

“I Am More Than My Brain Injury” Zoom Presentation

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Second Chance to Live

“What happens to us is not as important as how we respond to what happens to us.”

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

- 1. How my brain injury happened:** Car Accident in 1967 at the age 10 (open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damage, severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. Coma 3 weeks)
- 2. Greatest Challenge:** For many years, buying into my denial (lack of awareness) and the denial (lack of awareness) of family members. Breaking free from my denial.
- 3. Greatest Achievement:** That I have persevered and not given up along the way, when doing so would have been much easier. That I kept looking for a way that worked.
- 4. One Word or Sentence that Describe you:** Tenacious; “Research your own experience, absorb what is useful, reject what is useless and add

specifically your own creation”. Bruce Lee philosophy of Jeet Kune Do applied to my journey.

My Process and Journey Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability

Mainstreamed into elementary school 6th grade.

Graduated on time with my high school class 1975.

University of Arizona: Geology then Physical Ed.

Transferred to Pima Community College to take pre-requisites. Applied to the Licensed Practical Nursing program. Obtained my Nursing Assistant Certification. Eight weeks before graduating with my LPN was asked to leave the LPN program.

Transferred to Oral Robert’s University – parents asked to meet with undergraduate program chair due to unknown difficulties on campus?

Graduate School – Asbury Theological Seminary. On probation. Difficulties as a student chaplain during a J-term. Asked to meet with Department chair at the Seminary. Not admit for my 2nd year.

Graduate School – University of Kentucky. Difficulties with 1st practicum, met with Department Chair Graduate program. Was given 1 more

practicum, Internship difficulties. 1 hour before graduation was told.

Passed the exam and obtained my credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC). Worked in Worker's Comp out of Graduate School.

Florida

Employment – fired from 4 professional jobs.

Applied 2 times for SSDI in Florida and then 1 time in North Carolina.

Client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida, while I was still working as counselor on probation and then terminated as a counselor. Later terminated as a client due to an unsuccessful job placement.

North Carolina

Recruited Insurance Company as a CRC – Fired 4 months later. Could not find other employment.

Applied for SSDI for the **3rd time**. Applied to the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a client. After the evaluation process, my Vocational Rehab Counselor determined that I was unemployable.

Felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to Go although I diligently applied myself both academically and vocationally.

Shortly after being told I was unemployable, my 3rd application for SSDI was approved. Still had a desire to use my gifts, talents and abilities to be of service.

Got a computer with back pay. Wrote poems, an autobiography, a book and then started a blog, Second Chance to Live on Feb 6, 2007.

Since February 6, 2007

1895 articles, 423 video presentations, 12 e Books, 20 slide show presentations, 34 inspirational posters – body, soul, spirit, mind and emotions approach to an ongoing brain injury recovery process.

When I reach a point in my life

Could no longer Deny

I Discovered that Interest Inventories and Career Assessments do not Factor in Brain Injuries or Invisible Disabilities

What I Discovered about Purpose

“Purpose is about a process and a journey, not a destination. I cannot know until I know and knowing

just takes what it takes. There are no shortcuts, “silver bullets” or “magic potions”. By accepting that reality, I am given the gift of knowing by not giving up. I am given the gift of knowing by trusting the process, a loving God and myself.” Craig J. Phillips
MRC, BA

What is VERY IMPORTANT to Remember

Because there are Voices that Want you and I to Agree with their Assessment of Who we Are as Individuals living with Brain Injuries.

You and I are not our brain injuries.

You and I are not defined by labels and societal stigmatization.

Our brain injuries were only an event that occurred in our lives.

Our brain injuries do not have to define who we are as individuals.

We are not our deficits or limitations

What Can Do to Empower our Lives

Grieve the impact of our brain injuries. Grieve the impact of what I am powerless to change.

**“Confront our Denial”, “Face our Anger”, “Work through our Bargaining”, “Embrace. our Depression”,
“Accept our Reality”**

Awareness, Acceptance, and Action

Rail Roads — Brain injury was a switch on the railroad of life, pointing me in a different direction. A direction in which I get to learn how to use my gifts, talent, and abilities in ways that work for me.

Quotes that Inspire You and I to Not Give Up

The below quotes encourage me to not focus on my brain injury, but on the possibilities.

“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

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

“It is not as important what happens to us, as how we respond to what happens to us.” Craig J. Phillips
MRC, BA

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

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

Concepts that Empower the Process of Finding and Living our Destiny

Learning Styles / Strategies — How we learn may have changed after we sustained our brain injuries. Get tested to find out how you learn –Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic or a combination of these learning styles.

Jigsaw Puzzle — Learning from one circumstance (puzzle piece) to be able to step on another puzzle piece. Puzzle pieces will connect as I learn each lesson.

Baking Cakes — learning to combine ingredients — Sensei gives me ingredients to put together to become a black belt

Tapestries — Each thread (combined threads) look like jumbled threads on one side of the tapestry, on the other side combined create a beautiful story.

Elephant Riddle — Question — How do you eat an elephant? Answer — One bite at a Time

Light Bulbs — Thomas Edison

Strike Outs — Babe Ruth

Circumstances — lessons, opportunities, more lessons and opportunities

The Fable of the “Tortoise and the Hare

The Story of the Crack Pot

Bruce Lee’s Philosophy — Research your own experience, absorb what is useful, reject what is useless. And add specifically your own creation.

My Brain Injury was Merely an Event that Happened in My Life.

The event of my brain injury does not define who I am, no more than does a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype or a societal stigmatization.

What I Discovered that is VERY IMPORTANT to Remember

Because there are voices that want you and I to agree with their assessment of who we are as individuals living with brain injuries.

You and I are not our brain injuries.

We are not defined by a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype or stigmatization.

Our brain injuries were only an event that occurred
in our lives.

Our brain injuries do not have to define who we are
as individuals.

We are not our deficits or limitations

What I Discovered that I Needed to Do as an Individual Living with a Brain Injury

I needed to grieve the impact of my brain injury

I needed to grieve what I was powerless to change

I needed to confront my denial and the denial of
family and friends

I needed to work through my anger at what I was
powerless to change

I needed to allow myself to try to bargain my way out
of...

I needed to be gentle with myself as I worked
through depression

I needed to have people to help me through this
grieving process

I needed to get to a place of acceptance to be able
to accept my reality when other people couldn't.

I needed to let go of what no longer worked for me.

Understanding the Impact of Invisible Disabilities

My Interest is Sharing this Presentation

1. Not to fix blame on anyone – as that does no one any good
2. Empower individuals living with brain injuries and other kinds of invisible disabilities to pursue their hopes and dreams.
3. Encourage individuals living with brain Injuries and invisible disabilities to love and accept themselves.
4. Motivate individuals living with brain injuries and invisible disabilities to move forward with their lives.

I do not like to Label or Stereotype Individuals, however in this instance doing so has helped me to Understand what I was Experiencing.

Experiencing as an individual living with a brain Injury and an invisible disability.

Four Groups of Individuals

4 Groups of People we Interact with as Individuals living with Brain Injuries and Invisible Disabilities

First Group

People are oblivious and do not care one way or another whether we have invisible disabilities

Second Group

Hear that I am a living with an invisible disability, but believe that I am using my invisibility as an excuse.

Treat me with contempt, either overtly or covertly, because I am unable to meet or satisfy their expectations.

Third Group

Understand that I am an individual living with an invisible disability, but still want me to function without an invisible disability.

Believe that I am making an excuse when I am unable to fulfill their expectations.

Refuse to believe that I have legitimate limitations and deficits. Blame me for reminding them that I have an invisible disability.

Fourth Group

Thankfully realized that I am living with an invisible disability and that my invisible disability interferes with my ability to work.

To work with individuals, especially with individuals in the 2nd and 3rd groups.

Second and Third Groups

Tell me they understand and accept that I have an invisible disability. Nevertheless, I am blamed when I cannot measure up to their expectation (s).

Nothing I can say or do can convince them of my predicament and conundrum – that I am disabled although I look normal.

Feel like I am between a proverbial “Rock and a Hard Place”.

Treat me with Disdain and Ridicule

Want me to Give more than I am able to Give

Want me to buy back into their denial system to believe that if I just...

Denial Systems

Denial System includes manipulation through shame, guilt and emotional coercion.

Want me to believe that my invisible disability is all up in my head.

That if I just tried harder that I would not be affected by my invisible disability.

In My Experience

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.

Trying to Figure Things Out After Our Brain Injuries

Being Vulnerable

Being vulnerable can leave or open us to up to being bullied. Being vulnerable can leave us susceptible to being bullied.

As a result, we may be led to believe that we cannot trust ourselves.

By not trusting ourselves we may be led to believe what other people want us to believe about ourselves.

Through buying into those beliefs, we may find that we deserve to be mistreated and bullied.

Such treatment and bullying can lead us to believe that we don't deserve to be more than we are led to believe about ourselves by those individuals.

Individuals who then take advantage of our being vulnerable.

Intimidation Defined

Merriam Webster defines intimidation as: to make timid or fearful: frighten; especially: to compel or deter by or as if by threats.

Dictionary.com defines intimidation as: to make timid; fill with fear, to overawe or cow, at through force of personality or by superior display of wealth, talent, etc., to force into or deter from action by inducing fear.

Vocabulary.com defines intimidation as: You can see "timid" in the middle of intimidating, and to be timid is to be frightened or to pull back from something. When you intimidate, you frighten or make someone afraid. To frighten" or "make fearful" is at the root of the verb intimidate. Intimidation can be mental, emotional, spiritual and physical or a combination of one or more ways.

Challenged

As a traumatic brain injury survivor, I struggle with a sense of inadequacy at times. At times I listen to messages that seem to challenge me for not being more than I am today. I am encouraged to be more, but for some reason, I simply do not believe I can be more.

Innuendos of shame — in these messages — trigger the notion that I am not enough, I don't do enough and that I am unlovable.

Controlled

Unconsciously, shame seeks to discredit my desire to succeed in life through minimizing and marginalizing my best efforts.

Shame seeks to keep me distracted by a faulty notion that tells me that what I do and who I am is not enough.

Shame seeks to keep me in denial.

Shame seeks to rob my energy. Shame seeks to silence my efforts through criticism, minimization and marginalization.

As a person with a brain injury and an invisible disability, I allowed the message of shame to bully

me for many years. The shame bully controlled and manipulated my every move.

Shame told me that I was not enough and that my best efforts were never quite good enough.

When I attempted to justify, answer, defend and explain myself to the bully, the bully would jeer at me.

Shame mocks me through patronization, minimization, marginalization, dismissing and discounting.

The more I attempted to appease the bully — through striving to do more to be enough — the more the bully would remind of the reasons why I felt inadequate and insecure.

With time and through my process I began to realize that no matter how much I did to appease the bully, the bully would still abuse me.

Essential

With time and through my ongoing pain I began to realize what the bully was doing to me.

With time and when I got tired of being bullied, I realized that if nothing changed, it would remain the same.

Consequently, I made the decision to examine why I believed that I deserved to be bullied.

With my decision, I made several other decisions. I realized that I needed to examine how the bully kept me distracted.

I Needed to Examine

Why I believed that I was a mistake?

Why I believed that my best efforts were never quite good enough?

Why I felt a need to justify, defend, answer and explain myself to the bully?

Why I had such a difficult time living in my own skin?

Through my recovery process and my pain, I found the motivation to confront the “shame bully”.

Through My Process

Through my recovery process I discovered the origins of the lies and how I had been set up to bullied.

Through my pain and my recovery process I discovered why I had so readily accepted what I was being told by the bully.

Through my recovery process I discovered why I felt minimized and marginalized by the bully.

Through my recovery process I discovered how the bully used shame to keep me in denial.

Through my process, I discovered that the shame bully echoed the voice of perfectionism — at my every move.

The voice of perfectionism crippled, devalued, minimized and marginalized who I was and what I had to contribute.

Through my recovery process and my pain, I discovered that my ability to heal and grow in my mind, body and spirit were hindered by the voice of fear of failure.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism cut with a two-edge sword — telling me my efforts were not good enough and that I should not try because I would probably fail.

Shame also stymied my efforts by threatening me with the fear that I would be abandoned physically and emotionally if I did not do things perfectly.

The Bully created Drama

At the core of my being the fear of abandonment kept me enslaved by the bully.

Because the bully was unrelenting, I had no idea that there was life beyond the drama.

I had no idea how much energy I was using to avoid being attacked by the bully.

Energy Drained

Through my recovery process and pain, I began to recognize that my internal energy was being drained in my attempt to avoid being attacked by the bully.

Through recognizing how shame was draining my life, I was motivated to look for solutions.

These solutions helped me to begin to heal emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Three Rules

Through my recovery process and my pain, I discovered that there were three rules that enforced the power of the bully.

As I began to talk, trust and feel my eyes slowly opened. Through my recovery process and my pain, I discovered how the bully gained access to my life

and to my world. I discovered how the bully perpetuated the lie.

Through my recovery process and my pain, I became aware of what was blocking the peace that I longed for in my life.

I found that I needed to work through the pain to get beyond the pain.

I had to do the work to gain the awareness, to move beyond the awareness to a place of acceptance. A place of acceptance where I could stop losing myself.

Not Blaming Anyone – Including Myself

With my awareness, I realized that I had to move beyond the pain through the pain before I could accept what had occurred to me — without blaming anyone.

I found that I had to do the work to gain the acceptance before I could take the action to stop being bullied.

Awareness, Acceptance and Action

I discovered that I had to do the work before I could break free of the denial systems that contained the lie.

Through my recovery process and my pain, I began to realize that I had been living my life through vicarious demands.

Through my recovery process and my pain, I discovered that – over the years — I had willingly discarded parts of myself in an attempt to comply with the demands of the bully.

In my attempt (s) to not feel inadequate because of my brain injury.

Finding Freedom

In my experience, I had to begin healing from the effects of shame that the bully foisted upon me.

I had to break free from the illusion of power that the shame bully had over me before I could hope to live life on life's terms.

Through my recovery process and my pain, I have discovered that I am still susceptible and vulnerable to being exploited by the “shame bully”.

Exploited to Buying back into Denial.

I am susceptible and vulnerable to the “shame bully” when I am hungry, angry, lonely, tired or sick.

With this awareness, I need to take care of myself when I am angry, lonely, tired or sick.

Through recognizing when I am more susceptible and vulnerable to the “shame bully”, I am able to take the necessary steps to take care of myself.

Through being aware of the lies, distortions and illusion of power purported by the shame bully I was able to address a vital part of my recovery process — denial.

A vital part of my recovery process evolved because of my emotional, mental and spiritual pain.

Because of my pain and anguish. I was motivated to address both my denial and the denial of family and friends.

In my experience, I found that as I addressed my denial and the denial systems of family and friends, I experienced a new freedom. The freedom to accept my limitations, while not beating up on myself for them.

No Longer have to be Held Hostage by the ‘Shame Bully’

The good news is that I no longer need or have to be held hostage by the bully.

I no longer need to believe that I deserve to be bullied.

I no longer need to internalize the lie that I am not enough and that I do not do enough.

I no longer need to live in denial or defend other people's denial. I no longer need or have to discard parts of myself.

I no longer need to stoop to the vicarious demands of other people's expectations.

I no longer need to carry other people's shame or sadness. I no longer need to be bullied by a fear of abandonment.

I no longer need to sit and be minimized, marginalized, discounted or dismissed by the bully.

Change in Perspective

By accepting that I am a work in progress — not a work in perfection — I have changed the way that I look at my process.

Consequently, I have had a change of perspective. I now look at myself and my experience in a different way.

I now realize that I no longer have to answer, defend, justify or explain myself to the bully.

I now realize that I no longer have to be accountable to the bully.

With my change of perspective — I now realize that my circumstances and experiences are meant to build me up, not to be used to devalue and shame me.

I now realize — as Eleanor Roosevelt poignantly stated — that no one can make me feel inferior without my consent.

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” Eleanor Roosevelt

In Conclusion

In my experience, I had to address how the bully (shame) crippled my life and my relationships. In my experience, I knew that something needed to change.

In my experience, I became willing to do whatever was necessary — because I no longer wanted to be bullied.

Because I no longer wanted to be bullied, I looked for solutions.

Because I no longer wanted to be crippled by the bully (shame) I reached out for help.

In my reaching out for help I found a new way of living.

I found solutions for living life on life's terms.

In my experience, I discovered solutions that help me to live life on life's terms. A book that helped me understand and find solutions is **Shame and Guilt – Masters of Disguise by Jane Middleton Moz**. This book helped me to understand why I abused myself and allowed other people to abuse me through the “shame bully”.

For many years I did not know how to distinguish between guilt and shame.

Through my recovery process I learned something that changed my life and my world.

Let me share what I learned with you.

Guilt is different than shame. If you made a mistake you can make an amends and thus resolve the guilt.

Shame on the other hand is a being wound which leads the person to believe that they just don't make mistakes, but that they are a mistake.

Compensating for a Sense of Shame

Shame can lead the individual to compensate by over achieving (develop a sense of grandiosity) or to

under achieve (develop a sense of helplessness) can be seen in individuals who have been bullied by shame

Being bullied by shame can lead the individual to develop a learned helplessness, which can in turn undermine the individual's desire, ability and their motivation to succeed.

Grandiosity and Learned Helplessness

Grandiosity (striving to be more than so as to not feel less than) and a Learned helplessness (that I cannot do anything to change my situation and circumstances)

Both grandiosity and a learned helplessness perpetuates and gives power to the “shame bully”.

A learned helplessness occurs when an individual is subjected to what it perceives to be “adverse” stimulus that is believed to be inescapable. With this “stimulus” the individual is led to believe that they are helpless. Even when opportunities to escape or change are presented, this learned helplessness will prevent any action.

What I Discovered that Motivated Me

What I shared with a professional working with people living with brain injuries when asked about the term “new normal”

We are Not Our Brain Injuries – They Do Not Define Us

A 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 a brain injury. A Day in which a Switch was Pulled that Changed the Course of My Life.

Down a Different Track

On that day, unbeknownst to me, a “switch” was pulled and my life headed down a different track of the railroad.

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.

Accepting Something (the switch on the railroad of life) Does Not Mean I Like “IT”

To be able to accept my “new normal” after my brain Injury I discovered that I needed to grieve that I was no longer on the same “track”.”.

What I found was that I needed to confront what I could not and was powerless to change.

To Begin the Re-birthing Process

In my experience, I had to move through the stages of grieving (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, awareness and acceptance) to be able to begin the “re-birthing” process.

Brain Injury, Re-birth, Re-framing

Re-birthing, re-framing and seeing my life’s experience in a new way after my brain injury

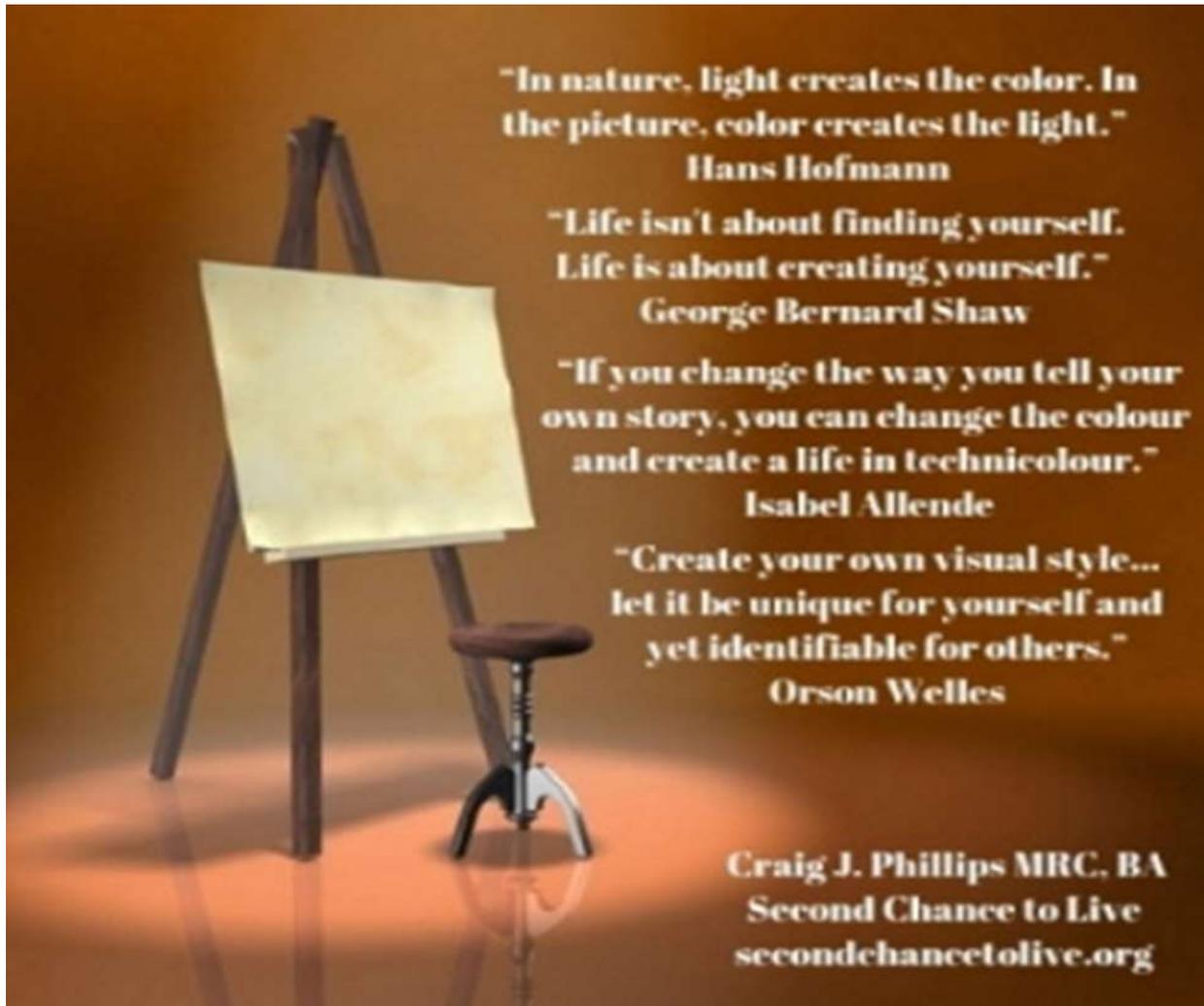
Re-birth in place of the term “a new normal”.

I use the term “re-birth” to illustrate the need to own our power.

Own our Power after Experiencing a Brain Injury

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 to start with a clean “canvas”.



Not “Why Me?” but “Why Not Me?”

**I am able to create in ways that work for me.
Create in ways that work for me instead of
being distracted.**

Distracted by the “Why Me?”

Owning Our Power

Owning my power instead of feeling like I had been “cheated” out of something because of my brain Injury and invisible disability.

“Why not me” gets me out of a mindset of merely being a “survivor” to accepting “what is” to be a “THRIVOR” in my life.

Not “Why Me” but “Why not Me”

To THRIVE in my Life, instead of Surviving in my Life. “What Is” instead of “What is Not”

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 or looking at “what is” instead of looking at “what is not” I gain hope.

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 and accepting what no longer “works” for me (after my brain injury) I no longer have to see myself as limited.

No Longer Limited by what No Longer Works

By re-framing, my experience and letting go of what cannot 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 hope and my dreams in ways that work for me.

Quotes that Inspire

“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

“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

Strategies that Have Helped Me in my Re-birthing Process to Discover my New Normal

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 that have Given me the Ability to Own My Power and Discover a New Normal in my Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery Process

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 now learn.

Visually, Auditorily, Kinesthetically or a combination of these learning styles.

Connections that Make us Who we Are

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

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.

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.

Give Yourself Permission

Give yourself permission to look at your life and your experience in a new way. In a way that empowers your process.

Begin to “paint” (if you have not already begun) on the canvas with your gifts, talents, and abilities in ways that work for you.

Begin to build on your lot in life (if you have not already begun to build) and don't compare your lot to anyone else's lot.

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

Brain Injury “Re-Birthing” is an Ongoing Process

Develop an Ongoing Recovery Process Strategy

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

To Own Your Power

Below is a link to several tools that have helped me to own my power in my ongoing “re-birthing” brain

Injury recovery process. You may find these tools to be helpful in the process of owning your power.

Comment and Question

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 myself the question many times.

The question I received was

“Why do I feel so misunderstood and shunned?”

Became Apparent

In my experience and through many struggles the answer to the question became apparent to me.

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

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

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



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

What Became Apparent to Me

That I could not wait for people to break free from their denial to accept my reality.

That I could not wait for people to accept my reality and walk across the bridge of acceptance.

In my experience and through my own recovery process, I became aware of two realities.

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.

Too Painful

To face the reality that our lives have been forever changed because of our brain injury may be too painful.

Too painful for them to accept. Because accepting our reality may be too painful, individuals may stay in and defend their denial.

Justify

As a result, and because of the lack of acceptance, they may justify, in their minds, the way they treat us.

I Need to Remember

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.

Did Not Work

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 or by my reality.

But the reality was that I had tried “every which way”. Every way possible to prove that I was not affected or impacted by the open skull fracture and brain injury that occurred when I was 10.

Created Ongoing Conflicts

Instead of helping them to understand and convincing them of my reality, my efforts only 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 by attempting to disprove my reality.

Conflicts in them that would leave them angry.
Conflicts in me that would leave me frustrated.

Conflicts in me that left me with 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 above-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 to get different results.

A realization that what I was trying to change, was not changing the impact of my brain injury or helping my relationships...

Insanity – doing the same things over and over again expecting to get different results.

Making Choices

When I reached a point when I could no longer deny and defend my reality, I made some life changing choices.

I began to grieve my reality.

Grieving my reality helped me to get to a place of acceptance.

Acceptance provided the “bridge” to taking a different course of action. A course of action to create hope in my life.

A Bridge of Acceptance to Cross Over to Create Hope in My Life

To Own Your Power

Through my grieving process, I discovered that as I was able to face, confront and address my own denial. By facing, confronting and addressing my denial I started to walk across the bridge.

Finding Freedom from the Struggle

What I discovered was that by confronting my own lack of acceptance, I was able to let go of the struggle.

The struggle to get them to be OK with me, so that we could be OK, so that I could hope to be OK with me.

The struggle that convinced me that I needed to get “them” to understand and accept what I could not change.

The struggle that led me to believe that I needed them to accept my reality before I could get on with my life.

I Realized that I Could Not Wait for Them to Cross the Bridge called Acceptance

Several years ago, I wrote an article and created a video presentation of the article to illustrate our great value. Our great value because of our reality.

**In the process of our Awareness,
Acceptance and by taking Action we
become wounded Healers.**

The Song



Click on the links to read or watch the presentation

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

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

Acceptance

In my experience, as I grew in acceptance, I found a new freedom. A freedom to run my own race and stay in my own lane. A freedom to realize and use my great worth and value.

Hope

My experience may help you to let go of the people who dismiss, discount, misunderstand and shun you because of what they are unable to accept.

My experience may help you to find more peace in your life by accepting who you are as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

[Second Chance to Live Author's Autobiography in Bullet Points](#)

Below is a link to several tools that have helped me to own my power in my ongoing “re-birthing” brain Injury recovery process.

For national and international resources to empower the re-birthing process.

[Global Brain Injury Peer Support Network – Empowering the Individual, Not the Brain Injury](#)