

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

"There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self." Aldous Huxley

"As long as a man stands in his own way, everything seems to be in his way." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Success isn't a result of spontaneous combustion. You must set yourself on fire." Arnold Glasgow

"You are as amazing as you let yourself be. Let me repeat that. You are as amazing as you let yourself be." Elizabeth Alraune

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

“I Am More than My Brain Injury – Defining and Creating My New Normal” Part 3 Zoom Presentation

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Second Chance to Live

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

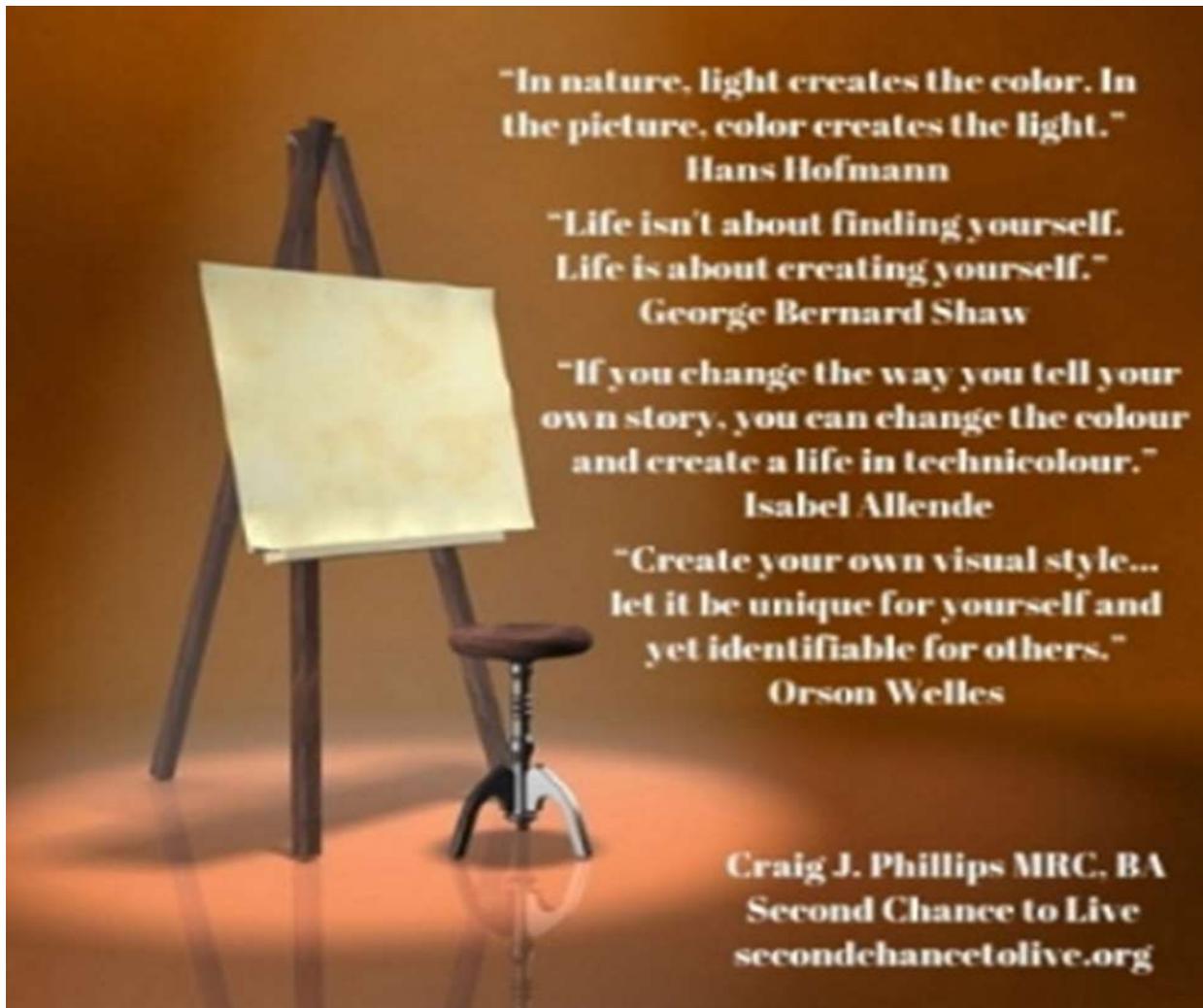
Re-birth in place of the term “a new normal”.

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 by the “Why Me?”

Owning Our Power

Owning our power instead of feeling like we have 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.

Freedom from Having to Prove Myself

Not “Why Me?” but “Why not Me?” gives me the ability to move beyond a learned helplessness.

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

“Why Not Me?” and “What is?” helps me build on my lot in life without having to prove my...

Free to Run my Own Race

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 what 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

Conflicts in them 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](#)