

**Understanding Invisible Disabilities and
Creating my New Normal after my Brain Injury**

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You can read more about my process and journey in my bio.

[Bio for Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA and Second Chance to Live](#)

Sharing My Experience in How I Created my New Normal

I had a lot of frustration and disappointments in my life growing up with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. Disappointments academically in practical settings and vocationally in work settings.

My frustration and disappointments continued for many years. My frustrations and disappointments seemed unavoidable. My frustrations and disappointments continued until I reached a point in my life.

Reached a Point in my Life

A point in my in my life when I realized that I needed to stop practicing insanity. Doing the same thing over and over and over again expecting to get different results in my life.

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired

When I reached this point, I became sick and tired of being sick and tired. At this point in my life, I began to grieve what I could not change. Through my grieving process, I had spiritual awakenings.

Spiritual Awakenings

1. I realized that I have been giving my power away by trying to fit my square peg into a round hole as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.
2. I realized that I had been fighting against myself by not accepting that I had deficits and limitations. Deficits and limitations that I could not have in my life.
3. I realized that I had been giving other people the calculator to determine my worth and value as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability.

Embracing my Power

The above realizations helped me to embrace my power as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

In the process, I had several more spiritual awakenings

Came to realize that I was not a diagnosis or a prognosis (what other people told me by their actions what I could or could not accomplish with my life).

Came to realize that I was not a label, a stereotype or a societal stigmatization (what other people want me to believe about myself because of my brain injury).

With the Above Spiritual Awakenings

1. I began to embrace my power through the power of choice.
2. I began to realize that I could look at my life, as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability in a different way.
3. In the process, with the help and guidance of a loving God, I could “re-frame” living with a brain injury and an invisible disability as a “re-birth” or as a “clean slate”.
4. By embracing my “re-birth” I began looking at my life through the “eyes” of “Why Not Me?” instead of through the “eyes” of “Why Me?”
5. As a “re-birthing” of sorts, I began to look at my experience of living with a brain injury and an invisible disability through the eyes of “What Is” instead of “What isn’t”.

A Different Lens

By looking at my life through the “lens” of “Why Not Me?” and “What is”, I gained hope. I began to realize that I no longer had to be limited by my deficits and limitations because of my brain injury and invisible disability.

Limited by what no longer worked for me. Instead, I could learn how to use my passion (what makes me feel deeply and vitally alive) in ways that would work for me.

Work to create in my life with a loving God’s help and guidance.

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

“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

In the process of learning to use my gifts, talents and abilities (in ways that would work for me, I could build something beautiful on my lot in life. I could learn how to develop my own genius.,

“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

To Achieve My Hopes and Dreams

During the past 54 years since my traumatic brain injury, I have needed to include my **mind, body, soul, spirit** and **emotions** in my ongoing brain injury recovery process.

How my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions were impacted by my brain injury and invisible disability. As a result, I have sought to develop my **mind, body, spirit, soul** and **emotions** to improve my well-being and quality of living as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury.

How I Understand my Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul and Emotions

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 my 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 my body. Through engaging both sides of my body, I engage both the right my right and left side of my brain (right and left hemispheres).

Spirit – My connection to God. My connection to myself. Making peace with God so that I can learn to trust Him and His guidance. 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.

Over time and through staying committed to the process I have been able to build on my lot in life. I have been able to paint on the canvas of my life.

Build and Paint with my Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul and Emotions.

What Gets Me into Trouble

In my experience, I get into trouble when I begin to compare myself to other people. Consequently, I have learned that I need to stay focused on running my own race and staying in my own lane. Using what works for me, that may not work for anyone else.

My Encouragement to You

Give yourself permission to look at your life in a different way as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

In a way that is separate from a diagnosis, a prognosis, a label, stereotype or stigmatization. In a way that will empower your process and journey.

With your mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions begin to paint on the canvas of your life in a way that will work for you. With your mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions begin to build on your lot in life in a way that will work for you.

And don't compare your lot or what you are building on your lot with anyone else. Develop your genius and Run your Own Race. Stay in your Lane.

What Helped Me to Create my New Normal

Because of my traumatic brain injury is an invisible disability, once my external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was never again factored into the difficulties that I encountered for many years.

As a result, I was blamed and shamed for not getting it “right”. In the process, I turned the shame and blame inward and became depressed. As a result, I bought into the notion that I did not just make mistakes.

I bought into the notion that I was a mistake, because I could not seem to get it “right”. That I would no longer have difficulties, if I just... When after repeated attempts failed, I realized that something needed to change.

With this realization, I began to grieve what I could not change...the impact of my traumatic brain injury and invisible disability. As I grieved, I grew in awareness and acceptance. As a result, I was able to get into action.

By getting into action, I discovered the power of choice. The power of choice gave me the ability to do something different to get different results.

As a result, I was able to find ways to use my creative abilities.

Use my creative abilities through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. In ways that would give me the ability to create hope.

To Make Changes

Through my grieving process, I discovered that I needed and had to feel feelings and make changes. Feelings that were uncomfortable and changes that were hard to make. But I had no choice. To not feel these feelings and make these changes meant that I would remain in denial. And staying in denial never worked for me. I needed to grow in awareness and acceptance to be able to get into action to create hope in my life.

My Awareness Helped me to Understand

My awareness helped me to understand that for anyone to come out of their denial would mean that they would have to feel feelings and make changes. Both of which they may not be willing or able to feel or make.

I cannot make anyone’s decision to feel feelings or make changes. With this awareness, I realized that I need to let people believe what they want or need to believe. I need to stop trying to convince them to believe.