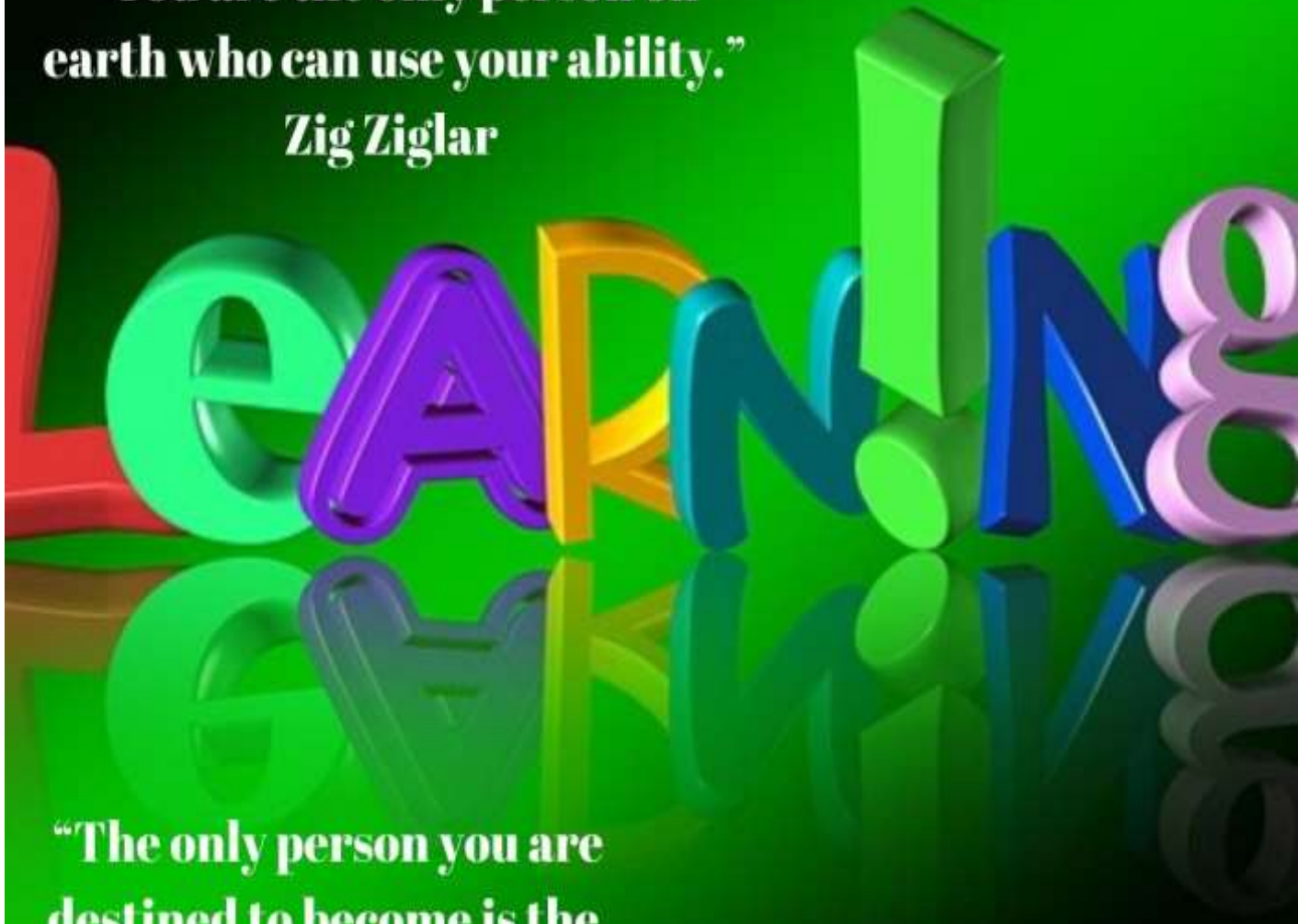


**“We are what we believe  
we are.” C.S. Lewis**

**“Adventure is not outside man;  
it is within.” George Eliot**

**“You are the only person on  
earth who can use your ability.”**

**Zig Ziglar**



**“The only person you are  
destined to become is the  
person you decide to be.”**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

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**“I Am Not My Brain Injury -- Understanding the People we Interact with as Individuals living with Brain Injuries” Part 2 Zoom Presentation**

**Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

**Second Chance to Live**

**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.

**My Interest is Sharing the Next Part of 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 realize that I am living with an invisible disability and that my invisible disability interferes with my ability to work.

### **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 had no idea that I was living with an invisible disability. As a result, I internalized the impact of my invisible disability as a reflection of my being.

### **In Response**

I shamed, blamed, berated and criticized who I was because of my inability to perform as an individual who was not impacted by a traumatic brain injury. In the process, I bought into the belief that I deserved to be blamed, berated, shamed and criticized.

### **I Did So Because**

I did not know the significance of my acquired brain injury or my invisible disability.

### **Trying to Figure Things Out After Our Brain Injuries**

#### **Being Vulnerable**

Living with a brain injury and an invisible disability can lead us to believe that we deserve to be bullied.

#### **The Consequence**

As a result, we may be led to believe that we cannot trust ourselves or our judgement. By not trusting ourselves we can be led to believe. Believe what other people want us to believe about ourselves.

### **A Faulty Belief**

Through buying into these beliefs, we may find that we deserve to be limited. In the process we may find ourselves being mistreated, exploited and taken advantage of for personal gain.

### **Learned Helplessness**

In the process we can develop a learned helplessness. A learned helplessness can lead us to believe that we don't deserve to be more than we are led to believe about ourselves.

In the process we may find ourselves intimidated by those individuals who seek use us for their gain.

### **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 struggled and can continue to struggle with a sense of inadequacy. A sense of inadequacy when I listen to messages that tell me that I am not enough, because I don't do enough

### **Controlled**

Unconsciously, shame seeks to discredit my desire to succeed in life through minimizing and marginalizing, dismissing and discounting. Shame seeks to undercut my effort through patronization.

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 rob my energy.

### **Shame seeks to keep me in denial.**

Shame seeks to silence my voice and efforts through criticism, minimization, marginalization, dismissing and discounting.

### **Voice of the Bully**

As an individual with a brain injury and an invisible disability, I allowed the message of shame to bully me for many years. The shame bully sought to control and manipulate my every move. When I attempted to justify, answer, defend and explain myself to the bully, the bully would mock me.

**Mock me through patronization, minimization, marginalization, dismissing and discounting.**

In my experience, the more I attempted to satisfy the bully through striving to do more, 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 mock 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. After much anguish, I made the decision to examine why I believed that I deserved to be bullied. In my anguish, I realized that I needed to examine how I could limit and stop the bully's distraction.

**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 be 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 discovered that I had to do the work to gain 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 to prove anything.

I no longer need to believe that I deserve to be bullied because I have an invisible disability.

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 so that they will not abandon me.

I no longer need or have to discard parts of myself in order to go along to get along to be OK.

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

I no longer need to carry other people's shame or guilt for being unable or unwilling to process pain.

I no longer need to be bullied by a fear of people going away because I don't live up to expectations

I no longer need to be bullied by a fear of people going away because I don't meet their expectations.

I no longer need to be bullied through minimization or marginalization because for lack of seeing value.

### **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.**

### **KEY**

I now realize that I no longer have to be accountable to the "shame bully". With my change of perspective, I now see my circumstances and experiences as learning

opportunities. As opportunities 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 “shame bully” 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. I found solutions that gave me the ability to succeed.

### **A Book that Helped Me**

In my experience, I discovered solutions that helped and continue to 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”.

## **A Distinction**

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. 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 believe that they are a mistake. Shame motivates the individual to compensate.

## **Compensating for a Sense of Shame**

Shame can lead the individual to compensate by over achieving (develop a sense of grandiosity) or compensate by underachieving (leading to a learned helplessness).

### **Grandiosity and Learned Helplessness**

Grandiosity (stiving 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 so why try)

### **Illustration – The Pike Syndrome**

Tank of water with a big fish at one end of the tank. Little fish at the other end of the tank. Pane of glass separating



the big fish with the little fish. Big fish hits the pane of glass attempting to get to the little fish (food). Over time the big fish begins to associate pain with getting to the little fish. After a period of such conditioning the pane of glass is removed. Although the big fish can now readily get to the little fish, because of the learned pain associated with the little fish, the big fish gives up. The little fish can then swim around the big fish without a fear of being eaten. The learned helplessness results in the big fish going without food and starving to death.

### **Grandiosity and Learned Helplessness**

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.

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

“Learned helplessness is behavior exhibited by a subject after enduring repeated aversive stimuli beyond their control. It was initially thought to be caused from the subject's acceptance of their powerlessness: discontinuing attempts to escape or avoid the aversive stimulus, even when such alternatives are unambiguously presented. Upon exhibiting such behavior, the subject was said to have acquired learned helplessness”. Wikipedia