Brain Injury Part 1**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, you may click on this link: [Loving Ourselves Unconditionally after a Brain Injury Video Presentation](#)

Learning to love ourselves unconditionally after a brain injury can be challenging.

Yesterday, in one of my daily meditations, I read the below entry.

In the process, I was encouraged.

The entry gives me a way that I can use to love myself unconditionally.

I would invite you to read the below entry.

### **Loving Ourselves Unconditionally**

Love yourself into health and a good life of your own. Love yourself into relationships that work for you and the other person. Love yourself into peace, happiness, joy, success, and contentment.

Love yourself into all that you always wanted. We can stop treating ourselves the way others treated us if they behaved in a less than healthy, desirable way.

If we have learned to see ourselves critically, conditionally, and in a diminishing and punishing way, it's time to stop. Other people treated us that way, but it's even worse to treat ourselves that way now.

Loving ourselves may seem foreign, even foolish at times. People may accuse us of being selfish. We don't have to believe them.

People who love themselves are truly able to love others and let others love them. People who love themselves and hold themselves in high esteem are those who give the most, contribute the most, love the most.

How do we love ourselves? By forcing it at first. By faking it if necessary. By "acting as if". By working as hard at loving and liking ourselves as we have at not liking ourselves.

### **Explore what it means to love yourself.**

Do things for yourself that reflect compassionate, nurturing, self-love.

Embrace and love all of yourself – past, present, and future. Forgive yourself quickly and as often as necessary. Encourage yourself. Tell yourself good things about yourself.

If we think and believe negative ideas, get them out in the open quickly and honestly, so we can replace those beliefs with better ones.

## **Loving Ourselves Unconditionally after a Brain Injury Part 2**

Pat yourself on the back, when necessary. Discipline yourself when necessary. Ask for help; ask for what you need.

Sometimes, give yourself treats. Do not treat yourself like a pack mule, always pushing and driving harder. Learn to be good to yourself. Choose behaviors with preferable consequences – treating yourself is one.

Learn to stop your pain, even when that means making difficult decisions. Do not unnecessarily deprive yourself. Sometimes give yourself what you want, just because you want it.

Stop explaining and justifying yourself. When you make mistakes, let them go. We learn we grow, and we learn some more. And through it all we love ourselves.

We work at it, then work at it some more. One day we'll wake up, look in the mirror, and find that loving ourselves has become habitual. We're now living with a person who gives and receives love, because that person loves him- or herself. Self-love will take hold and become a guiding force in our life.

*Today, I will work at loving myself. I will work as hard at loving myself as I have at not liking myself. Help me to let go of self-hate and behaviors that reflect not liking myself. Help me to replace those with behaviors that reflect self-love. Today, God, help me to hold myself in high self-esteem. Help me know I'm lovable and capable of giving and receiving love.*

Book: **The Language of Letting Go**; May 25 entry, "**Loving Ourselves Unconditionally**", pages 143-145 Author Melody Beattie

The author of **Codependent No More** and **Beyond Codependency**

## **Brain Injury and Self-Advocacy Part 1**

As I shared on my [About Page](#), I lived with the unknown impact of an open skull fracture, a brain injury and an invisible disability for 39 years. This lack of awareness turned out to be both a blessing and a curse to me in my ongoing recovery process. Although I could not see it at the time, I now realize that both my blessings and curses taught me lessons about self-advocacy.

**Both the blessings and the curses inspired me to make adjustments. Self-advocacy motivated me to make these adjustments. Self-advocacy inspired me to not give up. Self-advocacy empowered my ability to look for solutions.**

**Self-advocacy encouraged me to keep looking for ways that would work for me. Self-advocacy taught me that I could create hope in my life. Self-advocacy revealed to me that what I thought were curses, were in reality; gifts in disguise.**

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

**Click on the blue links to read the article part**

A blessing to me, in that I did not give up; when I faced challenges in my life. A curse because I internalized the difficulties that I experienced, as I blamed myself as others blamed me, as shared in [Finding Craig — Growing Up Continued Part 2](#). A blessing in that I kept looking academically and vocationally for ways to use my gifts, talents and abilities, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Academic Path Part 4](#).

A curse because I could not find a fit vocationally from what I had learned, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Brain Injury Awareness Part 5](#). A blessing because of what I learned through my disappointment, discouragement and disillusionment, as shared in [Finding Craig — Empowering my Life Part 6](#).

A curse for having to move through the pain to re-learn how to walk again, as shared in [Finding Craig — Learning to Walk Again Part 3](#). A blessing because circumstances motivated me to continue to train and develop physically, as shared in [Finding Craig — My Physical Recovery Process Part 7](#). A blessing in that my struggle, to pursue self-advocacy over the past 48 years; has helped me to make sense of my brain injury, as shared in [Finding Craig — Making Sense of Brain Injury Part 8](#).

## **Brain Injury and Self-Advocacy Part 2**

A blessing because what I learned empowered me to not give up. A blessing to realize that I could be my own advocate and stand up for myself. A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I no longer had to feel helpless.

**A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I could take steps to empower my life. I could take steps to empower my life, although I had been deemed unemployable and declared disabled. A blessing to realize that by being my own advocate, I could begin to look at my circumstances in a different way.**

A way that would empower my process, instead of feeling defeated by them. By being my own advocate, I began to realize that I could learn the lessons my circumstances taught me. I could use them to create hope in my life. Through being my own advocate, I could work to develop my mind, body and spirit to enhance my life.

**Through being my own advocate, I realized that I no longer had to feel helpless because of my brain injury. Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up. Our circumstances teach us lessons that prepare us for opportunities.**

Those opportunities teach us more lessons that prepare us for more opportunities. Collectively circumstances, lessons and opportunities lead and guide us. They lead and guide us to our dreams and our destinies.

### **Benefits of Self-Advocacy**

I share the above with you to encourage you to realize, like I have in my life; that we can make a difference in our lives. By owning this reality that we can make a difference in our lives, we take a huge step forward in self-advocacy. By being believing that we can make a difference in our lives, we empower our ability to realize that we are no longer helpless.

**Other people may have a desire to help us, but we are the only ones who can do the work. Do the work to empower our process and improve the quality of our lives.**

Brain injury awareness provides the door that we can step through to empower our lives. Self-advocacy frees us from a sense of helplessness and dependency. Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we do not have to limit ourselves because of a medical model of recovery.

### **Brain Injury and Self-Advocacy Part 3**

**Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we no longer have to limit ourselves because of a stereotype or societal stigmatization.**

No longer are we trapped by a feeling of helplessness. Instead, self-advocacy helps us to realize a new zest for living.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can walk through a door to a whole new way of living.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that our lives have not ended because of a brain injury, but our lives have just begun.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize living with brain injuries now offers new possibilities.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can have a profound impact on our and other people's lives.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that living with a brain injury is about a process and a journey, not a destination.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can have an active part in pursuing our dreams and living our destinies.

Self-advocacy reveals to us that life no longer needs to look like it did before our brain injuries.

Self-advocacy helps us to wake up from being in denial so that we can get on with our lives.

Self-advocacy inspires us to get into action, so that we can create a good life for ourselves.

Self-advocacy helps us to realize that we can create and experience hope.

Self-advocacy give us the creative capacity to experience what we never dreamed possible.

Self-advocacy empowers our ability to excel in life, in spite of what we may have been told.

Self-advocacy helps us to find a way, when we are told there is no way.

Self-advocacy inspires us to find and live in our truth and stop believing lies.

Self-advocacy helps us achieve our dreams, one step at a time.

## **Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury and Asking, “Why Me?” Part 1**

To listen to and watch the video presentation of the article, you may click on this link: [Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury and Asking, “Why Me? Video Presentation](#)

In life I have found that living with the impact of a brain injury and focusing on the question of “Why Me?” changes nothing.

What changes things is not living with the impact of a brain injury, but how I choose to live with the impact of my brain injury.

**“In life, what happens to me is not as important as how I respond to what happens to me.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

**In September 2012 I wrote the below article that I would like to share with you today.**

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am always happy to have you around my table. Recently I was looking through some magazines looking for topics to write about and I came across the title, “**Why Me**”. I have been thinking about that title and wanted to share some of my thoughts on the topic. What came to mind is, “**Why not Me**”.

In my experience I have found that when I think in terms of Why Me I revert to the notion that I am a victim of what is, instead of looking at the possibilities in Why not Me.

In my experience, I discovered when I think in terms of **Why Not Me** I am given a gift. The gift of acceptance. By accepting what is, I am able to move beyond what is not and take advantage of a new set of circumstances. By doing so I move beyond believing that I am now some how limited, to realizing that I have been given the opportunity to grow beyond my perceived limitations. By doing so, I am able to move beyond the notion that my life is some how over.

**By doing so, I am able to move in a new direction...the direction of my destiny.**

So when I stop buying into the mind set of “**Why Me**” I am able to take back my power. I am able to begin to see life in a different way. I am able to see life as an adventure set forth in terms of learning curves and progress. I am able to see my destiny in terms of progress not perfection. I am able to replace a fear of failure with the anticipation of what I am going to learn from my experience. I am able to replace my apprehension with tenacity and persistence.

**I am able to replace doubt and cynicism with trust, a trust in a loving God to guide me.**

## **Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury and Asking, “Why Me?” Part 2**

I am able to stop trying to figure things out by myself. I am able to let go of my need to control outcomes. I am able to stop trying to anticipate how the dots of my footwork are going to connect. I am able to let go of how I think things should be in my life. I am able to trust that the pieces of the puzzle – that guide me to my destiny – will come together in the right order and at the right time. I am able to suit up and show up in life. I am able to trust that I will get what I need. I am able to use what I have been given, and stop comparing myself to other people.

**I am able to stop living in the “What If’s” and start living in the “What Is”. I am able to start living in the now(s), instead of living in the past.**

I am able to stop living in regret and start living in response.

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

## **Strategies that Help when Dealing with Difficult People Part 1**

In life interacting with people is unavoidable. Along the way, we may encounter difficult people.

In today's article, I would like to share several strategies. Strategies that I have learned to use when dealing with difficult people.

Strategies that help me to find serenity in the midst of interacting with difficult people, including interacting with myself.

### **Strategies that Help**

If possible, let it go. Let go and let God.

Practice live and let live.

Accept the things we can not change without judgment.

When someone throws me a ball and I do not catch it, to throw it back, the game is over.

I don't have to engage with people who want to argue.

Pointing the finger in anyone's direction does no one any good.

Keep the focus on me. Take my own inventory. Check my own motives.

Justifying, defending and explaining does me no good.

Detach physically, if possible. Give yourself some space.

Change the subject. Doing so sets a boundary. If the person continues to want to engage me on the topic, change the topic again. Eventually, they will get the message.

Say what I mean, mean what I say, but don't be mean when I say it.

Be brief, be calm and be gone.

I do not have to stay in front of someone who wants me to feel a certain way by blaming me.

I also need to remember that I am doing the best that I know how to do and that has to be good enough.

If I need to, make amends. Progress, not perfection.

## **Strategies that Help when Dealing with Difficult People Part 2**

“It” is not all about me. “It” may be about other people’s expectations. (real or unrealistic)

What I need to remember is that do not have to beat up on myself for being human and making mistakes.

I am powerless over whether people accept my amends. Living amends empowers relationships.

We proclaim spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection, one day at a time.

“It” is not all about other people. “It” may be about me and my expectations (real or unrealistic).

I need to remember that people hear what I say, but they see what I do.

Is what I am doing speaking louder than what I am saying.

Changed attitudes aid recovery.

Let it begin with me.

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 1**

In December 2016 I wrote the article, I Am Not a “Label” — Being Our Own Best Cheerleader.

Being our own cheerleader after a brain injury can be difficult because of many “voices”.

Voices that discourage us. Voices from without and voices from within. Voices that we hear and stories that we tell ourselves.

Below I would like to share what I learned about the “voices” and what helped me to begin to be my own best cheerleader after my brain injury.

### **As Shared in December 2016**

Over the past several days I have been struggling with something. Something that I have had a difficult time understanding. Something that has been a distraction to me.

Last night I had a spiritual awakening. A spiritual awakening that helped me to understand. Understand that I was being distracted by the remnants and the effects of a being labeled. Labeled as someone with a brain injury.

### **Understanding the Origins of a Faulty Belief**

Distracted by the belief that I was limited by my deficits and limitations. Distracted by forgetting that I am not my brain injury.

Distracted by forgetting that I could dismiss the “voices” that sought/seek to discourage me.

### **Shaking off the Belief**

Below I will share what helped me to “shake-off” these remnants and the effects of “voices” that sought to discourage me.

I will also share what helped me to remember that I could take an active role as a cheerleader in my own life.

### **Background**

In my experience, I reached a point in time when I could no longer defend the denial that kept me stuck for many years. A point in time when I could no longer keep buying into the denial of what other people wanted or needed me to believe about myself. A point in time when I was able to stop being my enemy by believing. Believing that I should not be impacted by an open skull fracture and traumatic brain injury.

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 2**

### **Spiritual Awakenings**

I am thankful that I reached a threshold of pain in my life that motivated me to think outside of the “box”. I am thankful that I reached a threshold of pain that helped me to realize that I did not have to be limited by my deficits or limitations. I am thankful that I reached a threshold of pain in my life that motivated me. Motivated me to search for ways to use my gifts, talents, and abilities.

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

Similarly, I reached a threshold of pain that led to a spiritual awakening. A spiritual awakening that helped me to understand the struggle that I experienced for the past several days. My spiritual awakening reminded me that I needed to stop minimizing and marginalizing my efforts.

**My spiritual awakening showed me that I needed to take an active role as a cheerleader in my own life.**

That I needed to stop dismissing and discounting what I was building on my lot in life.

That I could no longer continue to do the same thing over and over again while expecting to get different results.

My spiritual awakening helped me to realize that I needed to find a way that would work for me.

A way that would work for me, despite my deficits and limitations. A way that would not get in my way.

A way, that would empower my ability to use my passions — through my gifts, talents, and abilities — to follow my dreams.

### **My Encouragement to You**

In the event that you are living with the impact of your brain injury, you are not your brain injury. You may have deficits and limitations, but you are not those deficits and limitations.

**Although your deficits and limitations may get in your way, they do not have to limit you.**

Accept yourself as a individual living with the impact of a brain injury and look for ways to use what you like to do. Like to do to follow your passions through your gifts talents, and abilities.

Like to do to follow your dreams.

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 3**

**You are not your brain injury and that is not your identity. Explore ways that work for you to follow your dreams.**

And then cheer lead what you able able to do through your gifts, talents, and abilities. And don't give up.

**Don't let your Capabilities be Limited by your Deficits and Limitations.**

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

**"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**

### **As a Bonus to the Above Article**

In **May of 2010**, I wrote an article to share what I learned about being labeled.

Being labeled as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury.

**Below is a copy of the article.**

I would invite you to read the article. The information within the article can be applied universally.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury and Being Labeled**

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 20 + Years**

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 4**

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 is perpetuated by arrogance.**

Labeling manipulates the individual by 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.

### **Labeling is not Harmless**

Although labeling in and of itself is harmless — although it is based on ignorance, bias, and prejudice — the repercussions of being labeled can be devastating.

If the individual being labeled buys into and internalizes the assumption of the label, the individual may find themselves unconsciously identifying themselves with the label.

### **Are You Believing the Lie**

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.

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. Other individuals living with brain injuries.**

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 dis-empowering manner. I made the decision to begin referring to people, such as myself — as an individual living with a brain injury.

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 5**

### **I Made a Decision**

I made the decision to stop seeing and defining myself as a traumatic brain injury survivor. Instead, I began seeing myself as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury. I began seeing myself as an individual with unique gifts, talents, and abilities to explore and develop. I made the decision to accept my limitations and deficits, but not be limited because of them.

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

### **Don't Have to Stop**

The reality is that individuals who have sustained or acquired brain injuries do not stop being individuals — to become a traumatic brain injury survivors. The 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.

### **No Longer Blocked**

You and I no longer need to believe that our brain injuries are blocks to achieving our destinies. We can believe that our brain injury is merely a switch on the railroad of life that is leading us “down the track” to our destinies. We can learn to use our gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for us.

That is why if you are putting labels on yourself, stop. If you are placing labels and limitations on other people, stop. If you have people in your life who want to place labels on you, remember that you have a choice. What people think of you or I does not make it so. What matters is what we think about ourselves.

### **We Get to Choose**

We no longer need to believe we are victims. We no longer need to believe that we are limited because of our brain injuries because you and I are not our brain injuries. You and I are so much more than our brain injuries, deficits or limitations.

## **Being Our Own Best Cheerleader after a Brain Injury Part 6**

### **Challenging Notions**

That is why we need to challenge the notion that who we are as individuals are based on a label. That is why we need to challenge our inner thoughts when we feel classified, categorized and limited by faulty information, bias or prejudice. That is why we need to celebrate who we are as individuals.

**That is why we need to stop buying into stereotypes and societal stigmatization.**

That is why we need to learn how to use our gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for us. That is why we need to be heard. That is why we need to push back and dispel the tide of ignorance by being all that we can be as individuals living with brain injuries.

## **Brain Injury and Not judging Your Efforts to Anyone Else's Efforts Part 1**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, click on this link: [Brain Injury and Not judging Your Efforts to Anyone else's Efforts Video Presentation](#)

As an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability who is living on SSDI I feel insecure at times.

### **Insecure at times when I judge my efforts to people who are not living with a brain injury, an invisible disability and living on SSDI.**

In **March 2014** I wrote an article to share what I experience when I feel insecure. I then go on to share what helps me to stop judging my efforts. Judging my efforts to the efforts of individuals who are not living with a brain injury, an invisible disability and on SSDI.

Below is a revised version of that article.

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 someone else.

### **Irritable, Restless and Discontent**

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 what was at the root of my funk.

### **Morning Meditation**

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 that I had for my lot. In my awareness, I found that I had been judging my efforts with the perceived efforts of other people. In my awareness, I found that I had been experiencing a sense of shame for not doing more on my lot in life.

### **Judging My Efforts**

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.

## **Brain Injury and Not judging Your Efforts to Anyone Else's Efforts Part 2**

What became clear to me was that I needed to stop judging my efforts by the efforts of what I perceived other people were building on their lots. 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 to be the value of what other people were building on their lots.

### **Refocusing my Attention**

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 worth and value. With this renewed awareness, I was able to stop judging my efforts. Judging my efforts to the efforts, worth and values that other people place on their lot's in life. People who are not living with a brain injury, an invisible disability and on SSDI.

**“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 my effort to build on my lot in life. By keeping the focus on my lot, I am able to keep from falling back into the trap.

Into the trap of judging my efforts. Judging my efforts with the efforts of people. People who are not living with a brain injuries, invisible disabilities and on a fixed income.

### **My Encouragement to You**

In the event that you are judging your efforts by other people's efforts, be aware. Refocus your commitment to building on your lot in life. And as you build, keep the focus on your efforts, mission, and vision. By doing so you will help you to keep from falling into the trap of judging your efforts. Judging your efforts with/to the efforts of people who are not living with brain injuries, invisible disabilities and on a fixed income.

### **Please leave a comment or question**

As you watch, listen to or read my article (s) and questions come to mind, please send those questions to me. All questions are good question. In the event that you would like to leave a comment, I would love to hear from you.

## **Looking at Success in a Different Way after a Brain Injury Part 1**

To watch and listen to a video presentation of the article, click on this link: [Looking at Success in a Different Way after a Brain Injury Video Presentation.](#)

Succeeding after a brain injury can seem out of reach. But instead of being discouraged we can do something different. We can begin to look at success in a different way.

### **Let me Share what I Discovered**

For many years I had no idea that I saw success through the eyes of “if”. If I just did enough I could experience success. But, like a carrot on the end of a string dangling just out of reach in front of a horse, success seemed just out of reach for me.

Nevertheless, I strove all the more in my attempts to do enough, to be enough to experience success.

### **Silly as It may Sound**

Silly as it may sound, I was asked to not come back to a church because of “unrepentant striving”. I am not sure what that was all about, but the experience reinforced pain. A pain that left me confused. Confused because no matter how much I strove to do enough, to be enough, I felt alienated from God, other people and myself.

Through my pain I became sick and tired of being sick and tired.

### **Growing Awareness**

Through my recovery process I became aware. In my awareness I began to see that my drive to be perfect was getting in my way. Getting in the way of my ability to experience and celebrate success.

### **Through my recovery process I was introduced to a concept.**

A concept that helped me to see success in a different way. The concept: progress, not perfection. The concept that opened the door to seeing success in a different way. Success as a process, not a destination.

### **A concept that helped me to experience success in a different way.**

Instead of seeing success as a completed jigsaw puzzle, I began to see success in each piece of the jigsaw puzzle. With my growing awareness, I began to see success in the journey, instead of in the outcome.

## **Looking at Success in a Different Way after a Brain Injury Part 2**

### **Doing the Footwork**

My awareness helped me to realize that I could do the footwork. Do the footwork and then trust the process to a loving God to guide my steps.

And what I discovered was that as I let go of the outcomes I have more peace in my life.

Having more peace in my life helps me to realize that the pieces of the puzzle will come together. Come together to complete the puzzle at the right time.

And as the pieces of the puzzle come together more will be revealed. And as more is revealed the dots will connect forward.

### **Stop Judging My Efforts**

Seeing success in a different way helped and continues to help me. Help me to stop judging my efforts.

Stop judging my efforts, one day at a time.

### **My Encouragement to You**

In the event that you find that you are judging your efforts I would encourage you to look at success in a different way.

As a process not a destination. As a journey instead of an outcome. And stop judging your efforts.

The pieces of the puzzle will come together at the right time and in the right order.

Trust the process. Trust a loving God. And trust yourself.

**More will be revealed with time. And the dots will connect forward.**

## **If You Feel Like You Don't Fit Into This World It Is Because You... Part 1**

I have created a video presentation of this article for individuals who learn through watching and listening. Click on this link to watch and listen to the article: [\*\*If You Feel Like You Don't Fit Into This World It Is Because You...Video Presentation\*\*](#)

Several weeks ago I watched an episode of Got Talent (not sure if it was **America's, Britain's, or another country**) presentation on YouTube.

As I watched, a young man with quirky mannerisms walked onto the stage. While introducing himself, the audience and the judges seemed to discount him.

After asking him what he was going to do the young man said, "sing". As the young man began to sing the discounting by the audience and the judges turned into amazement.

As the young man finished singing the camera's panned to the judge's table. All judges were moved by the young man.

One judge shared a quote with the young man that captivated my attention. **"If you feel like you don't fit into this world, it is because you were born to create a new one."**

Although you and I may "see" and "hear" what other people may not see (perceive) or hear (understand), we need not feel stupid. Instead, you and I can boldly create something that other people may not now see as valuable. You and I can be motivated by the beat of our own drum and stay committed. You and I can push the human race forward. You and I can take the "high road" and let go. You and I can be a gift to our world.

### **Quotes and Thoughts of Encouragement**

"If you feel like you don't fit into the world you inherited it is because you were born to help create a new one." Ross Caligiuri

"Everybody is a genius. But If you judge a fish by Its ability to climb a tree, It will live Its whole life believing that it is stupid" Albert Einstein

"Don't quit. Never give up trying to build the world you can see, even if others can't see it. Listen to your drum and your drum only. It's the one that makes the sweetest sound."Simon Sinek

## **If You Feel Like You Don't Fit Into This World It Is Because You... Part 2**

### **More quotes**

“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.” Rob Siltanen (Sometimes attributed to Steve Jobs)

### **Mother Teresa’s prayer, “Do it Anyway”**

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;

Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

Succeed anyway. If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

Be honest and frank anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

Be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

Give the world the best you’ve got anyway. You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God; It was never between you and them anyway.

## **Opening and Moving through a Door to Create New Possibilities Part 1**

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

In a recent article, [Opening the Door to Hope](#); I spoke to the need to face and address loss. Loss that I am powerless to change. Loss that interferes with my ability to move on with life.

### **What I Discovered**

In my experience, I discovered that I needed to reach a bottom before I was able to face my denial.

The denial that seeks to keep me believing that I had no other choices.

The denial that seeks to kept me fixated on the door that **was** closed for me.

Denial that leads me to believe that I am a victim of my circumstances.

### **What my Experience has Taught me**

Denial can be likened to a warm blanket that shields and protects. Nevertheless, after a time, denial only serves to mask feelings that fester, undermine and cripple.

Denial searches to make someone else responsible for...Denial perpetuates feelings of helplessness and keeps the individual focused on what can not be changed.

Denial interferes, as it seeks to justify and legitimate through blame, shame and scapegoating.

But the reality is that no one is to blame. Pointing fingers in anyone's direction does no one any good.

### **Prone to Re-Injury**

Denial seeks to keep the individual stuck and prone to re-injury.

Re-injury to their mind, body, soul, and spirit.

Re-injury that only promotes unrest.

Re-injury that acts and works like a cancer that devours from within the individual.

### **Good News**

But the good news is that denial no longer has to limit, cripple or undermine.

Little by little, by focusing on what I can change; the pain that once stymied me becomes a catalyst and a guide for change.

## **Opening and Moving through a Door to Create New Possibilities Part 2**

### **A Catalyst and a Guide to Change that reminds me that I have Choices**

A catalyst that motivates and a guide to lead me through the open door created through the grieving process.

A process that opens my eyes to see the possibilities that exist on the other side of the door.

### **What I Need to Remember**

I don't have the big picture. Doors close **For** me and not **To** me.

Although I may not like that a door has been closed to me, I realize that closed-door motivates me to look for an opened door.

My experience has also taught me that I don't have to go through this process on my own.

I can ask a loving God to help me to be honest with myself.

I can ask a loving God to help me to change attitudes and behaviors that no longer work for me and keep me stuck.

Although I may not understand why the door has or is closing for me I can trust that a loving God is doing for me what I can not do for myself.

I can ask a loving God to give me the ability to see the door that has or is being opened **For** me.

I can ask a loving God to help me to walk through the door.

I can ask a loving God to help me to create new possibilities on the other side of the door that has opened for me.

I can trust the process, a loving God and my ability to learn from and through the process of walking through the open door.

**“I feel that as long as you're honest, you have the opportunity to grow. It's when you shut down, go into denial, and try to start hiding things from yourself and others, that's when you lock in certain behaviors and attitudes that keep you stuck.” Tracy McMillan**

## **Creating a Good Life Through One Ingredient at a Time**

In May of 2000 I began training at a martial arts school. During one of my early conversations with my Sensei or martial arts instructor he shared something with me. What he shared with me changed the way that I looked at life. He said, "What I do is give you ingredients -- what he would teach me and I would learn there at the martial art school -- your job is to gather those ingredients and bake a cake to become a black belt."

**He also told me that a black belt is a master of the basics.**

What I gathered from my conversation with my Sensei was that as I gathered various skills, through my training and commitment to mastering the basics; I would gain the skills to become a black belt. And as I would later learn, that by mastering the basics; I would be able to build upon the foundation of what I have learned to develop. By doing so I continue to create my own style as a martial artist to fit my body type and capabilities.

### **Applying the Principles of Combining Ingredients to Creating a Good Life**

As I apply the principles, that I learned from my Sensei; I create hope. Through combining the lessons, that I gain from my circumstances and opportunities; I develop and grow as an individual. As I stay committed to the process of learning how to use my circumstances and opportunities, I discover how to use what I have in ways that work for me. Through combining what works best for me, I am able to create a life for myself.

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

### **Today's Thought**

Keep creating hope through gathering ingredients, through lessons that your circumstances and opportunities teach you; and don't give up. Bake your cake (s) and don't despise the day of small beginnings. More will be revealed to you in time.

**"Everyone is trying to do some thing big, not realizing that life is made up of little things." Frank A. Clark**

## **Getting Past a Victim Mindset through the Power of Choice Part 1**

To watch a 1-minute slide presentation with the key points, click on this link: [Slide Show](#)

**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 shared with my friend, “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”

### **Seeing my Circumstances in a Different Light**

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 — has been that my circumstances are teachers. Teachers to provide me with lessons that prepare me to take advantage of opportunities that teach me further lessons.

**Lessons and Opportunities that Lead me in Such a Way that Empowers my Ability to Fulfill my Destiny.**

When I forget to look for the lessons provided by my circumstances; I focus on my circumstances.

**When I focus on the circumstance, instead of looking for the lesson, I have a difficult time getting past a victim mindset.**

### **The Tapestry**

I also 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 threads in a tapestry. How I view these threads will determine whether I see myself as a victim or as an empowered co-creator of my destiny.

By trusting that each circumstance is being used (as a thread to weave) for my good, I am empowered.

**Multicolored Jumbled Threads Used to Create a Beautiful Tapestry**

## **Getting Past a Victim Mindset through the Power of Choice Part 2**

### **The Jigsaw Puzzle**

I also like the illustration of the **jigsaw puzzle**.

The jigsaw puzzle is made up of many pieces. Each puzzle piece, by themselves may make little sense.

Circumstances; can be likened to the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Individually, each circumstance may make little sense.

Nevertheless, as I gain the lesson provided by the circumstance, another puzzle piece falls into place.

As I learn each lesson, another puzzle piece reveals itself to me.

### **Recognize Good Things**

Our circumstances are meant for our good and not for our harm.

By trusting the process, a loving God and our ability to learn from each circumstance every (thread) will be weaved into place.

By trusting the process, a loving God and our ability to learn the (lesson) each puzzle piece will fall in place.

If you would like to read about my process and journey and what helped/helps me to get past a victim mindset through the power of choice, click on this link:

**[My Process of Getting Past a Victim Mindset](#)**

## **Finding Freedom from Perfectionism to Excel in Life Part 1**

To watch a 3-minute slideshow presentation that is made from this article, click on this link:

[\*\*You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be Your Own Hero Slideshow Presentation\*\*](#)

Through my recovery process, I discovered that my drive to be perfect hindered my willingness to take risks.

In the process, I discovered that perfectionism fueled my fear of failure.

### **With my Awareness**

I discovered that I was being driven by a taskmaster called perfectionism.

I discovered that perfectionism bullied me through the voice of shame.

I discovered that I was being driven by SHAME (**S**hould **H**ave **A**lready **M**astered **E**verything).

But, thank God, that I met a different guide.

### **A Guide that gave me Hope**

Instead of continuing to believe that I needed to do things perfectly the guide helped me to change my focus.

Instead of being driven by the taskmaster (feeling that I needed to do things perfectly), I could start listening to and being guided by the voice of excellence.

### **My Experience**

For many years I had no idea that I had a difficulty learning and applying sequences of information.

In the process, I became frustrated with myself, as I focused on **all or none**.

In the process, I focused on trying to be perfect, instead of on progress, not perfection.

### **How the Guide called Excellence Changed my Life**

With my recovery process, I began to realize that I could give up trying to master everything already.

Through accepting my difficulty learning and applying sequences of information I stopped beating up on myself.

And when I stopped beating up on myself I was able to try something different.

### **And what I tried worked for me.**

## **Finding Freedom from Perfectionism to Excel in Life Part 2**

### **What Helped me to Excel — Working on One skill and One Skill Set at a Time**

In my process of discovery, I began to realize that I could master skills and skill sets through repetitive mirrored movement.

The guide of excellence taught me that I could work on **one skill** at a time.

The guide of excellence taught me that I could learn to **excel at one skill** at a time.

Excelling, over time, in a different Skills gave/gives me the ability to Combine those Acquired skills into Skill Sets

With time, commitment, tenacity, and persistence, I discovered that I could combine Skill Sets with other Skill Sets to achieve Goals.

### **My Experience**

Through combining skills, skill sets and combined skill sets I have been able to accomplish goals that I never dreamed possible.

Through staying committed to the process (**by not giving up**) I have experienced both small and huge successes.

In the process, I have been able to celebrate both small and huge victories, one skill at a time.

### **Today's Thought**

Following a brain injury, we may find that skills which once came naturally to us, now seem out of reach.

In the process, we may find ourselves becoming both frustrated and discouraged.

In the process we may find ourselves wanting to give up.

### **But there is Good News**

By staying committed to the process we can learn to compensate and once again build those skills By staying committed to the process we can learn to compensate and build confidence.

Little by little, we can re-learn skills and learn new skills. In the process, we can begin to celebrate the successes we make as we are re-learn/learn skills and skill sets.

### **Don't Give Up**

In the process, we can achieve goals that we never thought we could achieve. In the process, we can begin to celebrate both small and huge victories, one skill at a time. In the process, we can excel in life.

## **Has Drama Replaced Living One Piece at a Time with Depression? Part 1**

To watch the slideshow, click: [Has Drama Replaced Living One Piece at a Time with Depression Slideshow Presentation](#)

### **A question to consider, "Has Drama Replaced Living One Piece at a Time with Depression?"**

In many families where ongoing conflict persists, a heightened tolerance for emotional pain ensues. Denial then, rather than resolution, becomes the goal to avoid the pain.

In the process, the individual becomes addicted to the ensuing drama. Drama then unknowingly becomes the way in which the individual feels alive.

In the process, denial and drama replace living with depression one piece at a time.

### **Factors to Consider**

#### **Family System Roles**

Overtime each of the members of the family unknowingly, to manage the pain, assume different roles in an attempt to mask the pain or secret.

Among the roles given to or assumed by individuals within the family system

#### **Enabler, Scapegoat, Hero, Lost Child, Mascot, etc.**

Repression, shame, and blame then become the tools that are used to perpetuate the need to deny what exists.

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 Drama**

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.

## **Has Drama Replaced Living One Piece at a Time with Depression? Part 2**

### **The Role Becomes the Individuals Identity**

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.

### **Looking for Solutions**

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 pain and 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 irritability, restlessness, and discontent. I also decided to give people the dignity to be responsible for how they chose to react to things that were/are 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 and defend through drama 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 – through drama, in an attempt to contain unresolved conflict and pain in each member within the family system.**

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.

## **Has Drama Replaced Living One Piece at a Time with Depression? Part 3**

**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 denial contained within the drama, my role, and the way in which I interacted with in the family system; I was able to begin to create hope in my life.

### **Today's Thought**

In the event that I find myself slipping back into the role, drama, denial and the way that I relate to the family system, 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 the 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.

By doing so, I replace living for drama. By doing so, I create hope in my life.

In the event that you find that drama has replaced living with depression, I would encourage you to do an inventory of why drama may be defining your life.

**And then do something different and get busy.**

In the event that you have any questions, please ask. You don't have to figure this out on your own. I didn't. Leave a comment and I will respond.

**“Some of us have become so addicted to pointing fingers at others for all the wrong that happens in our lives that self-assessment has become synonymous with blaming the victim.” LZ Granderson**

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

## **So... Where Do I Fit in Society after My Brain Injury? Part 1**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **So... Where Do I Fit in Society after My Brain Injury? Part 2**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, please click on this link: [So... Where Do I Fit Following My Brain Injury? Video Presentation](#)

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

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

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

A foundation that would bring clarity. A foundation that would reveal answers.

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

### **Affirmation**

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

## **So... Where Do I Fit in Society after My Brain Injury? Part 3**

### **Quotes that Restore my Focus**

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

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

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

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

## **Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Part 1**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, please click on this link: [Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Video Presentation](#)

I have also created a slideshow presentation of this article. To watch the slideshow presentation of this article, click on this link: [Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Slideshow Presentation](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me. Recently I received a comment and a question. As an individual living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability, I have asked the question many times.

The question I received was, “Why do I feel so misunderstood and shunned?”. In my experience and through many struggles the answer to the question became apparent to me. If you have asked this question too, I would invite you to read on to find out what became apparent.

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

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

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

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

### **Realization**

In my experience and through my own recovery process, I came to realize two realities. The first reality is that many people do not want or do not know how to process their feelings. The second reality that helped me to begin to have more peace in my life was that many people either do not know how to or do not want to change. To face the reality that our lives have been forever changed because of our brain injury may be too painful.

### **Too Painful to Accept**

Too painful for them to accept. Because accepting our reality may be too painful, individuals may stay in and defend their denial. Defending their denial for what they do not want to accept is not our fault. Secondly, because of the lack of acceptance, they may justify the way they treat us.

## **Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Part 2**

### **Not Our Fault**

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

### **Awareness**

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

### **Bargaining**

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

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

### **Awakening**

After much toil and cycles through the mentioned conflicts, I had a spiritual awakening. A realization that I needed to do something different. A realization that I needed to do something to be able to accept myself. A realization that what I was trying to change was not changing my reality. When I reached a point when I could no longer deny and defend my reality, I made some life changing choices. I began to grieve my reality.

### **A Bridge to a Different Course of Action**

Grieving my reality helped me to get to a place of acceptance. Acceptance provided the “bridge” to taking a different course of action.

Through my grieving process, I discovered that as I was able to face, confront and address my own denial I had more peace in my life. What I discovered through confronting my own lack of acceptance, I was able to let go of the struggle.

## **Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Part 3**

### **Needing to Let Go**

The struggle that convinced me that I needed to get “them” to understand and accept what I could not change. What I also discovered was that I needed to let go.

I needed to let go of what other people wanted or need me to believe “about” me so that I could get on with my life. What I discovered was that I alone needed to accept my reality.

### **Can’t Afford to Wait for People to Catch Up**

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

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

I began to realize that being misunderstood and shunned was the “way” in which “they” coped with what they could not accept. I began to realize that I needed to let the people who misunderstood and shunned me go. I needed to let them go so that I could grow in my own acceptance. The acceptance of who I am and what I could do living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability.

What I could do in ways that would work for me. Several years ago I wrote an article and made a video presentation of the article. Below are links to the article and the video presentation. The article illustrates how valuable we are, with what makes us different in the midst of being misunderstood and shunned. You are of much value, because of your reality.

### **Acceptance**

In my experience, as I began to realize that I could not wait for people to “catch up” to me in their acceptance, I found a new freedom. I began to realize that I was walking down a road less traveled. A road that was leading to fulfilling my dreams. A road that was leading to my destiny. A road across other “bridges” of acceptance, yet to be discovered. Bridges of acceptance that would give me more peace in my life.

**Bridges that would help me to accept that people are where they are on their own journeys. The people who misunderstand and shun me, for whatever reason.**

## **Brain Injury — Why do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Part 4**

During the past years, as I have grown to accept both myself and where other people are on their journeys I have continued to make peace with being misunderstood and shunned. As I have found more peace, being misunderstood and shunned has had less impact upon me. Several days ago I updated my about page to share what has helped me to be at peace with being misunderstood and shunned. In my updated about page,

I share what helped and continues to help me to move forward with my life. I would invite you to click on the following link: [Updated About Page](#).

### **Hope**

My experience *may* help you to let go of the people who misunderstand and shun you. My experience may help you to find more peace in your life when people misunderstand and shun you. My experience may help you to not feel less alone. My experience may encourage and inspire you to walk down a road less traveled and over “bridges” of acceptance.

**Bridges of acceptance yet to be revealed. As you read my about page and what I share helps you, please let me know. Thank you. I would love to hear from you.**

## **Living with a Disability, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Courage Part 1**

For individuals who learn through watching and listening, I create video presentations of my articles. I have created a video presentation of this article. To watch and listen to a video presentation of this article, you may click on this link: [Living with a disability and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Video Presentation](#)

Living with a disability can leave you and I feeling isolated and alienated. Isolated and alienated from both ourselves and other people. Feeling alienated and isolated can lead to our feeling minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

In December 2009 I wrote the below article under a different title – **Living with a disability and Feeling Different**. Last year, I presented the article in 3 different parts. This year I have decided to combine each of the 3 parts into one article. Although the article is longer than I normally publish on Second Chance to Live, I believe that by having the 3 parts of the article combined together, the context of the article will be easier to follow as you read the article.

### **And now for the article — Living with a Disability, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Courage**

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. I am happy to see that you decided to stop by to visit with me, my friend. You are always welcome around my table. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to both 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 given the impression that Rudolph’s nose 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 is laughed at, called names and not allowed to join in reindeer games.

Although the reason (s) why Rudolph is 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.

## **Living with a Disability, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Courage Part 2**

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 other members of the “herd”. As I listened to the song – with my new understanding – I found that I could identify with Rudolph’s experience within the “herd”.

**Although I attempted to go along to get along — for many years — to find my place and position in the herd I continued to experience feelings of alienation and isolation for being different.**

As we continue to listen to the lyrics of the song we hear, “then one foggy Christmas night Santa came to say...”. In this part of the song, we hear that Santa recognized the value of what made Rudolph different and uniquely qualified to fulfill a unique need – to empower the herd and his mission. Upon reflection, I can only imagine what Rudolph and the other reindeer thought when Santa asked Rudolph “Won’t you guide my sleigh tonight?” What the herd had laughed at and ridiculed and scorned, Santa saw as essential to accomplishing the mission before him – to guide his sleigh.

Rudolph’s gift – what made him different – 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 infers, to many boys and girls.

In my experience, because I bought into the notion that I deserved to be ostracized, ridiculed and rejected – because of what made me different – I criticized and berated myself for being different. Consequently, I had a difficult time celebrating the possibilities surrounding what made me different. Subsequently, instead of feeling connected – with a sense of belonging and inclusion – I experienced feelings of alienation and isolation. Instead of using my time and energy to explore how I could use what made me different, I sought to gain the approval and validation of the herd.

**I continued to feel alienated and isolated from the “herd” and from myself until I experienced a spiritual awakening. The 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 to me that I no longer had to wait for the herd to recognize, accept or approve the value of what made me different. My spiritual awakening revealed to me that I needed to begin to use what made me different despite the “herds” continued ridicule and exclusion.

My spiritual awakening revealed to me that a loving God wants to use what makes me different to be a blessing to the “herd”,

## **Living with a Disability, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Courage Part 3**

To also be a blessing to those individuals ostracized by the herd – just as Santa used what made Rudolph different to bless the whole herd.

In your experience, you may have also found that – as Rudolph and I have discovered – that there is something that makes you different. You may be a traumatic brain injury survivor, an individual living with a disability or you may have experienced some other kind of trauma, abuse or adversity. Consequently, you may find yourself feeling ridiculed, ostracized and excluded by the herd. In the process, you may have a difficult time accepting yourself for being who you are as an individual. As I have shared in this article, I can identify with you. But that is not the end of the story.

The end of the story is that a loving God is going to use what makes us different, as Santa used Rudolph. What makes you and I, different is essential. What makes you and I different is essential to God fulfilling a unique mission through us.

### **Be Encouraged**

What makes you and I different will be used to draw the herd to fulfill its purpose. What makes you and I different will be used as beacons of hope to draw our brother and sisters from the shadows of isolation feelings of alienation. What makes you and I different will make us leaders. What makes you and I different will help dreams live in people. What makes you and I different will empower people to move beyond the shore (s) of their fear and apprehension. What makes you and I different will give people courage. What makes you and I different will bring about the change that we want to see in our world.

“First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.” Mahatma Gandhi

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

“Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person.” Mother Teresa

“You don’t have to be a person of influence to be influential. In fact, the most influential people in my life are probably not even aware of the things they’ve taught me.” Scott Adams  
American Cartoonist

“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

## **Brain Injury — No Longer Limited by Limitations — Live Your Dreams Part 1**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**What I discovered was that I could re-define my dreams to live my dreams.**

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

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

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

### **Encouragement**

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

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

### **An Interview with Tiger Woods**

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

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

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

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

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

## **When Circumstances Change our Plans and Dreams Part 1**

In March 2009 I wrote an article to share how my plans of achieving a dream were interrupted by a set of circumstances that were out of my control. But I am glad I did not give up. To watch and listen to a video presentation of this article, click on this link: [When Circumstances Change our Plans and Dreams Video Presentation](#)

In today's article, I would like to share what happened when circumstances changed my plans. Plans that I had been working on diligently during the past 8 years. During the past 8 years, I have been training towards being able to test for my black belt in a style called international martial arts and boxing. In November I completed and passed an 8-hour long progress check to qualify to enter a 10-month long process called the black belt cycle.

In November 2008 I completed and passed an 6 1/2 hour long progress check to qualify to enter a 10-month long process called the black belt cycle. Three weeks later my Sensei met with me and told me that I have passed the 6 1/2 hour long progress check to enter the black belt cycle.

The cycle process began January 1, 2009, and I was fired up to begin the 10-month long process to test for my black belt in October 2009. And then on February 3, 2009, I hurt my right knee. To make a long story short I saw an orthopedist, had an MRI and discovered that I had a tear in my meniscus. Tears in the medial meniscus and the anterior hood of the lateral meniscus of my right knee. During the past 2 – 3 weeks I have been back training at the martial arts school while avoiding activities that could further damage my knee.

### **When Circumstances Changed my Plan and Dream of Testing for my Black Belt**

Today March 24, I met with my sports medicine Doctor. After discussing my MRI and the meniscus tear with my Doctor, I asked him a series of questions. When all was done and said my Doctor told me that if I continued in the black belt cycle — given the intensity of training required — I was asking for trouble. With the news I experienced some sadness over not being able to train toward obtaining my black belt in October, but happy to hear that I could continue training in the martial arts.

As I have processed the reality of my knee being injured and not being able to test for my black belt in October 2009 I experienced some mixed emotions. In the process of sorting through my emotions, my goal as a martial artist changed — from obtaining my black belt — to growing as a martial artist.

My goal (s) for training in the martial arts has evolved over time. My priorities have changed. At one point obtaining the next belt was the goal and then the journey became more important than any belt. As I approached the possibility of a new door opening I focused on obtaining my black belt. With my knee injury and not being able to continue in the black belt cycle, my

## **When Circumstances Change our Plans and Dreams Part 2**

focus has changed back to enjoying the process, growing as a martial artist and developing my focus.

**With my change of focus, I became encouraged by the possibilities. In the next several months I will continue to train in various martial arts that do not necessitate pivoting and torching.**

And who knows what my future holds in the martial arts. Hmm!!!

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

### **Today’s Thought**

I have good news for you. Although one door of happiness may have closed on you — be encouraged — my friend. Possibilities exist. By letting go of our plans — when they do not go as we would like — we can open our hands and our heart and know that they will be filled.

Although one door of happiness may have closed for you, my friend, be encouraged for another will open for you.

We can trust the process because we don’t have to have the big picture. We can let go and know that we will get what we need. We will be led towards the light. We will know what we need to know.

We can trust the process, a loving God and ourselves because possibilities never die.

### **UPDATE: October 30, 2016**

I worked on rehabbing my right knee through walking an indoor pool — forwards and backward — for an hour 3-4 times a week. I also engaged in other exercises to strengthen my knee. After being diligent to working on my knee — for 9 months — I was able to resume training in different martial arts disciplines. I was able to resume practicing right leg full power muay Thai kicks and muay Thai knees. During the course of the past 6 1/2 years, I have continued to train 5-6 days a week in muay Thai kickboxing and other martial arts disciplines. I have continued to train with the vision of improving my ability to engage my both sides of my body through repetitive mirrored movements. I have done so to engage both sides of my brain, to create new neural pathways and brain reorganization.

To see gains that I have made, you may click on these links: 2013

<https://youtu.be/snHjxYrRYU> and 2014 <https://youtu.be/sV82V2y-Jrk> and 2015 <https://youtu.be/j4BajiK5qB8>

## **Resentment, the Power of Forgiveness and Setting Ourselves Free Part 1**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, you may click on this link:

[Resentment and The Power of Forgiveness Video Presentation](#)

**“Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner!” Max Lucado**

Last night I attended a support group meeting the topic of forgiveness was tabled for discussion. I listened to what people shared and when it came time for me to share I shared my perspective. In my experience, I have found that resentments stem from unforgiveness and unforgiveness many times can be traced to expectations that have not been met or fulfilled. In my experience, I have found I may not even be aware of the reasons for resentment (s) until a current event reminds me of my resentment(s).

### **The Impact of Resentment**

Resentment (s), unchecked and unresolved; smolder like lava beneath a volcano. Resentment (s), unchecked and unresolved, grow like a malignant tumor slowly destroying beneath the surface. Resentment (s), unchecked and unresolved; come out sideways, as the lava of unforgiveness, through anger; oozes out at unpredictable and unexpected times. Resentment (s) unchecked and unresolved; leave banished souls in their wake. Banished from relationships, hopes and dreams that might have been.

**“Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.” Carrie Fisher**

**“Bitterness and resentment only hurt one person, and it’s not the person we’re resenting – it’s us.” Alana Stewart**

**“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of harming another; you end up getting burned.” Author unknown**

**“Resentments leave me stuck believing that I am a victim of some thing that I am powerless to change. The good news is that as I let go of the resentment (s), I am able to stop believing that I am a victim over that which I am powerless to change.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

But there is good news. I have found that resentments can be checked and resolved through a process. The process involves being honest with myself, taking the time to examine who I am resentful at, the cause of my resentment, how the resentment impacts (impacted) my — self-esteem, personal relationships, finances, material goods, security, ambitions and my emotional well-being). I also need to examine what my motives were that resulted in or led me to my being resentful.

## **Resentment, the Power of Forgiveness and Setting Ourselves Free Part 2**

Resentments are often tied to my fear of losing some thing or not getting some thing that I want of think I need. The good news is that I can examine my fear (s) as they relate to my resentments, so that these fears no longer have to paralyze me. Examining my fear (s) can also open the door to a freedom that I never knew existed. By examining my resentments I am able to also examine the expectations that were (are) at the root of my resentment (s). By examining my expectations, I am able to curtail future resentment.

**By working through my resentment (s) I am able to let go to find the ability to free both myself and other people.**

Examining my resentments empower me to forgive, both myself and other people, Examining my resentments help me to grow in awareness. Examining my resentments help to free up internal energy so that I can take action. Action that will both empower my process. my relationships and enable me to pursue my dreams and my destiny without restraint.

### **A Way Out – Action Steps**

I would invite you to read my article, **Second Chance to Live -- Action Steps** that I wrote in May 2008. In this article, I share what helped me to face, address and find freedom from my resentment and experience the power of forgiveness.

#### **The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

## **Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set me Free Part 1**

To watch and listen to a video presentation of the series, click on these links.

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

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

“If nothing changes, nothing changes. If you keep doing what you’re doing, you’re going to keep getting what you’re getting. You want change, make some.” Courtney C. Stevens

In my experience, I have found that I determine how I choose to experience my life. I am not saying that I am able to control people, places and events because I am not. To think that I have the power to change people, places and things is foolishness.

**With my awareness I have come to realize that having control or asserting control is merely an illusion of power.**

When I let go of the illusion of control I am able to accept that I am powerless over people, places and things. As I practice the power of acceptance new doors are opened to me. When I admit my powerlessness, I am able to admit my limitations. Through admitting that I have limitations, I discover that I am not helpless. When I realized that I was not helpless — in my process — I had a spiritual awakening. Because I am not helpless, I am able to take action steps.

**These action steps enable me to accept the things that I can not change, to change the things that I can. The difference between what I can and what I can not change.**

Through my process I have grown to trust a power greater than myself. Consequently, I have made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of that power. In the process, I made the decision to become a proactive participant in my life. Subsequently, I have been empowered to change the things that I can. As a proactive participant in my life the obvious became apparent. I needed to change my attitudes and the perspective (s) that I placed on my experiences. I needed to be honest with myself. I needed to be accountable to myself.

**I needed to keep the focus upon myself. I needed to take a fearless moral inventory of myself, not to berate who I am, but to free the negative energy of my defects of character.**

Through my process, I discovered that my defects of character were in essence the defense mechanisms that I used to protect myself over time. Through examining my motives and by being honest with myself I began to realize that my defense mechanisms were no longer serving me or enhancing my relationships. In actuality, I found that my defense mechanisms were hindering my ability to truly live my life.

## **Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set me Free Part 2**

**Through being honest with myself I was slowly able to come out of hiding. My isolation was broken when I met with my sponsor and shared what I discovered about myself.**

As I trusted the process and shared my story I discovered that I was not terminally unique. As my sponsor listened without judgment I began to learn to trust again. In my trust I became willing to have my defects of character removed. In the next action step I humbly asked the God of my understanding to remove my character defects.

My next action step involved making a list of the persons that I had harmed through out my lifetime. I placed myself on that list. Next I became willing to make direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or other people. In my process I shared such amends with my sponsor before I attempted to make amends to those individuals. In the next action step I made a decision to continue to be honest with myself and in the process keep my side of the street clean by continuing to make direct amends.

**Next I made a decision to trust again by praying for the knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out – on a daily basis.**

In the final action step – as a result of completing the previous action steps – I had and continue to have spiritual awakenings. Consequently I am motivated to share my experience, strength and hope as I have the opportunity.

My spiritual awakening (s) also inspire (s) me to practice the principles of 12 action steps in all my affairs.

### **Synopsis of the 12 Action Steps**

In the spirit of sharing the power of these action steps I have compiled a synthesis of the action steps. I will include that list below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through a comment or a confidential email.

How to contact me through a [comment or confidential email](#).

Synopsis of the 12 Action Steps — 12 Step Programs

#### **Synopsis of the 12 Action Steps — the 12 Steps**

1. – You may be powerless over many things but you are not helpless. Although your life may seem unmanageable now, you no longer need to feel like a victim.
- 2- You do not have to be alone anymore to figure it out on your own.

## **Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set me Free Part 3**

- 3-** By making the decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of a power greater than your self, you will find an unlimited source of encouragement, motivation, empowerment and hope.
- 4-** You can find out what you have been doing to sabotage your life. You can look for patterns that have undermined your life. Consequently, you will be able to stop shooting yourself in the foot of life.
- 5-** You no longer need to hide in the shadows. You can begin to trust. By admitting to a loving God, to yourself and to another human being what you found in step 4 that has been sabotaging your life, you can find a new freedom — a freedom that you never knew existed. Through the process, you can make peace with God and with yourself.
- 6-** You can become entirely ready to let go of the behaviors that you have been using to defend and in the process sabotage your relationships and yourself. Be encouraged my friend.
- 7-** You can be actively involved in the process of seeing the behaviors that have sabotaged your life removed by humbly asking a loving God to remove the behaviors that sabotage your life and relationships.
- 8-** In working in partnership with a loving God you can make a list of the persons — including yourself — who you have been harmed by participating in behaviors that have sabotaged your life and your relationships. By making a list of the people you that have negatively impacted or harmed (that you have gleaned through completing your 4th action step) you become willing to make direct amends to them all.
- 9-** You make direct amends (once you have completed the first 8 action steps and you have talked with your sponsor) to the people who have been negatively impacted by the behaviors that you have previously used to cope. Consequently you can make peace with your fellows, and in the process make peace with yourself. By completing this step — making amends — you can be released from the burden of guilt and shame. You can find a new freedom and happiness.
- 10-** On a daily basis, you continue to take a personal inventory and when you are recognized that you have harmed others you promptly admit those wrongs to the person (s) that you have harmed. On a daily basis, you continue to be accountable to and for your behavior. You choose to keep your side of the street clean.
- 11-** You do not have to live life each day by yourself. You can rely on a power greater than your self to guide and direct your steps. You don't have to lean on your own understanding.

You can pray for the knowledge of God's will — for you — and the power to carry that out. You can trust the process, a loving God and your ability to learn from your circumstances and experiences. In the process, you will be empowered to live the life that you have imagined.

**12-** Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of working these 12 action steps you attempt to carry the message of the 12 action steps to other people and continue to practice the principles of the 12 action steps in all your affairs

### **Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set me Free Part 4**

**Note:** The 12 action steps are not meant to be punitive in nature. Instead, the 12 Action Steps are designed to empower you and I to live life on life' terms — while succeeding. The 12 action steps — by divine design – are meant to free the individual of self-defeating behaviors that sabotage and undermine their lives and their relationships. The 12 action steps — by divine design — empower the individual to be of maximum service to God and to their fellows.

Note: In the original text the 12 Steps “We” has been used where I have written “You”. I have used you instead of we to emphasize that you are powerless over people, places and things. I have needed to keep the focus on myself as I have worked through the 12 action steps.

Nevertheless, by participating in a 12 Step recovery program, you never have to be alone again. As I have heard mentioned. 12 Step recovery programs are a We program.

In my experience, I have found that when I choose to take the focus off of myself and place the focus on another person, place, event, institution or thing I miss the benefit that can be gained through working the 12 action steps with a sponsor. I have found that when I am drawn to take the focus off of myself and place the focus on someone/something else that I need to work the 12 action steps. I have found that my triggers and reactions are my triggers and reactions.

**In my experience, I have come to realize that the 12 Action Steps are not meant to point out where I am not measuring up.**

**Instead, the 12 Steps are meant to set me free from limiting behaviors and limiting beliefs that sabotage and undermine all of my relationships.**

**My relationship with the God of my understanding, other people and myself.**

**The 12 Steps empower my ability to be of maximum service to a loving God and individual who a loving God brings into my life.**

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

To listen to and watch the video presentation of the article, please click on this link: [Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”? Video Presentation](#)

**A question that I need to consider in the context of this article: Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”?**

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. It is just that I wind up frustrated when I seek to get what I need from them.

**I have heard this experience is 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”. Puts people 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.

**After such a diagnosis is made, the individual may start to identify themselves with the diagnosis or prognosis.**

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.**

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

### **Limited by the Diagnosis and Prognosis**

These limiting biases, prejudices and stigmatization’s serve to reinforce to the individual that they are limited because of the diagnosis/prognosis.

### **Identifying with a Label**

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**

Unconsciously, the individual may then find themselves internalizing and justifying the judgment and stigmatization.

The judgment brought on to them by the diagnosis, prognosis, and subsequent label.

Such labeling and stereotyping lead to a stigmatization of the individual.

### **The Impact of Labeling, Stereotyping and Stigmatizing**

#### **Undermining, Under cutting. Minimizing, Marginalization, Dismissing and Discounting.**

“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.

### **Identifying with Societal Stigmatization**

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 identity 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](#)

### **Secondary Gains and Secondary Dependencies**

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 set the individual up to believe that there is little hope outside of the “box”.

## **Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”? Part 3**

### **Little Hope Outside 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 within the “box”. Societal judgment and stigmatization of the label then perpetuate a continued need and dependency upon the medical model. In collusion, little hope exists.

### **Limiting Because of a “Box”**

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”. A “box” created by a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype and stigmatization.

In my experience, I have seen how the medical model — through the diagnosis, prognosis, and subsequent labeling process — undermine the individuals drive to look for solutions beyond the “box”.

### **Lulled into Believing**

Once labeled and stigmatized, the individual becomes conditioned to believe that they are limited because of the diagnosis, prognosis, and stigmatization.

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

## **What You may be Telling Yourself may be Limiting You Part 1**

To share the information with the article with individuals who learn through watching and listening I created a video presentation. Click on this link to watch and listen to the video presentation: [What You may be Telling Yourself may be Limiting You Video Presentation](#)

**I have been thinking about how self-talk messages (scripts) affects me. What messages (scripts) I tell myself, about myself'; and my experience.**

Scripts, like those that an actor uses — in a play or a movie — to set the stage. Set the stage for how the actor is to play their part.

Like an actor who plays a part in a play or a movie, scripts (messages) play a part in how I live and experience my life.

Messages (scripts) that I tell myself affect my quality of life and well-being.

Limiting messages (scripts) that I tell myself and the messages (scripts) that other people tell me.

**Messages (scripts) that other people want or need me to believe about myself.**

Limiting messages (scripts) that enable people to remain in their denial.

Messages (scripts) that justify the way that I allow other people to treat me.

Limiting messages (scripts) that may have kept you and I unknowingly stuck for many years.

Below is a list of several limiting scripts and messages that we may need to be aware of as we move forward with our lives.

Being aware of these limiting scripts and messages can give us the ability to change what we tell ourselves.

Change what we believe about ourselves.

### **Some Limiting Messages and 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.

## What You may be Telling Yourself may be Limiting You Part 2

9. Relationships just don't work out for me.
  10. Life has got to be hard.
  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' think for yourself.
30. Speak only when you are spoken to.
  31. Being emotional is weak.
32. The only thing that matters is wealth and intelligence.
  33. People are disposable.
34. Some people are made to be used.
  35. Spirituality is for kooks.
  36. God does not love me.
37. I have to perform to be lovable.
  38. I only exist to be beaten.
    39. Don't talk.
    40. Don't trust.
    41. Don't Feel.
42. I can't be happy unless you are...

## What You may be Telling Yourself may be Limiting You Part 3

### Today's thought

In the event that you find yourself being limited by scripts or messages, I would encourage you to examine those scripts and messages. Messages or scripts that you or other people may believe or have told you for many years. People who may no longer be living. Scripts or messages that may have been passed down to you from people who were misinformed themselves.

Examining the origins of these scripts will help you to make peace with your past. Not only can we make peace with our past, but we can begin to recognize when people seek to limit or stymie us with similar scripts or messages.

By being aware, [making peace with our past](#) (click on the link to read the article) and by taking note of what we or other people may be telling us, we can change those limiting scripts and messages. We can change those limiting scripts and messages. Change those scripts and messages to ones that inspire, encourage, motivate, empower and give us hope.

### **The benefits of changing what we believe and tell ourselves.**

Through making peace with our past and by continuing to take note of what we are telling ourselves we can create a good life for ourselves.

Through making peace with our past and by continuing to take note of what we are telling ourselves we can follow our dreams.

Through making peace with our past and by continuing to take note of what we are telling ourselves we can create hope in our lives.

Through making peace with our past and by continuing to take note of what we are telling ourselves can make the best use of our time.

# **Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury and Overcoming Vulnerability Part 1**

**Living with the impact of brain injury can leave you and I feeling vulnerable.**

Vulnerable to the belief that who we are and what we bring to the “table of life” is of little worth, value or significance.

**Sadly, this faulty belief can lead you and me; to believe, that who we are and what we can become as individuals no longer matter.**

In response, we can become discouraged, despondent and disheartened.

**But there is Good News**

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

Living Our Destinies Beyond the Box of Traditional Employment

Through my recovery process, I discovered something that I would like to share with you.

**What I discovered helped me to realize that I no longer had to “fit” into a specific “box” to have worth, value or significance as I live and pursue my destiny.**

**We do not have to “fit” into a specific “box” to have worth, value or significance as we each live and pursue our destinies.**

Don't let the Hare's in Your Life discourage You from Running and Winning Your Race

**Don't Let the “Hares” in Life Limit You**

Click on this link to read the article

**[The Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare and Achieving Our Dreams](#)**

**Slow and Steady Wins the Race**

Struggle to Strength through Persistence and Not Giving Up

## **Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury and Overcoming Vulnerability Part 2**

### **Excelling in Life**

Read my article by clicking on this link

#### **[Struggle to Strength](#)**

“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

Owning One's Power and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

#### **I Can Choose to Own my Power**

Although giving away my power can be subtle, I will stay vigilant. If I feel that I am giving away my power, I will take steps to take back my power.

Read my Article, by clicking on this link,

#### **[Owning Our Power and Not Giving Away Our Hopes and Dreams](#)**

Steps to take back and own my power.

Through owning my power, I am given the gift to exercise my ability to use my time and energy to pursue my hopes and dreams.

Finding Freedom from Self-Pity through Solutions

#### **Moving from Fear to Faith**

Through owning my power, I am able to stop feeling like a victim.

**Through owning my power, I am able to recognize when I am experiencing self-pity.**

By recognizing when I am experiencing self-pity, I am able to move from fear to faith.

**Through moving from fear to faith, I am empowered to do something different.**

Through being empowered to do something different, I am able to get different results in my life.

## **Finding Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity through Solutions Part 1**

Have you ever felt self-pity? Have you ever thought, "the grass must be greener on the other side of the fence"? I have, as I recently felt frustrated concerning matters that seemed to be out of my control.

Little did I know it; at the time, that I was experiencing a touch of self-pity. But, thank God that I got myself to a support group meeting. When a member of the support group shared that she was experiencing self-pity, I realized that the topic applied to me.

As the individual shared that she was struggling with self-pity, I started to think of solutions. Solutions that have previously given me freedom from feelings of self-pity. When the time came for me to share my experience, strength and hope, I shared these solutions.

In the process of thinking about and sharing these solutions I experienced a fresh freedom from feelings of self-pity. Solutions that have Helped and Continue to Help me to Find Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity

**There is light at the end of the tunnel. By not giving up, I am assured that what seems dark now will be made clear.**

The metamorphosis of the butterfly. In the cocoon the caterpillar develops into a butterfly, however in order for the butterfly to be able to fly there must be struggle. Struggle to break free from the confines of the cocoon strengthens the butterfly's wings. And so, struggle is essential to my becoming strong enough to fulfill my destiny. There can be no shortcuts for me to become stronger.

As with a woman giving birth, going through labor and delivery is very painful process. Going through struggles brings about joy. Focus on gratitude, not on the pain of struggle.

When I am in pain because of what I am unable to change, I enter a grieving process. In this process, I become willing to confront my denial, experience anger, enter into a bargaining process where I continue to try to change what can not be changed. After experiencing a period of depression, I am able to reach a place of acceptance.

**The process of grieving is not necessarily a smooth process. In my experience, I have found that the grieving process, just takes what it takes.**

## **Finding Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity through Solutions Part 2**

The grieving process helps me to move through the 3 A's in the process. Awareness, Acceptance and Action. By increasing in awareness I grow in acceptance.

**As I grow in acceptance, I gain the ability to recognize that I have choices. The choice to do something different to get different results.**

By realizing that I can do something different to get different results, I am able to break free from feelings of self-pity. By making different choices I create hope in my life. In the process, I move from fear to faith.

Here is a link to an article that contains information and solutions that have and continue to help me to break free from feelings of self-pity: [Resources](#)

# **Brain Injury and Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Part 1**

To watch and listen to the presentation, you may click on this link: [Brain Injury — Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Video Presentation](#)

Hello and welcome back to Second Chance to Live my friend. I am happy to have you around my table. In the past several articles, “[Are You Living Your Truth?](#)” and “[Whose Life am I Living?](#)” I spoke to the need to find, own and live our truth.

Apart from finding, owning and living our truth we may find ourselves trying to live someone else’s life. In the process, we may be trying to live someone else’s truth for ourselves.

In the process we may find that we have been living our lives in quiet desperation.

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

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

But thank God we can live our destinies outside the “box” of traditional employment. We can learn how to sing our song in ways that work for us.

## **The Song within Me**

For many years I had no idea what song resided in me because I was led to believe that my destiny had to be sung in a certain way.

In searching for my destiny, I took both interest inventories, intelligence and personality tests.

I took these tests at different colleges and universities in an attempt to find my song.

The information and results from these inventories and tests proved to be helpful but only provided information.

## **A Life Changing Realization**

In hindsight and what took me many years to realize was that the results of these inventories and tests never took into account the impact of traumatic brain injury.

## **Search for Suitable Employment**

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

## **Brain Injury and Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Part 2**

I was terminated from each of these positions. I eventually became a client of the Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

I became a client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida — while working as a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the DVR. I was put on probation and later terminated 4 months later from Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a counselor. I remained a client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. while

I was later terminated as a client of the Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation due to an unsuitable job placement.

After being recruited to work as a certified rehabilitation counselor with an insurance company I moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. After moving and beginning the job, I was fired 4 months later. After being fired from the insurance company.

After being fired from the insurance company, I filled out my 3rd application for SSDI. I also applied to begin receiving services through the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. After completing their evaluation process, my voc rehab counselor determined that I was unemployable.

Shortly after the report was written by my DVR counselor my 3rd application with the Social Security Administration was approved. I began receiving SSDI in late 1998.

### **Reality Sunk In**

The end result from being deemed unemployable and declared disabled was that no one had an answer for me. An answer that would help me to find, own and live my truth. My educational pursuits in geology, physical education, nursing, emergency medical technology, theology, recreation, and rehabilitation counseling seemed to be for naught. Seemed to be for naught because I was unable to maintain employment using what I had learned.

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

### **Finding a Different Way**

Based on the reality, that I was deemed unemployable and declared disabled; I could not use traditional employment to own, express and live my truth. Because I had a desire to still use my gifts, talents and abilities I needed to find a different way.

## **Brain Injury and Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Part 3**

Although my educational pursuits appeared to be for naught, based on being deemed unemployable and declared disabled; I am glad I did not give up. I am glad that I did not give up on finding my truth and a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me.

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

My encouragement to you is that you do not give up on finding your truth. Use what you have learned along the way to fuel your vision. Look within yourself to determine what is your primary motivator. What do you like to do with your time and how can you use what you enjoy to enhance both your life and the lives of people in your world. My search revealed that I had a strong desire to encourage people to not give up.

### **Pursuing Answers**

I share the above with you for this reason. People and society, as a whole, conditioned me; to believe that they held the answers. Because I believed they held the answers, for me; I pursued those answers for many years.

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

## **Brain Injury and Living Our Destiny Beyond the “Box” of Employment Part 4**

### **Who Knew**

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

### **Not Able to Work in Traditional Employment – My Encouragement to You**

I share the above with you to encourage you — in the event that you have found yourself unemployable and disabled — to not give up. The process may take time, as the process took for me. But by not giving up and through diligence your search, you will “strike gold”.

### **Don't Give Up**

By not giving up, you will find and own your truth. The truth in how to express your gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that will work for you. And as I have found, the expression of your truth may not take the form given to you by other people or society as a whole. No worries. There is a different way. A way that is uniquely suited for you my friend.

### **To Fulfill Your Purpose and Destiny**

A way that will set you apart, to meet a unique need. A way that is fashioned for you to meet, by the grace of a loving God. A way that will set people free. Free beyond the confines of a “box”. A way that will inspire the lives that your life touches. A way that will create ripples of hope. A way that will empower you to live your dreams. A way that will help you to live and fulfill your destiny, beyond your hope and imagination.

### **A way that will make your life full and touch many lives.**

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

## **The Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare and Achieving Our Dreams Part 1**

### **The Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare.**

The fable is about running a race and not giving up despite being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

**In the fable, the tortoise challenges the hare to a race. The story goes on to share how the hare scoffs at the tortoise's challenge. The hare, because of his "superior speed" thought he would surely beat the tortoise.**

**The hare's arrogance — by what he said and did – minimized, marginalized and discounted the possibility that the tortoise could run and even win the race.**

As the fable comes to a close, we find that the tortoise is actually waiting for the hare at the finish line.

The line written at the base of the fable denotes the meaning of the story.

### **Slow and Steady Wins the Race**

Although the hare was much quicker than the tortoise, because the tortoise stayed committed to running his race, the tortoise went on to finish and even win the race.

### **My Reflection**

In life, you may feel like the tortoise in the fable. Like the tortoise, you may have people in your life who behave like the hare.

Hares who seek to discount who you are as an individual and in your ability to participate in any race.

You; like the tortoise, may find that there are hares in your life, who by what they say and do dismiss your ability to run in, much less win your race.

You; like the tortoise, may have hares in your life who by what they say and do discourage you from running in your race.

To that I would say. No worries. Be like the tortoise and determine to run your race. Be like the tortoise and be who you are my friend. Be like the tortoise and go about your business. Stay committed to your mission and vision.

## **The Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare and Achieving Our Dreams Part 2**

### **Today's Thought**

No one else can run or compete in the race of our lives.

Only you and I can run and compete in the race of our lives.

### **What Needs to Be Remembered**

In our race we are not in competition with anyone.

We are Fully Empowered to Run Our Own Race

### **Run Your Own Race**

And as the tortoise found, you will finish and win your race.

### **And as you Run your Race, Remember**

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

**In the Process and by Staying Committed to Running and Finishing Our Race, We will  
Achieve Our Dreams**

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

**Henry David Thoreau**

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

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

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

## **Finding Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity through Solutions Part 1**

**Have you ever felt self-pity? Have you ever thought, “the grass must be greener on the other side of the fence”?**

I have, as I recently felt frustrated concerning matters that seemed to be out of my control.

**Little did I know it; at the time, that I was experiencing a touch of self-pity.**

But, thank God that I got myself to a support group meeting.

**When a member of the support group shared that she was experiencing self-pity, I realized that the topic applied to me.**

As the individual shared that she was struggling with self-pity, I started to think of solutions.

**Solutions that have previously given me freedom from feelings of self-pity.**

When the time came for me to share my experience, strength and hope, I shared these solutions.

**In the process of thinking about and sharing these solutions I experienced a fresh freedom from feelings of self-pity.**

**Solutions that have Helped and Continue to Help me to Find Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity**

There is light at the end of the tunnel. By not giving up, I am assured that what seems dark now will be made clear.

The metamorphosis of the butterfly. In the cocoon the caterpillar develops into a butterfly, however in order for the butterfly to be able to fly there must be struggle. Struggle to break free from the confines of the cocoon strengthens the butterfly's wings. And so, struggle is essential to my becoming strong enough to fulfill my destiny. There can be no shortcuts for me to become stronger.

**As with a woman giving birth, going through labor and delivery is very painful process. Going through struggles brings about joy. Focus on gratitude, not on the pain of struggle.**

## **Finding Freedom from Feelings of Self-Pity through Solutions Part 2**

When I am in pain because of what I am unable to change, I enter a grieving process. In this process, I become willing to confront my denial, experience anger, enter into a bargaining process where I continue to try to change what can not be changed. After experiencing a period of depression, I am able to reach a place of acceptance.

**The process of grieving is not necessarily a smooth process. In my experience, I have found that the grieving process, just takes what it takes.**

The grieving process helps me to move through the 3 A's in the process. Awareness, Acceptance and Action. By increasing in awareness I grow in acceptance. As I grow in acceptance, I gain the ability to recognize that I have choices. The choice to do something different to get different results.

**By realizing that I can do something different to get different results, I am able to break free from feelings of self-pity. By making different choices I create hope in my life. In the process, I move from fear to faith.**

Here is a link to an article that contains information and solutions that have and continue to help me to break free from feelings of self-pity: [Resources](#)

## **Owning Our Power and Not Giving Away Our Hopes and Dreams Part 1**

**Several years ago I watched part of a movie, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, with nurse Ratched among a group of colorful characters.**

The movie spoke to me

When people do not own their power, they give away their hopes and dreams.

### **The Plot of Significance**

One of the actors, Jack Nicholson; played Randal McMurphy. Randal from what I understand pleads insanity to get out of going to jail/prison and believes he voluntarily committed himself to the state mental hospital, only to find out that he is there involuntarily. At one point in the movie, Randal; during a group session, finds out that many of the individuals who he thought were surely involuntarily committed were there voluntarily and could leave at any time.

To his amazement, he finds out that they are willing to stay at the state hospital — instead of having the freedom to do what they wanted without the control of nurse Ratchet. McMurphy then tries to convince the men who are there voluntarily to leave to own their power and their freedom beyond the confines of the hospital.

### **Reflection of the Movie Plot — *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest***

I have been thinking about the script of the movie. The men who wanted freedom could have left the hospital, instead of being controlled by nurse Ratched. Instead, they gave away their power to people who could or would not give them what they longed for — the freedom to choose how to live their lives, hopes, and dreams.

In the process, these individuals gave away their power to pursue their hopes and their dreams.

These individuals gave away their power for a lower quality of life, to be dictated by the power of a medical team and at the direction of Nurse Ratched.

### **Need to be Aware of When I am Giving Away my Power**

Although giving away my power may not appear to be so obvious — as the men who gave away their power — I need to guard against giving my power away to people in my life. With this realization, I need to take responsibility for my reactions to what people do or do not do in response to their expectations and my choices. In the event that I start feeling helpless and like a victim, due to my reactions, I need to examine why I am reacting — to own my power. By examining why I react, I am given ability. to make different choices. Choices that will give me the ability to own my hopes and dreams, a little at a time

## **Owning Our Power and Not Giving Away Our Hopes and Dreams Part 2**

**“If I begin to feel helpless or like a victim, I need to take a closer look at why and what I can do to take back and own my power.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

### **Not Giving Away My Power**

Giving away my power can be subtle, so I need to stay vigilant. Staying vigilant and by being aware of when I am beginning to give away my power, I am given me the ability to take steps.

Steps to take back and own my power. Through owning my power, I am given the gift to exercise my ability to use my time and energy to pursue my hopes and dreams.

Dreams that may seem foolish to some, but real to us. Dreams that did not die, because of the adversity that we may be facing.

### **Below are Several Ways that Can help You and I Own Our Power each Day.**

Owning my Power by not seeing myself as victim through figuring out what I need to do to take care of myself, given the person or situation.

Owning my Power by dealing with my anger and resentments, so that they do not continue to steal my time, energy and my ability to make healthy choices.

Owning my Power by not continuing to try to fix other people’s problems or attempting to control their behaviors.

Owning my Power by not taking on responsibility for other people’s behavior and choices, when they attempt to blame me for their choices.

Owning my Power by taking responsibility for choices and then learning from my choices.

Owning my Power by recognizing that I can’t know until I know and that is good enough.

Owning my Power by pursuing excellence, instead of perfection.

Owning my Power by celebrating small successes and gains in my recovery process and personal development.

Owning my Power by realizing that there is no such thing as failure, only an opportunity to learn.

Owning my Power by not blaming anyone for anything.

Owning my power helps me to recognize that with all learning, there is a learning curve.

Owning my Power by keeping the focus on myself and my choices, not on other people or their choices.

## **Owning Our Power and Not Giving Away Our Hopes and Dreams Part 3**

### **More Ways to Own Our Power**

Owning my Power when people attempt to control and manipulate me.

Owning my Power by knowing that it is OK to feel anger and distrust.

Owning my power by saying no to what individuals may want me to do or accomplish to fulfill their plan (s) or agenda (s).

Owning my Power by learning to trust my judgment, despite what other people may want me to believe about myself and my circumstances.

Owning my Power by accepting the things that I can not change, while changing the things that I can.

Owning my Power by not giving up on myself, when other people treat me like I don't matter.

Owning my Power by realizing and remembering that I have great worth and value to a loving God.

Owning my Power by learning how to channel my passion in ways to enhance both my life and the lives people who are brought into my life.

Owning my Power by facing our own pain/issues so that they do not continue to leave me feeling like a victim.

Owning my Power by owning and taking responsibility for my pain, instead of waiting for someone to rescue or fix me.

Owning my Power by recognizing and detaching from people who seek to control and manipulate me; for whatever reason, through the use of shame and guilt.

Owning my Power by staying on my course and running my race, without waiting for approval or validation.

Owning my Power by recognizing that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but they are meant to build me up.

Owning my Power by developing my gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for me.

Owning my Power by staying committed to my process and my journey by realizing that more will be revealed in time.

Owning my Power by learning to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

## **Owning Our Power and Not Giving Away Our Hopes and Dreams Part 4**

### **Owning My Power**

In my experience, as I own my power I am able to leave the “confinement” of a mental attitude that keeps me trapped believing that I have limited choices. As I own my power, I gain more awareness and acceptance. As I own my power, I am able to get into action through making choices that will empower my hopes and dreams. As I own my power I am given the freedom to explore beyond what a system may want me to believe are my constraints.

As I own my power, I am able to experience a freedom that I never knew existed. As I own my power I am given the opportunity of a second chance. A second chance to pursue my hopes and dreams.

### **A Second Chance to Pursue what I Never knew Existed Beyond my Deficits and Limitations**

**As I own my power, I am given the gift and ability to use my time and energy to pursue my hopes and dreams on my own terms each day. Pursue my hopes and dreams in ways that work for me.**

## **Living with a brain injury — Whose Shame are you Carrying? Part 1**

In **May of 2007** I wrote an article to share some information that helped me in my process.

My motivation in sharing this information is to provide insights to the parents who read my blog. My motive is to provide awareness.

### **Whose Shame are You Carrying?**

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.

### **Carrying 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 persons 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.

### **Hot Potato**

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. Instead of owning shame, shame is transferred.

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.

## **Living with a brain injury — Whose Shame are you Carrying? Part 2**

### **My Experience with My Dad**

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.

### **Not Angry or Bitter**

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**

As a parent, work through your own guilt and shame, instead of making your children carry your shame. Carry your shame by blaming, shaming and scapegoating them.

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.

## **Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't Part 1**

To watch and listen to a video presentation of the article, click on this link: [Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't Video Presentation](#)

Through my experience I learned a painful reality. Learning to accept ourselves when other people can't or won't can be very difficult. Such a difficulty can leave us feeling stuck behind invisible walls.

### **Background Information on my Living behind the invisible Wall**

As you may know, I sustained a traumatic brain injury (open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement) in 1967. In 1967 traumatic brain injury was not on the "map" of consideration, nor was the concept of invisible disabilities.

Consequently, once my external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was never again factored into the difficulties that I experienced in life. As a result, I found myself stuck behind invisible walls. Invisible walls that led me to believe there was something wrong with me.

### **Behind the Invisible Walls of a Brain Injury and Invisible Disability**

Behind the invisible walls, I felt flawed and defective for many years. I felt flawed and defective because I was unable to meet the expectations of many people. People who could not accept the possibility that my life was being affected the my traumatic brain injury.

#### **But who could know as once my external wounds healed and I looked normal.**

In the process, and for many years, I turned my frustration (anger) inward, which led to my low grade chronic depression. In the process, I blamed and shamed myself and allowed other people to blame and shame me for not meeting expectations.

### **Reaching a Bottom**

In my experience, when I reached a point in my life when the pain of denying my reality, exceeded my need to deny and defend my denial (so that I would not feel flawed and defective) I found myself angry, confused and depressed.

#### **Invisible walls that were and had been getting in the way of my ability to accept myself.**

In my anger, confusion and depression I reached an emotional and spiritual bottom. A bottom in which I could no longer deny the reality that I was stuck behind invisible walls. Invisible walls that I was powerless to move or change.

## **Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't Part 2**

### **The Impact of Shame**

In **May 2007** I wrote an article to share what I discovered that kept me defending what family and friends wanted or needed me to defend and maintain. The article title is: **Living with a brain injury — Whose Shame are you Carrying?**

The information shared in this article has and continues to help me to understand why people may want and even need me to defend their denial. The information in the article has also helped me to learn how to detach from what other people may want or need to believe.

### **Stop Fighting against Myself**

In my experience, I discovered that for people to come out of their denial to accept us would mean they would have to do 2 things. Feel feelings that they may not want to or know how to feel. Make changes that they do not know how to make or want to make.

Both of these decisions are out of my control. Consequently, by accepting this reality, I am able to get on with my life. Get on with accepting my lot in life, instead of waiting for them to feel and change. Both of which may never happen.

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

This awareness helped me to stop fighting against myself. This awareness helped me to stop joining in with the chorus of voices that criticized and berated me. This awareness helped me to stop focusing on what I could not accomplish because of my invisible disability. This awareness gave me the ability to discover how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me.

**This awareness helped me to learn how to respect who I am, given my limitations; although I may not understand my limitations.**

This awareness helped and help me to realize that I am powerless over what people choose to think or believe about me. This awareness helped me to realize that I need to keep the focus on myself, stay committed to my own course and run my own race. This awareness helped me to stop being driven to live someone else's dream for me and start living my own dream.

## **Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't Part 3**

In **August of 2007** I wrote a **6 part article series** to share what I learned through my struggle of living with an invisible disability. For individuals; who are, like myself living with an invisible disability I would like to share the article series with you.

**The article: My Struggle Living with an Invisible Disability.**

**In the article series I speak to the awareness's that I gained through my interactions with 4 different types of mindsets.**

Gaining these awareness', has given me the ability to better understand and accept myself and the people I interact with as an individual living with an invisible disability. These awareness's help me to detach from what other people may want, need or choose believe or think of me. These awareness's have helped me to stop picking on myself.

In the pages that follow the **3<sup>rd</sup>** part of **Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't** is the **6 part article series, My Struggle Living with an Invisible Disability.**

In **April of 2014** I created a video presentation series; of the **6 part article series**, to share the information with individuals who learn more effectively through watching and listening. I divided the video presentation series into **4 parts** to make watching and listening to the series, more manageable.

### **Video Presentation Series of the 6 Part article series**

If I may suggest, I would encourage you to watch each part of the video series (in order) to benefit from the entire video presentation series.

**[My Struggle Living with an Invisible Disability Part 1 Video Presentation](#)**

**[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors— Learning to Accept Our Reality Part 2 Video Presentation](#)**

**[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors— Learning to Accept Our Reality Part 3 Video Presentation](#)**

**[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors— Win / Win Outcomes Part 4 Video Presentation](#)**

**Note: Since the writing of the article in August 2007 series all parties spoken about in this series have grown in their awareness and acceptance of my invisible disability. I share the series for individuals who are living with invisible disabilities to give insight. Insight into what you may be experiencing.**

## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 1**

### **Article Series Written in August 2007**

Today I am going to process my struggle living with an invisible disability. Before I was aware of this particular struggle I believed that 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.

#### **Interacting with Four Different Types of Individuals**

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

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

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

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

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

## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 2**

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.

**Their denial system includes manipulation through shame, guilt and emotional coercion. Shame, guilt and coercion for what they don't understand.**

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.

### **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 3**

Through my recovery process – from the effects 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.

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 to be who I am, rather than attempting live in someone else's reality.

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

In the last 3 parts of the article series, 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. The first lesson learned. 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 the country, I started experiencing some anxiety.

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

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 become 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.

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

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 a number 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 my stress level increases. When I am stressed beyond my limits my ability to monitor and manage external stimuli decreases.

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

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

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.

## **My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 6**

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.**

### **Update 1:**

I have since visited and learned a needed lesson. I need to limit the duration of my visits to 3-5 days. No one is to blame as it is as it is. By accepting this reality, I can practice live and let live. I have also learned that when I do not respect my limitations — regardless of whether other people do — I set myself up for a lose-lose scenario.

### **Update 2:**

Since the writing of this 4 part series, my relationships with the different groups of individuals has improved significantly. As I have accepted my reality — instead of trying to convince them of my reality — I have been able to minimize conflicts. I have also found that by keeping the focus on me, I have been able to keep my expectations in check. I also found that by continuing to limit the amount of time that I spend with individuals, who want or need me to deny my reality, I am less frustrated. I am less frustrated with both myself and with those individuals. I also have found that as I practice the principle of live, and let live I am able to have more serenity in my life. I have also come to realize that the less I try to change what other people believe about me, the better able I am to get on with living my own life.

I have also come to realize that the less I try to change what other people believe about me, the better able I am to get on with living my own life. I have also come to realize that as I respect myself and own my reality — the impact of living with an invisible disability — I am able to respect what other people want or need to believe about me. I have also come to realize that the only one who I can change is me. As I remember that reality, I am able to keep the focus on myself and continue to use what I have in ways that work for me. I am better able to live my own life, run my race and stay committed to my course.

## **Emotional Hangovers and What Helps Me to Avoid Them Part 1**

**Have you ever come away from a conversation feeling anxious with a sense of dread?**

For many years I had no idea what I was experiencing in the aftermath of these conversations. And then one day I heard someone use the term, “emotional hangovers”.

The term “emotional hangover” certainly made sense to me, as I experienced anguish, worry, doubt, distress, tension, fear, dread, apprehension, and unease following conversations with some family and friends.

**An emotional hangover leaves me feeling anxious as I believe I have done something wrong that I am responsible to fix.**

That I have done something wrong that I am unable to fix.

Emotional hangovers stem from topics that leave individuals feeling blamed, shamed and criticized for what they say or don't say.

**Prior to my awareness, I had no idea why certain topics of conversation (with individuals) often resulted in my experiencing emotional hangovers.**

But thank God, that over time I became aware of these topics. Topics that are slippery slopes for me.

Slippery slopes that; when not avoided, result in my experiencing emotional hangovers.

### **Techniques and Strategies that Help Me to Avoid Emotional Hangovers**

When a topic comes up during a conversation; that I recognize as a slippery slope, I change the topic of conversation. If the individual continues to want to talk about the “slippery slope” topic, I again switch topics.

**Changing the topic helps me to practice healthy self-care, while preserving the relationship.**

Through being aware of slippery slopes and switching topics, I am able to be true to myself, maintain relationships and practice healthy self-care.

### **H. A. L. T. S**

I also need to be aware of when I am experiencing: **H.A.,L.T.S. — Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired or Sick** — that I am more susceptible to reacting to people instead of responding to them.

With this awareness, I need to be brief, be calm and be gone when I am on a “slippery slope”.

## **Emotional Hangovers and What Helps Me to Avoid Them Part 2**

### **Slippery Slopes**

“Slippery slopes” are topics that have resulted in “yucky feelings” after past discussions and conversations. Recognizing these “slippery slopes” help me to avoid feeling trapped.

#### **Being aware helps me to take care of myself**

Take care of myself by saying what I mean, meaning what I say, but not be mean when I say it. Doing so helps me to also avoid feeling like I have fallen into a dark hole.

#### **Setting Boundaries**

Setting boundaries are not about keeping people out. Setting boundaries with people are about understanding and respecting my limits.

I have been getting over being sick during the past 2-3 weeks and have subsequently had to end and limit conversations.

I have also had to set boundaries with the frequency of speaking with specific individuals.

Setting boundaries is being self-caring, not selfish.

Setting boundaries help me to avoid becoming resentful.

Setting boundaries help me to avoid slippery slopes.

Setting boundaries help me to avoid emotional hangovers.

#### **Suggested Exercise**

Become aware of topics of conversations that are emotionally charged.

Become aware of topics that leave you with an emotional hangover.

Be aware of what you are experiencing and whether you are reacting to or responding to people, places and things.

Recognize slippery slopes and set boundaries when necessary.

Practice healthy self-care by understanding and respecting your limits.

Be brief, be calm and be gone. If someone throws you a ball and you do not catch it, the “game” is over.

Take responsibility for your reactions so that you can learn to respond instead of reacting.

Say what you mean, mean what you say, but don't be mean when you say it.

## **Resentment, Forgiveness, Letting Go and Singing Our Song Part 1**

To watch a slide show presentation of this article, click on this link: [Emotional Hangovers and What Helps Me to Avoid Them Slideshow Presentation](#)

Yesterday, I attended a support group meeting, where the topic of resentment and forgiveness was shared by one member of the group.

When the topic was tabled for discussion my initial thought was “letting go”. As the discussion moved around the circle, as people shared, I thought about something that I experienced on the way to attending another support group meeting the previous Wednesday.

### **The Experience — Last Wednesday**

After parking my car, I walked to where I was going to attend the support group meeting. This support group meeting is held at a church.

As I walk toward where the meeting was to be held, I saw a man dressed in a suit. The next thing that I saw was a hearse pulled into a parking space (which was behind the church). I gathered that the man was a funeral director and asked him if there was a funeral scheduled. He said yes and I continued on to attend the meeting.

After the meeting and on my way back to where my car was parked I stopped to look into the hearse. I looked into the hearse, not expecting anything, as I thought the casket had already been moved into the church. Instead, what I saw was a blue steel casket unattended by the funeral director.

As I saw the casket in the hearse I thought about the finality of life and the body lying lifeless in the casket.

### **Reflection**

After seeing the casket in the hearse I walked back to my car. The image of the casket there in the hearse; unattended, reinforced a reality. When I am dead and gone my resentments will no longer matter to anyone.

Resentments (unresolved) are going to go with me to the grave with no meaning or purpose.

Reflecting on this reality, I had another spiritual awakening. Unless resentments are resolved they will continue to hurt me. Unless resentments are resolved, letting go will be impossible.

Unless resentments are resolved, I may never know or sing my song.

**”Resentment Is Like Taking Poison And Waiting For The Other Person To Die” Malachy McCourt**

## **Resentment, Forgiveness, Letting Go and Singing Our Song Part 2**

**“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of harming another; you end up getting burned.” Buddha**

With this realization, I am reminded that resentments held onto only serve to poison me. With this realization, I am reminded that resentments held onto only serve to burn me. With these realizations, I am reminded that resentments only serve to injure and slowly kill me.

With this realization, I am motivated to resolve my resentment(s) so as to stop taking poison and stop picking up hot coals.

**“Before You Embark On A Journey Of Revenge, Dig Two Graves” — Confucius**

### **What I shared with the Support Group**

I shared what I had learned through my experience with the hearse and the casket. I then shared the realization that unless resentments are resolved and let go of, resentments will only keep me stuck. Stuck like a deer in the headlights.

**Stuck believing that I am a victim of my circumstances.**

I went on to share that I have the ability to step away from the headlights, through working an inventory and a grieving process. (See my article by clicking on this link [Action Steps](#))

By letting go of my resentments I am able to away from the “headlights”. By letting go of my resentments I am able to stop believing that I am a victim of my circumstances. By letting go of my resentments, I am given the ability to use energy; once depleted, to discover my song.

By letting go of my resentments I am given the ability to make other choices. By letting go of my resentments, I am given the ability to take steps to sing my song. By letting go of my resentments and by forgiving I am given the ability to get on with my life to sing my song.

By letting go of resentment; to experience forgiveness, I will not be among those individuals who are living their lives in quiet desperation. By letting go of my resentments; to experience forgiveness, I will not be among those individuals who will go to the grave with the song still in them.

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

### **The Good News**

We do not have to be like most men, leading our lives in quiet desperation.

## **Stay in Your Own Lane and You Will Succeed by Not Giving Up Part 1**

**During my morning meditation, I thought about an article that I wrote in June of 2010.**

**As I thought about the article I was reminded to stay in my lane.**

I was reminded that by staying in my own lane I would succeed by not giving up.

As I thought about the article, I was reminded to stay committed to running my own race.

I was reminded to stay focused on running my own race.

I was reminded that I only need to be concerned about running my own race.

I was reminded that I was never meant to run anyone else's race.

I was reminded to not be distracted by what other people may say or do as I run my race.

I was reminded that I would win my race.

Below is a copy of the article that I wrote in June 2010.

### **Living with a brain injury and the Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare**

Posted by Second Chance to Live on June 11, 2010

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

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

As the fable comes to a close, we find that the tortoise is actually waiting for the hare at the finish line. The line written at the base of the fable denotes the meaning of the story.

**Slow and steady wins the race.**

Although the hare was much quicker than the tortoise, because the tortoise stayed committed to running his race, the tortoise went on to finish and even win the race.

## **Stay in Your Own Lane and You Will Succeed by Not Giving Up Part 2**

### **Today's Thought**

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

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

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

**“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**

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

**“The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” Lao Tzu**

**“Once we start walking on our journey, before long we will be able to look back and see how far we have come because we did not give up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

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

## **Feeling Overwhelmed — What to Do Now with My Time?**

To watch and listen to the video presentation of the article, you may click on this link:  
[Feeling Overwhelmed — What to Do Now with My Time? Video Presentation](#)

Yesterday I attended a meeting where the topic of feeling overwhelmed was brought to the table for discussion. As I listened, I thought about what has worked for me. When I had the opportunity to share, I shared a slogan. First things First.

**First things First gives me the permission. The permission to step back and examine what is out of my control, what is in my control and what I need to let go of now.**

First things first gives me hope. Gives me hope through the serenity prayer, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I can not change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference”.

**Riddle: How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time.**

By taking an inventory of what is out of my control, what is my control and what I need to let go of I am able to create a plan. By creating a plan I am able to manage my feeling overwhelmed. Through managing what I can do, I am able to honor my thoughts and feelings, while looking for solutions. Solutions that will help me to manage feeling overwhelmed.

**Solutions that will empower my life and well-being.**

## **Starting a New Project, Managing Stress and Brain Injury**

I created a video presentation of the article for individuals who learn through watching and listening. [Starting a New Project, Managing Stress and Brain Injury Video Presentation](#)

Several days ago I was feeling a little overwhelmed at the prospect of moving. What I realized was that living with a brain injury and starting a new project would mean managing stress. As I thought about the things involved with having to move, I knew I wanted to avoid as much stress as possible. I realized that I could manage the stress by working smart. So what I decided to start sorting through and getting rid of what I no longer needed.

**Riddle: How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time.**

Elephants like goals and projects can seem overwhelming when looked at as a whole. But when broken down into bite size pieces the enormity of the elephant, goals and projects become manageable. By working smart I decided to start a little at a time. Yesterday I began working in my walk-in closet. During the past 2 days I have gone through, thrown out and reorganized the contents of my closet. I am glad that I started on the project by dividing the apartment in sections. By breaking down and completing the project by sections I am able to avoid stress and celebrate the gains made in the process of completing the project.

**So I was on my way to completing the project by managing the stress a little at a time.**

In the next several days I plan to work on my bedroom and computer area, then start in my living room, dinette area and kitchen. My needing to move will probably not occur, but I am taking steps to practice healthy self-care. By taking steps to practice healthy self-care I am able to do what I can to manage what is in my control, while trusting that things will work out. Work out regardless of whether I have to move or will be able to stay in my apartment. As my Mom said to me some time ago, by taking care of the things we can, we are able to feel lighter. Lighter by taking steps, a little at a time; to manage stress.

### **Today' thought**

In the event that you find yourself facing an elephant that seems overwhelming to you, step back. Realize that it is just an elephant. No biggie. No worries. You can consume the elephant and accomplish the project. You can chip away at the project or goal a little at a time. One bite, one section at a time. By working on the project or goal, one objective or section at a time; you will feel lighter and you will be able to celebrate the gains you make. You don't have to get it done all today. You can face the elephant with confidence by knowing that you can accomplish your goal one bite at a time.

**Serenity Prayer – God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference...**

## **Living with a Brain Injury and New Ways of Learning Part 1**

To listen to and watch a video presentation of this article, You may click on this link:  
[Living with a Brain Injury and New Ways of Learning Video Presentation](#)

Following a brain injury, individuals may experience changes in their ability to learn.

**These changes in learning can lead to frustration and anxiety.**

Consequently, both the traumatic brain injury survivor, as well as family and friends, may experience frustration.

Frustrations may be compounded because the individual impacted by the brain injury may look normal.

**Recently I heard someone say, “She was in a car accident several months ago, but she is fine. She just had a head injury.”**

Learning may subsequently become laborious and daunting for the individual impacted by a brain injury.

Executing and practicing once familiar tasks become a struggle.

Once simple tasks take huge amounts of effort and energy.

As a result, the individual may want to give up trying to learn.

### **What I Discovered that Helped Me**

Through my experience, I have discovered that there are different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Some people learn best through a combination of these three learning styles, while others learn predominantly through the use of one or two of these styles.

Through testing, I discovered that I learn best through two of the three styles. When auditory (listening to instructions) and kinesthetic (show me and let me do) are combined my learning aptitude increases and I am better able to learn the new material.

### **People Learn in Different Ways**

Through my experience, I discovered that my ability to learn tasks is hampered when sequences of information are presented to me. Through my experience, I discovered that because I had a difficult time learning sequences I learn best through a “bazillion” repetitions and through persistence. My learning new sequences of information, as a result, comes at a slower pace. Because I have difficulty learning new sequences of information, I need to have a list of the steps in the sequence to follow while I learn the task.

## **Living with a Brain Injury and New Ways of Learning Part 2**

**I also need to have more time to process new information.**

### **Being Aware — Good News**

In the event that you have experienced a brain injury, your learning style may have also changed for you. As a result, you may be attempting to learn in ways that no longer work for you. Being aware of these changes can reduce your frustration and anxiety.

### **Get Tested**

Being aware of these changes can help you to learn. My encouragement to you, my friend; would be to discover how you best learn. Are you a visual learner, an auditory (hearing) learner or a kinesthetic (doing) learner?

### **Encouragement**

Consequently, I would encourage you to ask your counselor or caseworker to test your learning style.

Knowing your learning style(s) will help you to develop new strategies that will enhance your ongoing recovery process. Knowing your learning style(s) will open new doors for you.

## **The Difference between Ability and Capability after a Brain Injury Part 1**

To listen to and watch a video presentation of this article you may click on this link. [The Difference between Ability/Capability after a Brain Injury Video Presentation](#)

Following our brain injuries, we may find that our ability to accomplish certain things has changed. Because our abilities and capabilities may have changed we may become discouraged and despondent.

**But there is good news.**

Instead, of continuing to be discouraged because of what we can no longer do we can set off on an adventure. We can begin an adventure to discover how to use our abilities and capabilities.

### **The Adventure involves a Process**

The adventure involves the process of learning how to use our abilities and capabilities in ways that will now work. Ways that will now work for us to accomplish what we once thought impossible.

**“All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better.” Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**Inch by Inch Life’s a Cinch. Yard by Yard, Life is Hard**

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

For many years I unknowingly bought into the lie of **SHAME: Should Have Already Mastered Everything**. The lie that told me that if I did not know how to do things perfectly then there was something wrong with me.

**The message of shame still haunts me at times, but now I am aware.**

My awareness helps me to remember that I do not have to do things perfectly. My awareness helps me to recognize my adventure involves process and progress, not perfection.

With these awareness’ I am free to pursue excellence (QUALITY) instead of perfection.

**Progress, not Perfection**

## **The Difference between Ability and Capability after a Brain Injury Part 2**

### **What I Have Discovered About Myself**

As I allow myself to pursue excellence (quality) instead of trying to be perfect I find that I have more peace in my life.

As I allow myself to pursue excellence (quality) instead of trying to be perfect I find that I am able to stop striving to prove my worth and value.

As I allow myself to pursue excellence (quality) instead of trying to be perfect I find that I am able to stop needing other people's approval and validation.

As I allow myself to pursue excellence (quality) instead of trying to be perfect I find that I am able to be more comfortable on my own adventure.

I am able to be more comfortable in my own skin.

As I am more comfortable on my own adventure

I find the freedom to use my gifts, talents and abilities.

I find the freedom to run my own race, instead of comparing my race to the race (s) of other people.

I find the freedom to accept and build on my own lot in life, instead of for comparing my lot with what other people are building on their lots.

### **Below are Several Quotes that Encourage Me to Pursue Excellence (QUALITY) Instead of Perfection**

#### **Quotes of Encouragement**

"Believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place. Have faith in your own abilities, work hard, and there is nothing you cannot accomplish." Brad Henry

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it." Lou Holtz

"Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability." Roy L. Smith

"Success is where preparation and opportunity meet." Bobby Unser

## **Don't Let Your Fear, Anger, and Guilt Stop You from Living Your Dreams Part 1**

To listen to and watch a video presentation of the article, click on this link: [Don't Let Your Fear, Anger, and Guilt Stop You from Living Your Dreams Video Presentation](#)

Fear, anger, and guilt no longer have to intimidate me. Instead, I can examine how my fear, anger, and guilt impact what I think about myself and my reality. In the process, I am able to stop allowing fear, anger, and guilt to dictate the quality of my life.

Through becoming aware of my fear, anger, and guilt I no longer have to be anxious. I no longer have to allow my fear, anger, and guilt to stop me from living my life and my dreams. And as I accept how my fear, anger, and guilt affect my reality, I am able to replace my fear, anger, and guilt.

Replace my fear, anger, and guilt with concepts and solutions. Concepts and solutions that will empower and build me up. Build me up instead of defeating and keeping me down. In the process, my fear, anger, and guilt will become my teachers, instead of being my enemies.

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

**“If you do not like something, change it. If you can not change it, change the way you think about it.” Mary Englebreit**

With this realization, I am able to ask several empowering questions. Empowering questions that will help me to see my fear, anger, and guilt in a new way. In a way that will give me the ability to take a different course of action.

### **Questions that will Help me to See the Gifts in my Fear, Anger, and Guilt**

1. What are the gifts present in my fear, anger, and guilt?
2. What are my fear, anger, and guilt teaching me about my experience?
3. What can I do about my fear, anger, and guilt that will change the way that they impact me?
4. What can I change in my life that will overcome my fear, anger, and guilt?

## **Don't Let Your Fear, Anger, and Guilt Stop You from Living Your Dreams Part 2**

5. What steps can I take to change the way that I think and feel about my fear, anger, and guilt?
6. How can I empower my life and well-being through my fear, anger, and guilt?
7. What can I do differently so that I no longer feel intimidated by my fear, anger, and guilt?

If I am still feel stuck by my fear, anger, and guilt today, as I was yesterday, I need to revisit these questions again.

**“If nothing changes, nothing changes. If you keep doing what you’re doing, you’re going to keep getting what you’re getting. You want change, make some.” Courtney C. Stevens**

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

I have also created a video presentation of this article. To listen to and watch the presentation, please click on this link: [Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skills and Skill Sets Video Presentation](#)

Following a brain injury, we may find that skills that came naturally to us, now are difficult to achieve. In the process, we may find ourselves both frustrated and discouraged. We may find ourselves wanting to give up.

But there is good news. We can learn or relearn skills and skill sets through using the principle of neuroplasticity to create new neural pathways and brain reorganization.

### **Little by Little**

Little by little, we can achieve what we never dreamed possible. In the process, we can begin to celebrate successes as we are learning/relearning skill sets.

In today's article, I would like to share with you something that has helped me to learn new skill sets. Through learning these skills I have been able to use those skills in other areas of my life. In the process of applying those skills to other areas, my quality of life has improved.

In my experience, learning these skills did not come over night. But through staying committed to the process I have experienced both small and huge successes.

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

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

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

**Movements on my Dominant and Non-Dominant sides of my Body.**

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

### **Duplicating movements or mirroring (alternating) movement on both sides of my body.**

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

### **Not Judging my Efforts**

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

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

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

### **Exercise:**

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

## **Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning/Relearning Skills/Skill Sets Part 3**

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

### **Riddle:**

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

### **How I Use the Principle of Neuroplasticity to Create new Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization**

Below are links to short video presentations showing the progression of how the concept of neuroplasticity through repetitive mirrored movements has benefited my mind and body. The documentation and progress made spans over each of the past 5 years.

Click on the below links and they will open for you on YouTube.

[\*\*Neuroplasticity through Martial Arts Disciplines August 2013\*\*](#)

[\*\*Neuroplasticity Demonstration August 2014\*\*](#)

[\*\*Brain Injury, Neuroplasticity and Personal Gains August 2015\*\*](#)

[\*\*Balance and Coordination through Repetitive Mirrored Movement 2016\*\*](#)

[\*\*Brain Injury Recovery and Repetitive Mirrored Movements 2017\*\*](#)

[\*\*Improving Our Brain and Body’s Ability to Excel after Brain Injury 2018\*\*](#)

Below is a power point presentation that I am available to present at upcoming conferences.

[\*\*Neuroplasticity and Opening the Door to Hope PowerPoint Presentation\*\*](#)

Below is a link to the slideshow presentation that I created on the topic of neuroplasticity.

[\*\*Neuroplasticity, Small Successes, and Learning/Relearning Skills and Skill Sets  
Slideshow Presentation\*\*](#)

## **Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset to Excel in Life Part 1**

In my article, [Moving from bitter to Better in Life is a Choice](#) I spoke to how I reached a place in my life that I no longer wanted to merely be a survivor, tossed about by my reactions to people, places, and things.”

In today’s article, I would like to speak to what I discovered that led me to no longer wanting to be merely a “survivor”. The decision that motivated me to examine the mindset of a “survivor”. The mindset that led me to believe that I was somehow limited because of the adversity that I experienced in my life that resulted in my being a “survivor”.

### **Let me explain:**

Let me first share with you that I understand what it is like being a survivor. I sustained a severe traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. I am now 63 years old. What I learned as a survivor is that often the designation comes with a label and a stigmatization. The label and stigmatization are frequently bolstered by secondary dependencies and secondary gains. The label and stigmatization that leads the individual to believe that they are the identity of the survivor, with the trimmings of the assumed limitations; assigned by the stigmatization.

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

### **The Mindset**

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

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

## Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset to Excel in Life Part 2

### Today's Thought

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

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

### Epilogue

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

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”.

## **Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset to Excel in Life Part 3**

### **Quotes that Remind me that I can Be more than a Survivor**

As you read these quotes, may you also be inspired to remember; that you can be more than a survivor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Moving Beyond a Survivor Mindset to Excel in Life Part 4**

### **More Quotes**

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

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

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

## Abraham Lincoln and Not Giving Up on Your Dreams Part 1

To watch and listen to the presentation of the article, you may click on this link:  
[Abraham Lincoln and Not Giving Up on Your Dreams Video Presentation](#)

History can both encourage and motivate. Watching the struggle and the triumph of individuals can both empower and give us hope to pursue our dreams.

Abraham Lincoln is one of those individuals. Below is an article in which I share what I learned about Abraham Lincoln.

His life, struggle, and experience encourage me to not give up on my dreams, despite failures and setbacks.

As you read the below article may you also be encouraged to not give up on your dreams, despite failures and setbacks.

Posted by [Second Chance to Live](#) on August 17, 2010

Last night I stopped by the martial arts school to see my Sensei – instructor – and to see and say hello to some of the brown and black belts with whom I trained with for 8 years.

I then made the decision to stay for part of the brown and black belt class.

At the beginning of class, Sensei shared something with the students that I want to share with you, my friend. May you be encouraged as you read through this article to not give up on your goals, your process, your dreams or your destiny. May the lesson – below – inspire you to keep getting back up no matter how many failures or setbacks that you may experience during your lifetime. As Sensei began class he shared a list of setbacks and failures that an individual in history experienced during his lifetime.

- 1832 Lost Job and defeated in the state legislature
  - 1833 Failed in business
  - 1835 Fiance/sweetheart died
  - 1836 Had a nervous breakdown
- 1836 Defeated in run for Illinois House Speaker
- 1843 Defeated in run for nomination for U.S. Congress
  - 1848 Lost re-nomination for Congress
  - 1849 Rejected for land officer position
  - 1854 Defeated for U.S. Senate

## Abraham Lincoln and Not Giving Up on Your Dreams Part 2

- 1856 Defeated for nomination for Vice President
  - 1858 Again defeated in run for US Senate
    - 1860 Elected President (Success)

The above list of setbacks and seeming failures are attributed to one of our greatest Presidents in American history. His name is **Abraham Lincoln**. Abraham Lincoln profoundly impacted his generation and generations to come because he made the decision (s) to not allow failures or setbacks to keep him from pursuing his dreams or his destiny. Because of his decision (s) to keep moving forward, freedom has occurred in the lives of many individuals for many generations.

Sensei went on to encourage the students in the class to not give up on their goals – be it advancing to their next belt rank or in another area in their life– even though they may encounter failures or setbacks in the pursuit of those goals.

Abraham Lincoln's example and Sensei's lesson inspires both you and me to stay committed to our goals, vision, mission, dreams and destinies — regardless of any adversity, failure (s) or setback (s) that we may experience during our lifetimes. And as Abraham Lincoln brought a freedom to the lives of many individuals, so too will we bring about a freedom — simply by staying committed to our dreams and our destinies regardless of any adversity, failure (s) or setback (s) — to the lives of many individuals in our generation and in generations to come.

### Several Quotes that Inspire

“I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” Thomas Edison

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

“We would accomplish many more things if we did not think of them as impossible.” Vince Lombardi

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

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

# **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 1**

## **VIDEO PRESENTATION SERIES OF THE ARTICLE**

To make the information available in this article, I created a video presentation series. To watch and listen to the article series, click on the below links:

[\*\*Making Peace with God Video Presentation Part 1\*\*](#)

[\*\*Making Peace with God Video Presentation Part 2\*\*](#)

[\*\*Making Peace with God Video Presentation Part 3\*\*](#)

[\*\*Making Peace with God Video Presentation Part 4\*\*](#)

In **July 2007** I wrote an article, **Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust**. I divided the article into 3 parts. Today, I decided to combine the 3 parts of the article to share what helped me to make peace with God and myself so that I could stop wasting time.

The Article

### **Making Peace with God and Learning to Trust**

#### **MY STRUGGLE TRUSTING**

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

**Over time, my cynicism and doubt grew and I struggled with believing that God cared and that I could trust Him.**

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

For many years, I was criticized and berated by my Dad for not measuring up to his expectations. He frequently told me that I would never amount to anything while I was growing up. My Mom would frequently tell me to prove your Dad wrong. I believed I needed to be more than, rather than just am. As I grew older and attended college I found myself

seeking out people like my Dad. My unconscious motive at the time was to appease surrogate Dad's in order to prove that I was lovable.

## **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 2**

**Nevertheless I continued to fail in my attempts to satisfy the expectations of those individuals.**

### **MY PILGRIMAGE**

In my effort to purge myself of my unbeknownst sense of shame and guilt, I attended various types of churches. Fundamental, non-denominational, denominational, charismatic, full gospel and four square and assembly of God churches. I sat under pastoral teaching and submitted myself to what was taught. I diligently attempted to apply what I was learning, in order to gain favor with God and with those individuals with in the church I was attending. My motive was to be accepted and approved of through measuring up to the expectations set forth for me.

### **MY SEARCH FOR PEACE**

**My search for peace seemed fleeting at best.**

My desire was to have peace with God, other people and myself. My efforts to measure up to the literal interpretation of the Bible proved to be inadequate. Feeling inadequate only reinforced my sense of shame and guilt. That although I strove to do enough, to be enough I did not feel enough. As I sought to learn from the leadership from these different churches I heard other conflicting messages.

**These conflicting messages served to reinforce that I had to perform to have peace. Because I was led to and believed that my good was not good enough having peace with God was constantly in question to me.**

One such double message told me that God loved me and wanted me to have life and have it more abundantly. However, I could not experience life more abundantly unless I measured up to specific expectations. Performance based acceptance to gain love and acceptance appeared to be the underlying requirement. Consequently, I continued to feel inadequate and unlovable in many church settings and fellowships.

### **COME CLOSE/ GO AWAY**

My experience within these religious settings reflected the message that I had become all too familiar with in my life experience: Come close, Go away. The impact of the come close, go away messages created confusion and reinforced my experiencing emotional duress. I found myself wanting what I could not have and seeking to be in relationships with an emotionally

unavailable God. The crazy making behavior of come close, go away kept me trapped in a sense of inadequacy and unpredictability. Crazy making made it difficult for me to trust.

### **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 3**

The impact of the come close, go away messages created confusion in my attempt to have peace with God. The impact of the come close go away messages — from my youth and from my experience in many churches — undermined my ability to trust. What became evident was that I was seeking to have a relationship with a God, who was like my Dad; was/had been emotionally unavailable to me. Emotionally unavailable to me unless I measured up to his expectations of me. Emotionally unavailable to me as I was criticized for not doing and being enough.

#### **FEELING CUT OFF**

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

#### **MAKING PEACE WITH MY DAD**

What became apparent to me was that I needed to make peace with my Dad so that I could make peace with God. Although I could not change my Dad, I realized that I needed to change me. What became evident to me, through my recovery process was that I needed to challenge messages. Challenge messages that I received from my Dad. Messages that were reinforced by people who were like my Dad. Messages that led me to believe that I needed to perform to have peace. Messages that led me to believe that...had to be met before I could trust. Messages that alienated me from having peace with God. Messages that alienated me from being able to be at peace with myself. Messages that distracted me. Messages that led me to believe that it was not safe to trust. Messages that “cut” me off from the Source of my healing. Messages that sought to convince me that my circumstances were being done to me, instead of for me. Messages of abandonment, instead of empowerment.

## **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 4**

### **BLAMING ONLY KEEPS ME STUCK**

What I discovered through my process is that no one is to blame. My Dad and the churches I attended did the best they knew how to do at the time. What I discovered through my process was that I could change the messages that I received from my Dad and churches with and empowering messages. Messages that I could tell myself that would empower my ability to trust, be at peace with myself and be at peace God.

What I discovered helped me to realize that I no longer had to remain stuck. Instead, I could replace those messages with messages that would help me to make peace with God. Messages that would help me to be at peace with myself. Messages that would help me to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

### **RESOLVING INCONSISTENCIES — THE WIZARD OF OZ**

In my process, I had to make peace with the God of my understanding. I had to resolve the conflicts and inconsistencies. I had to understand God's heart toward me so that I could trust Him. I had to be like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz" who had to see what was behind the guise of the loud ominous voice. I had to make peace with myself and be convinced that God truly cared about my world in a non-punitive fashion. I had to engage with a God who loved with an everlasting love, an unconditional love and a renewing love. I had to see God as a non-critical parent image. I had to see God as a loving parent who has my best interest in mind, so I could trust.

**I had to be like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz" who had to see what was behind the guise of the loud ominous voice. I had to be like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz" who realized that she could approach the Great OZ. I had to realize like Dorothy that my God was approachable and that I could draw near to Him without requirement.**

I had to realize that I could readily approach God without fear or apprehension. With my awareness, I began to realize that I could have peace with God. With my awareness, I began to realize that I could trust God. I began to realize that I could trust the process and I could trust myself. I began to realize that I did not have to perform to BE. I had to replace my misguided, inadequate belief system in order to trust the God who knew me before I was created in my mother's womb.

## **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 5**

### **WHAT I NEED TO REMEMBER**

I had to know this God who created me in awe and wonder. I wanted to know my God who cried with me, and was sad when I was sad, who rejoices over me with gladness because I am called according to His purpose. I wanted to know God as a kind and loving Father. I wanted to know my God, who loves me with an everlasting and unconditional unfailing love. I wanted to know my God who promised to be with me, even to the end of the age. I wanted to know my God who told me that He would no, no never leave me. I wanted to know the God who knows the extent of my days. I wanted to know the God who knows the plans that He has for me.

### **MAKING CHANGES**

#### **Something I discovered through my making peace with God and learning how to trust**

In order to restore my relationship with a loving God, who truly cared about my world, I had to make significant changes. In my experience, I had to physically detach from places, groups and organizations that controlled through the use of debilitating guilt and debilitating shame. I had to stop paying attention to people who wanted me to qualify my worth through performance. I had to understand how debilitating guilt and debilitating shame drained my creative capacity. I had to understand how critical voices undermined my ability to trust God, the process and myself. I had to replace the demand of perfection with the pursuit of excellence. I had to replace the message of you always do things in a half-ass way with a learning curve.

I began to realize that I needed to change the old messages with new messages. Messages that I told myself about myself. Messages that I told myself about God that were not true. Messages that served to alienate me from the Source who created and destined me to become in this life.

### **UNDERSTANDING MYSELF**

Spiritual progress, rather than spiritual perfection had to become the measure of success. In my experience, I had to come to terms with my humanity, so that I could do a fearless moral inventory of myself in order to identify patterns that set me up to believe I was a victim of my circumstances. I had to identify defense mechanisms that no longer worked and I needed to be rigorously honest with myself. I had to do the necessary work to enable me to see myself as an empowered being, instead of that as a human doing. I had to learn how to trust a God who was kind and loving and wanted my very best. I had to do the work to be able to accept the reality that I have a God, who dances and knows how to have fun.

## **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 6**

### **TRUSTING THE DOTS TO CONNECT FORWARD**

I had to begin to live life on life's terms and let go of matters that are out of my control. I had to begin to trust the process. I had to trust that the pieces that make up my life would fall into place. That the pieces would fall into place at the right time and in the right order. I had to trust that the dots would connect forward.

### **GROWING IN AWARENESS**

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

**I can choose to be a part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I can be empowered, regardless of what evil may lurk in my world.**

### **WHAT I DISCOVERED**

I discovered that by living life on life's terms doors open, as I trust the process. I discovered that by letting go of matters that are out of my control I find peace. I discovered that when things don't happen like I want them to, God is doing for me what I can not do for myself. I discovered that I could trust the process, a LOVING GOD, and myself.

I discovered that more would (will) be revealed to me in time. I discovered that I could let go of people and situations and trust God with the timing. I discovered that I could let go of the BIG Picture. I discovered that I could have an active role in my life by doing the footwork while trusting the outcomes to a loving God. I discovered that I could ask God to guide and lead me.

Because I have committed myself to my process, I have learned that I can trust God. Through trusting God, I am able to be at peace with a loving God and with myself (most of the time). I am able to learn from my circumstances, instead of feeling victimized by them. Through realizing that I can learn from my circumstances, I see my circumstances in a different light. Not as impediments but as guides. Guides that teach me about myself and empower my ability to be a part of God's will for my life.

## **Making Peace with God and Myself to Stop Wasting Time Part 7**

### **Guides that teach me lessons that prepare me for opportunities.**

Opportunities that teach me more lessons that give me insight. Insight that guides me in the direction of my destiny. The destiny for which I was created to fulfill through my life. Having peace with God and learning to trust enables me to accept who I am. Have peace with God and learning to trust has and continues to help me to be at peace with myself.

### **TODAY'S THOUGHT**

In the event that you are having a difficult time making peace with God and trusting Him, may I make a suggestion? Pray the below prayer or some thing similar. Ask God to reveal Himself to you as a loving Father. Ask Him to help you to make peace with Him. Ask Him to help you to learn to trust.

### **SUGGESTED PRAYER**

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

## **Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Because...Part 1**

To listen to the video presentation of this article, you may click on this link: [\*\*Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Because...Video Presentation\*\*](#)

Living with the impact of a brain injury — visible or invisible — can leave you and I feeling unimportant in many ways.

Unimportant in ways that leave you and I feeling less than, ineffective, ineffectual, weak, feeble, and useless...

Feeling as though our lives and our efforts do not matter. But the reality is that we are powerful beyond measure. Powerful beyond measure because of what is in each of us to be expressed.

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

### **Be Aware**

We may have individuals in our lives who reinforce the feelings of being less than, ineffective, weak, feeble, useless, worthless and futile. These individuals may lead you and me to believe that without their “special knowledge” we will not amount to much in life.

We may also have individuals in our lives who, although we have achieved far beyond all reasonable expectations despite obstacles and adversity still minimize, marginalize, discount and dismiss who we are and what we have to contribute.

But there opinions no longer have to limit us.

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

## **Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Because...Part 2**

### **But We Don't Have to Shrink Back**

As a result — of the individuals who in practice minimize, marginalize, dismiss, discount and by their actions patronize who we are as individuals — we may find ourselves shrinking back. We may find ourselves being lulled into believing that our voice and who we are as individuals really does not matter.

**We may have people in our lives who communicate to us — overtly and covertly — that their opinions, not ours; matter. As a result, we may find ourselves discouraged from listening to our inner voice, our intuition and our heart. As a result, we may have since paid little attention to our inner voice.**

As a result, we may have traded our judgment for the judgment of other people. As a result, we may have a difficult time trusting ourselves, a loving God and our process. As a result, we may have been led to believe that we are not enough and that good is not in our future.

### **But who we are is not the judgment of anyone.**

“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.” Rob Siltanen

### **But there is Good News**

We can trade a lie for the truth. We are enough. Our inner voice, intuition, and heart motivation do matter. Our inner voice, intuition, and heart motivation will guide us. We can trust ourselves and how we feel led, over the opinions of other people. We can trust the process, a loving God and ourselves through what is being revealed to us.

**We can trust a loving God to lead and guide us each day. We don't have to figure things out on our own. We can move through the process, one day at a time.**

We can ask for help and then follow our inner voice, our heart and our intuition. We can replace other people's judgment (what is best for us) with our judgment (what is best for us),  
We can ask loving God to guide us along our journey.

And as we are led, we can trust that our light will shine in the darkness. That our presence will liberate other people. And that our being, by being who we are, not who other people may want us to believe; will give people the courage to carry on with their lives.

## **Don't Let Anyone tell You — You Aren't Enough Because...Part 3**

Through our example, they will, in turn, let their light to shine in, darkness. Through our example, they will, in turn, liberate others.

And through our example (by being who we are, not what other people may want us to believe about ourselves) we will give other people the motivation to achieve far beyond all reasonable expectations.

### **Some Quotes that Inspire Me**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“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

## **Finding Freedom from Limitations through The Power of Humility Part 1**

To offer the information to individuals who learn through watching and listening, I have created a video presentation of the article series. Click on the below links to watch and listen.

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

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

I have been thinking about a very powerful principle. A principle that helps me to find freedom from limitations.

A principle that helps me to step out of limitations into the abundance of possibilities.

In the process, discouragement is disbanded as an illusion of lack.

Apprehension is traded for hope. In the process the conceivable becomes attainable.

Progress rather than perfection becomes a way of life.

The bondage of needing to be perfect is replaced with the pursuit of excellence.

### **Limitation is traded for hope.**

The voice of inadequacy is replaced with the voice of enough.

I no longer have to be right to feel secure.

I am free to say, "I don't know".

I am made strong when I am weak.

I am free to take risks because I realize that I can not fail.

I am able to laugh at myself because I know that I am learning.

I am able to let go of outcomes because I know that I will get what I need.

I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I do not have to know the big picture.

### **What I Discovered**

Humility promotes and empowers the individual through meekness.

Humility sets the individual free to accept themselves — because the individual knows that they do not have to prove their worth or value.

Humility lavishes the individual with hope because the individual knows that possibilities exist.

## **Finding Freedom from Limitations through The Power of Humility Part 2**

Humility encourages learning because the individual realizes that they do not have to already know everything.

Humility encourages and sets the stage for learning curves.

Humility breeds and brings about security because the individual knows that they can trust the process, a loving God and themselves.

Humility encourages the individual to let go of that which is out of their control and to trust the process.

Humility motivates the individual to ask for help because the individual realizes that they do not have to lean on their own understanding or resources.

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

Humility seeks to set the individual free because the individual knows that they can practice easy does it.

Humility motivates the individual to take risks because there is no threat of reprisal.

Humility encourages the individual to succeed, while at the same time cheer leading their efforts.

Humility celebrates the individual as a work in progress.

Humility teaches the individual to stay in the moment, to enjoy the process, to do the footwork and to let go of the outcomes.

Humility reinforces self-esteem, self-respect, and self-worth.

Humility does not seek justification.

Humility does not disparage, minimize or marginalize.

Humility does not condescend.

Humility is free of contempt.

Humility is patient and kind.

Humility champions and supports the individual.

Humility readies the individual for service.

Humility empowers with wisdom.

## **Finding Freedom from Limitations through The Power of Humility Part 3**

Humility gently reveals power through change.

Humility teaches the individual that they are on a journey.

Humility teaches the individual that on that journey.

Humility reveals that the process is more important than the destination.

Humility teaches the individual that — with seeming serendipity — they are being led in the direction of their destiny.

Humility is different than humiliation.

**Humiliation scorns the individual.**

Humiliation's motive is to control and limit.

Humiliation undermines self-esteem, self-respect and self-value.

Humiliation stymies creative expression.

Humiliation demands justification.

Humiliation seeks to disparage, minimize and marginalize the individual — at their very core.

Humiliation promotes fear and insecurity.

Humiliation undermines enthusiasm and motivation.

Humiliation promotes fear and anxiety.

Humiliation cripples initiative.

Humiliation squashes hope.

### **My Experience and What I Learned**

Prior to understanding the difference between humility and humiliation I berated myself on a daily basis.

I believed that I was the problem and thus deserved to be victimized and humiliated by life and the people in my world.

Consequently, I felt trapped by the voice of criticism and the clamoring of shame.

My efforts to be enough were frequently chided as inadequate.

Consequently, I developed insecurity, low self-esteem, and low self-worth.

## **Finding Freedom from Limitations through The Power of Humility Part 4**

I did not believe that I made mistakes, but that I was a mistake.

At the core of my being, humiliation chided me as inadequate and unlovable.

My attempts to quiet the voice of humiliation — shame and criticism — only seemed to reinforce the impact that humiliation had on my life.

Unrealistic expectations kept me anxious and depressed.

Humiliation reinforced the belief that I could not do enough to be enough.

Humiliation inhibited my being through intimidation.

Humiliation demanded that I be perfect.

Humiliation hindered my ability to find peace.

Peace with other people and peace with myself.

Humiliation, rather than humility subsequently reinforced my sense of shame and feelings of inadequacy.

Humiliation distorted my perceptions and held me captive to the belief that who I was and what I had to contribute in life did not matter.

Because of my distorted perceptions — prior to understanding the distinction between humility and humiliation — I could not take the risk to be humble.

Humiliation led me to believe that I needed to be hyper-vigilant.

Humiliation led me to believe that I needed to stay on guard.

### **Humility on the Other hand Taught Me**

With time and through my recovery process I came to understand that humility validates and heralds my best efforts as good enough for today.

Through learning how to trust the process and continuing to trust the process — instead of trying to control the process — humility has been able to encourage me to do the footwork.

### **To do the footwork and then to let go of the outcomes.**

Through maintaining humility, I am able to revel in what I am experiencing in the now — without a fear of reprisal.

As I let go of my need to justify, answer and defend who I am — I am able to be.

## **Finding Freedom from Limitations through The Power of Humility Part 5**

As I am able to be I am free to create without the threat of being criticized or shamed for my efforts.

Consequently, I am able to focus on excellence — instead of striving to be perfect — with each new day.

In the pursuit of excellence, I no longer need to listen to the voice of humiliation or be humiliated by my efforts.

Consequently, I can rest through my efforts and live beyond my limitations because I do not have to focus on my limitations.

Humility allows me to accept who I am, where I am at today, instead of judging my efforts.

Humility allows me to learn from my experience — rather than judging my experiences.

Humility empowers my perspective and motivates me to learn from my circumstances.

### **Humility gives me the freedom to be who I am, where I am...**

Humility releases me to live beyond my limitations because I do not have to depend on my own resources.

Humility teaches me to stay in the moment.

Humility helps me to find my center.

Humility teaches me to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

In **July 2009** I wrote the above article and divided the article into 4 Parts. In the event that you would like to read the article in Parts, click on the below links.

[\*\*To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 1 of 4\*\*](#)

[\*\*To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 2 of 4\*\*](#)

[\*\*To Live Beyond Limitations Through Humility Part 3 of 4\*\*](#)

[\*\*To Live Beyond Limitations through Humility Part 4 of 4\*\*](#)

## About the Author

I am a traumatic brain injury and survivor. My traumatic brain 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 severe 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. Difficulties in my social interactions and through my educational and vocational pursuits for many years despite my hard work and diligence.

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. I then went on to obtain my undergraduate degree (4 majors, 2 universities and one junior college) in 10 years and graduate degree (2 different grad schools) 3 1/2 years. 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 with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida, I became a client of that Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. After being recruited to North Carolina and then being fired from that job, I applied for my 3rd SSDI application. I also applied to and became a client of the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. After completing the evaluation process, my vocational rehabilitation counselor reported that I was unemployable.

Shortly, after being terminated as a client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, my 3rd application for SSDI was approved. Although I was deemed to be unemployable and declared disabled by the Social Security Administration, I still had a desire to use my gifts, talents and abilities. After 7 years of searching (writing poems, an autobiography, and a book that I could not get published) I was encouraged to start a blog. I created Second Chance to Live on February 6, 2007. Since that time I have written articles, e Books, created video presentations, slide show presentations, and inspirational posters. (See [Resources](#)).

