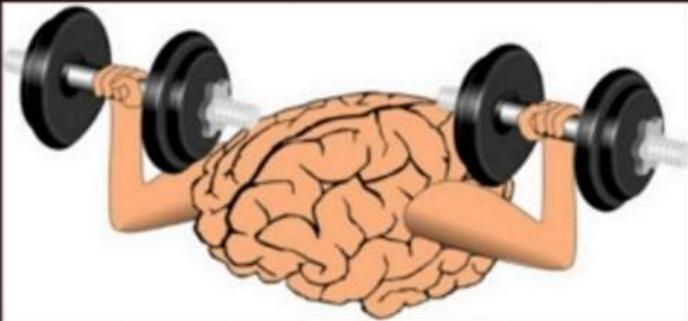


**SECOND CHANCE TO LIVE
SECONDCHANCETOLIVE.ORG**



**EMPOWERING BRAIN, BODY, SPIRIT
ONE SKILL AT A TIME**

**BELIEVING IN OURSELVES
THROUGH SELF-ADVOCACY
We Can Own Our Power**

**Empowering Our Lives
through Owning Our
Power. The Power in our
Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul
and Emotions**

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA
Second Chance to Live
secondchancetolive1@yahoo.com

Self-Advocacy

“Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination.”

[According to the Parent Center Hub for Information and Resources.](#)

Self-Advocacy grows as I grow in Awareness, Acceptance and take Action one Day at a Time.

In my estimation, self-advocacy is about owning our power in every area of our lives. If we do not own power (over what is in my power to control) we will give our power away.

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

Theodore Roosevelt

In my estimation, self-advocacy means that I take responsibility for every area of my life. My mind, body, soul, spirit, and emotions. If I do not take personal responsibility, I acquiesce and give my power away, by believing I have no power.

If I do not own my power (in my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions) I will develop a learned helplessness. In the process, like the caterpillar that becomes a butterfly, my wings will not be strengthened to fly. And if my “wings” (body, soul, spirit, mind and emotions) are not strengthened, I like the butterfly will not possess the strength to fulfill my purpose through my life.

Overcoming a Learned Helplessness

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.

How Can I Advocate for Myself to Empower My Body, My Soul, My Spirit, My Mind and My Emotions?

First and Foremost

First and foremost, in my process of self-advocacy is to realize and embrace that I am not a diagnosis or a prognosis. I am not my brain injury, my invisible, my deficits or limitations. I am not what other people may want me to believe about myself. I am not what other people want me to believe that I can or cannot do.

“If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” Isaac Newton

Second Chance to Live is a selection of articles, video presentations and e Books. In my articles, video presentations and eBooks I share what has helped me to own my power. The power in my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions to be who I am, not what other people my want me to believe about myself or what I can and cannot accomplish with my life

My e Books

Click on the highlighted titles of my eBooks to open a PDF of the eBook. Any questions, ask. All questions are good questions and welcomed.

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

Needed to examine the pieces that made me, me. What pieces get in my way and what pieces enhance my life.

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

Needed to look at what was getting in my way of experiencing my life in ways that interfere with my being my own hero – instead of looking to someone else to be my hero.

Living with a brain injury and Building Self-Esteem and Self-Acceptance

In this e Book I will share some of what I learned about myself through examining my motives and interactions with various environments – family, education, religious, work, social -- and how I related to myself. What I share in the articles of this e Book are lessons that helped me to identify and address messages that undermined my ability and capacity to build self-esteem and self-acceptance.

What I share in this e Book, helped me to trade lies for the truth. What I share in this e Book helped me to realize the gift that I present with my life. What I share in this e Book helped me to stop sabotaging myself. What I share in this e Book helped me to stop being victimized by people, groups and institutions. What I share in this e Book helped me to learn how to trust, what is trustworthy.

Living with a Brain Injury, Making Sense of Why and What is my Destiny? eBook

Looking at “Why Me?” Instead of “Why Not Me?” keeps me stuck in a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. “Why Not Me?” helps me to take a proactive role in my life and well-being, one day at a time, realizing that more will be revealed with time. “Why not Me?” empowers me to move in the direction of my destiny one day at a time. Articles in this e Book helped me in this process, one day at a time.

Living with a Brain Injury, What Helped Me to Stop being my Enemy and Create a life for Myself eBook

In this e Book, I would like to share with you what I discovered in my search to find freedom and gain my focus. In my experience, what I discovered was that as I became aware, I grew in acceptance. As I grew in acceptance, I was able to take a different course of action. Through taking a different course of action I discovered a new set of tools that empowered my ability to find a freedom. A freedom that I never knew existed. A

freedom from factors that once distracted and undermined my recovery process. A freedom that helped me to stop fighting against myself and being, as my mom used to say, my own worst enemy.

It's Never too Late to Create Hope eBook

I created this e Book to share what has helped me to overcome blocks to creating hope in my life. In this e Book I share some of the awareness that I gained that became keys. These keys have given me the ability to open doors that previously remained shut to me. Opening these doors helped me to create hope.

And as you read through the articles in this e Book, may you be encouraged to dream again. May you be encouraged to realize that you can have an active role in your relationship with hope to create a good life. May you too be encouraged to not give up on your process, a loving God or yourself. More will be revealed in time.

The pieces of the puzzle will come together at the right time and in the right order. What we cannot see or comprehend now, will be made clear.

Moving Forward Following a Brain Injury eBook

Because I was unaware for many years that my life was being impacted by a brain injury and an invisible disability, I stayed baffled and confused. The impact of staying baffled and confused left me doubting myself. Through my recovery process I came to realize something that I would like to share with you in this e Book. I needed to stop berating myself for what I could not do because of what I discovered was out of my control. With this realization I discovered that I needed to grieve my reality.

Grieving my reality helped me to accept the things that I could not change. Facing my denial, as well as what other people wanted or needed me to believe helped me to move forward. Move forward with my life through grieving and accepting what I could not do. And as I grew in acceptance, I was given new freedom. The freedom to realize I had choices.

And through these choices I could take a different course of action to get different results. Different results that would help me move forward.

Living with a Brain Injury and Taking Care of Ourselves eBook

Living with a brain injury can leave us baffled and confused. What adds to the confusion is that once our external wounds have healed, we look “normal”. What was once familiar, no longer seems to make sense to us. In our attempts to adapt, we may find ourselves denying what we cannot understand. In the process, we may find ourselves being blamed for what is out of our control. In our confusion, we may find that our judgment is challenged and questioned.

We may subsequently begin to question and trust our judgment. In the process we may have a difficult time trusting. Trusting both ourselves and other people. As our ability to trust crumbles we may begin to question hope and life itself. In the process, we may find that we experience a sense of alienation. Alienation from both other people and from ourselves. In our sense of alienation, we may find ourselves shrinking back into the shadows of isolation and defending the denial that keeps us bound.

Isolating may feel like a warm blanket that keeps us safe from stereotypes and stigmatization. But isolation only serves to keep us from experiencing what life has to offer to us. As an individual who has lived with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability for the past 54 years, I have experienced all of which and what I have shared above. With my awareness, I came to realize that I needed to do something different in my life, to be able to get different results in my life to take care of myself.

Having a Relationship with Myself and Other People after a Brain Injury Video Presentations eBook

As I began to come out of my own denial what became apparent was that I was the one who needed to change. What I mean by, “I was the one who needed to change” is that I needed to stop expecting other people to “understand”, so that we could have a “relationship”. I began to understand how living with the impact of my brain injury and an invisible disability impacted my relationships. As I became increasingly aware I realized that I needed to grow in my own awareness, acceptance and action.

Not only of how my brain injury impacted my relationship with other people,

but how my brain injury impacted the relationship that I had with myself. In this e Book, I will share with you what I discovered that has helped me to begin to have a relationship with myself. I will also share what I discovered that helped me to understand where I ended and where other people began as I sought to have a relationship with them. Through this video presentation e Book I will share what I discovered about balance

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

Following a brain injury, an individual's abilities and capabilities may have changed. What once came naturally to them, may now be a struggle. As a result, celebrating the success once gained through those abilities and capabilities may be out of reach. As a consequence, individuals living with brain injuries may be led to believe that their efforts are not worth celebrating. But that is simply not the case. Although abilities and capabilities may change, individuals living with brain injuries and adversity can begin to celebrate small and great successes.

“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

For many years I lived in denial to how my traumatic brain injury impacted my life. Nevertheless, I ran into one wall after another wall. Facing these walls minimized the gains that I made in my efforts to succeed in my life. In response, I had a difficult time celebrating what I had accomplished in my attempt to succeed. When I reached a point in time that I could no longer deny my reality, I realized that I needed to change how I measured success. I began to realize that the process and the journey were more important than the destination.

What I discovered along the way, was that I needed to stop putting a judgment on my efforts. I discovered that I needed to stop berating myself for what I could not do and begin to discover ways that would work for me. Ways, in which I could begin to celebrate the success that I was making through my efforts. Through my process and my journey. I discovered several lessons and share what I learned through this e Book.

[Avoiding the Trap of Our Brain Injury e Book for PDF File](#)

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.

[Don't Let Anyone Tell You \(Including Yourself\) that... Video Presentation e Book](#)

Living with a brain injury and an invisible disability can leave us feeling like the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion in the movie, **The Wizard of Oz**. Feeling as though we are not smart, that we lack heart (motivation and drive) and the courage (ability/ambition) to follow and live our hopes and dreams, one day at a time.

But there is good news. We have the smarts, heart and courage to discover what works for us. What works for us to achieve, follow and live our hopes and dreams. To live our purpose.

In this video presentation e Book, I would like to share with you what has helped me to discover what works for me. What works for me because of my smarts, heart and courage to achieve my hopes and dreams. May you

also be encouraged to discover what works for you to achieve, follow and live your hopes and dreams.

“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

Article Categories Found on Second Chance to Live

I needed to develop greater self-esteem, self-acceptance, learn to celebrate my success, create hope in my life, have serenity, pursue my purpose, follow my dreams, be aware of and overcome bullying and developing a relationship with myself and other people.

Links to article written and shared on the above topics. Click on the highlighted category to open a list of links to articles.

[Category Building Self-Esteem after Brain Injury](#)

Self-esteem is slowly stripped away following a brain injury. The individual often finds that their relationships have changed. The relationships they had with people and the relationship that they had with themselves. What was once familiar, may now seem foreign. What was once a way to build a sense of self may no longer work. As a result, the individual living with a brain injury may have a difficult time relating to themselves and to other people. Articles in this category are written to help the individual living with a brain injury to re-build a relationship with themselves.

In the process of rebuilding a relationship with ourselves we gain a sense of self. In the process, we create our new sense of what it means to esteem ourselves. As we build a relationship with ourselves and gain a sense of self, we gain the power to follow our dreams. Follow our dreams in ways that work for us. In the process we learn how to relate to other people in healthy ways that work for us. In the process, we build self-esteem.

Although our relationships may have changed, we discover the value of having a relationship with ourselves and having healthy relationships

[Category Self-Acceptance after a Brain Injury](#)

Self-acceptance may be difficult for an individual living with a brain injury.

As a result, individuals living with brain injuries may begin to doubt themselves. This doubt can undermine their ability to trust or believe in themselves. Societal labels and stereotypes may lead them to believe that they are their brain injuries.

In this belief, individuals living with brain injuries may find themselves angry at themselves. Angry at the “world”. After coming out of my own denial concerning my brain injury, I was angry. I was angry at the impact of my brain injury. I was angry at the labels, stereotypes that society placed on me.

I was angry for being minimized and marginalized because of what was out of my control. I was angry at what I was powerless to change.

But I am grateful for this anger. My anger and frustration motivated me to make changes. Changes that helped me to begin a journey of self-acceptance.

I am grateful for the anger I experienced. The anger helped me to move through a grieving process. A grieving process that helped me to accept what I could not change. I am grateful for the acceptance of what I could not change. The acceptance of what I could not change gave me the ability to change what I could. By changing what I could, I grew in self-acceptance. My self-acceptance gave me the gift to be able to get into action. Action that would prove to me that I was not my brain injury.

The action that gave me the ability to create hope in my life. The hope that gave me the ability to grow in self-acceptance. The self-acceptance that helped me to realize that I was not my brain injury. To discover my unique creative capacity to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me.

The self-acceptance that helped me to define my identity as an individual living with a brain injury. To discover my unique creative capacity to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me.

Self-acceptance that gave me the ability to trust myself. The articles in this category can help the individual living with a brain injury to love, accept and approve of themselves. To love, accept and approve of themselves to create. To learn how to trust themselves. To discover their unique capacity as an individual

living with a brain injury. To discover that they are not their brain injuries. To discover their identify as an individual living with a brain injury. To discover their own unique creative capacity to use their gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for them. To find the freedom to be themselves. To discover that they are not limited because of their limitations. To discover that they no longer have to allow societal stereotypes or stigmatization to get in the way.

Category Celebrating Success Following a Brain Injury

Following a brain injury, an individual's abilities and capabilities may have changed. What once came naturally to them, may now be a struggle. As a result, celebrating the success once gained through those abilities and capabilities may be out of reach. As a consequence, we may be led to believe that our efforts are not worth celebrating. But that is simply not the case. Although we may not be able to do what we used to, we can learn to excel in ways that work for us.

“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

In my experience, I ran into one wall after another, despite my diligent efforts. As a result, I had a difficult time celebrating my success's. Through my struggle, I discovered that I needed to change the way in which I measured success. A way that would empower both my dreams and my life. As you read my articles and watch my video presentations in this category may you also be empowered. Empowered to measure your successes in a new way.

In a way that will empower you to celebrate both your dreams and your life.

“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

Category Creating Hope after Brain Injury

Having hope or believing we can have a part in the process can be very difficult for individuals living with the impact of a brain injury Through my recovery process I discovered that my definition and expectations of hope

were clouded by ability to experience hope. My concept of hope held me hostage when things did not change. Hostage to the belief that hope was for naught. But I am glad that I discovered that hope is not limited by my definition or expectations. I am glad that I discovered that I could both have a part in creating hope in my life. I am glad that I discover that by creating hope in my life I could learn to thrive, not merely survive.

I am glad that I discovered that by creating hope in my life I could learn to thrive and not merely survive. Not merely survive as an individual living after brain injury.

Through my experience I discovered something that helped me tremendously. Hope is not something that tethers me to something that may happen in the future. Hope, instead is something to experience in the present. What I discovered helped me to realize that hope, like faith; becomes evident by taking action. By taking action, I discovered; I can experience hope in the now. I don't have to wait for hope. Instead, I can create and have an active part in the process of hope. Articles in this category are written and shared to encourage, motivate, empower and engage, you and I; in the process of creating hope.

Category Finding and Knowing Peace after Brain Injury

Finding peace after a brain injury can be very difficult. Questions arise, often too many that cannot be answered. With a lack of answers comes a host of emotions, but not peace. Accepting what cannot be understood seems out of the question. How can we accept what has changed our lives forever? And so, we find ourselves stuck and arguing at life.

Arguing at life that gets us nowhere.

In my experience, I found myself arguing with life. In the process, I fought against myself for many years. In the process, I unknowingly remained my own adversary. And I remained my own adversary until I reached a point in my life. A point in my life when my need to deny my reality was overwhelmed by the pain of denying my reality. When I reached this point in my life, I started to grieve my reality. In the process of working through my pain, I found that I was slowly able to stop blaming myself, God and other people.

When I reached this point in my life, I started to grieve my reality. In the process of working through my pain, I found that I was slowly able to stop blaming myself, God and other people. Knowing Peace could replace blame.

As I was slowly able to stop blaming myself, God and other people a change occurred in my life. I was slowly able to accept something that was out of my control. Something that I could not change. As I grew in acceptance, I found that I had more peace in my life. Serenity to accept the things that I could not change. In the process of accepting what I could not change, I found hope. Through growing in acceptance, I discovered that I was able to stop being my enemy. I was discovered that I could make peace with myself and the God of my understanding. I discovered that as I made peace with myself (in my reality) and with a loving God. As I made peace with myself and a loving God, I opened myself up to receiving help. As I opened myself up to receive help from a loving God, I found peace. I discovered the power to change the things that I could in my life.

I discovered that I could stop fighting against myself and the God of my understanding. I discovered that I could start building something beautiful with my life.

In the articles in this category, I share what helped me to stop fighting against and being my own enemy. I share how I was able to stop blaming myself, God and other people. I share what helped me to find peace with myself and a loving God. I share what helped me to find freedom. I share what helped me to begin to create a good life for myself. In this category I share what helped me to start building something beautiful on my lot in life. As you read articles from this category may you be encouraged to find and know peace. May you find a new freedom. May you find the courage to create a good life for yourself.

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

[Category Finding Purpose after a Brain Injury](#)

Following a brain injury finding one’s purpose can be a challenge. What was once understood and clear to us may now be unclear. In my experience, I sought for clarity for many years. What I thought was my

calling and the way I was to live my destiny did not work out. I struggled in this process for many years. In my experience the answers did not come over night. Increasing clarity came to me as when I stopped trying to prove that I was not impacted by a brain injury.

Stopped denying that I was living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. When I stopped trying to live in the truth of people not living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. When I started to own my reality and live in my truth, my purpose became clearer to me. Finding my purpose became clear to me after my brain injury.

Once I arrived at a place of acceptance of what could not be changed, I became willing to try something different. Once I became open to trying something different, I started to explore my truth. After I started to explore my truth, it took me another 6 years. Although there was more struggle during these 6 years to find my truth, I am glad that I did not give up on the process. I share my experience with you to encourage you to not give up on your process.

Although your process may take time, as my process took time for me, to gain clarity don't give up. Keep searching and asking questions. Clarity will come for you. The process just takes time. At least it did for me.

Matters will become clear to you in time. So don't give up! Articles that I share through this category include information that helped me through the process of finding my purpose in life. May you be encouraged to not give up in your process of finding your purpose. May you be encouraged to stay committed to your process. May you stay committed to running your race. May you be encouraged to not give up on finding and living your truth. More will be revealed in time.

“A brain injury is merely a switch on the railroad of life that directs us down a different track of life. A track that we may not have otherwise traveled. The good news is that as we move down that track we can learn. We can learn how to use our gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for us. In ways that will help us to find and fulfill our purpose.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

[Category Fulfilling Dreams after Brain Injury](#)

Before our brain injuries, dreams for the future may have seemed bright.

Following our brain injuries, those dreams may now seem out of reach.

What once seemed attainable, may no longer appear to be realistic.

Through my recovery process I discovered that although life may have changed forever, I do not have to give up on my dreams. Although the way in which I once followed my bliss has changed, I do not have to give up on following my bliss. Fulfilling my dreams can be a way of life for 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 you only have a half-possession...Do that which is assigned to you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

What I discovered gave me hope. What I discovered helped me to realize that I could follow my passion in a different way. In a way that would give me the ability to pursue and achieve my passion. My passion to encourage people to not give up on their dreams. In a way that would give me a medium to use my gifts, talents and abilities. In a way that would work for me. In a way that would be received by the people who wanted what I had to bring to the table.

“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.” Steve Jobs

The articles in this category are written to encourage you to follow your dreams. To follow your dreams in ways that work for you, for the people who want what you have to bring to the table. To the table of life. So, be encouraged and don’t give up. You will find a way to use your gifts, talents and abilities. Your limitations do not have to limit you. You can find a way

that will work for you. You can create with your life and change your world. Only believe and put action behind your belief.

Category My Journey Living with a Brain Injury

My Journey Living with a Brain Injury offers insight into my process and journey. My process and journey living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability during the past 54 years.

My journey after brain injury began in August 1967. I sustained my brain injury in a motor vehicle accident with my family. My brain injury resulted from an open skull fracture. The result of fracturing my skull was right frontal lobe damage and a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement.

On the way to the back of the windshield I snapped my left femur (thigh bone) on my dad's bucket seat. I remained in a coma for 3 weeks and in traction to set my left femur fracture for 7-8 weeks. After awakening from the coma, I remember touching the front right side of my skull. My skull felt like a shallow depressed bowl.

“Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up. Our circumstances are meant to teach us lessons that prepare you and I for opportunities. These opportunities teach us more lessons. Collectively lessons and opportunities lead us in the direction of our dreams and our destinies. That is why I am encouraged to not give up. To not give up because more will be revealed with and in time.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

After completing traction to set my left femur, I was placed in a Spica or full body cast for 4-5 months. After undergoing brain surgery, I was released from the hospital. After being taken out of the Spica cast, I taught myself how to walk. I walked with a limp for a long time according to my mom. I was tutored at home for a year and learned how to talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. In my article, [Background Information for a Keynote Presentation](#); I share from my process and journey living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. In the articles with in this category, I share what has helped me in my recovery process.

I share what I have learned through my lessons and opportunities. What I have learned and given me the ability to follow my dreams and my destiny. As an individual living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible

disability. I believe in the power of identification. What I share in this article is from my experience, strength and hope living with a brain injury for the past 48 years. What I share in this category is to encourage you to not give up on your process or your journey. To not give up on your process and journey of living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. More will be revealed.

Category Overcoming Bullying after Brain Injury

Bullying can be a challenge for anyone. Individuals living with brain injuries may have a difficult time recognizing bullies. Individuals living with brain injuries may question their own judgment. Individuals living with brain injuries may have a difficult time trusting.

Because individuals living with brain injuries may have difficulty trusting themselves. Individuals living with brain injuries may have a difficult time trusting their judgment. Individuals living with brain injuries may, as a result, become more vulnerable to being bullied.

In my experience, I bought into the notion that I deserved to be bullied for many years. I bought into this belief because I believed that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake. My low self-esteem and poor self-worth left me vulnerable to being bullied. Following my brain injury at the age of 10, my self-esteem, self-worth, and self-value continued to be undermined. Undermined by being blamed for what was invisible and out of my ability to control. Blamed for what I did not understand, nor knew how to change.

Bullies can be found everywhere. Bullies on the playground. Bullies in academic settings and within organizations. Bullies within associations. Bullies within churches. Hurt people, hurt people. Bullying can occur in physical, emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual ways. Bullying is not about us. It is not about you. It is about the bully. Hurt people hurt people. We are not at fault or responsible. The good news is that we can stop the process of being bullied. We no longer have to be bullied. We can stand up for ourselves.

My low-self-esteem, low self-worth, coupled with the impact of the injury to my brain added to my vulnerability. The impact of my brain injury and the invisible nature of my disability made it difficult to trust myself. I also found

that I had a difficult time trusting my judgment. In response, I was led to believe that I needed to trade my judgment for the judgment of other people. Trading my judgment for other people's judgment continued to make me vulnerable.

But thank God I did not remain vulnerable. Instead, I grew in my recovery process. In response, I grew in my ability to trust myself and trustworthy people. In response, my self-esteem grew, as well as my feelings of self-worth and value. In the process, I began to trust my judgment instead of defaulting to other people's judgment.

In this category of articles, I share what helped me to stop believing that I was a mistake. I share what helped me to grow in self-esteem and feelings of self-worth and value. I share what helped me to start trusting myself and my judgment. I share what helped me to recognize bullies and bullying behavior. Bullying behavior in individuals and groups of individuals. I share what helped me to set limits, boundaries and what helps me to stand up to bullies.

The good news is that we do not deserve to be bullied. The good news is that our self-esteem and feelings of self-worth and value can improve. Living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability no longer has to leave us vulnerable to being bullied. We can stand up for ourselves. We can take care of ourselves in the face of bullies.

Category Peer Support after Brain Injury — We are Not Alone

Without peer support living with a brain injury can leave the individual feeling very alone and isolated. Individuals who previously were our friends seem to slip away. As they slip away, we may feel increasingly alienated from both other people and ourselves. In feeling alienated from other people and ourselves we may feel as though no one understands us. We may feel abandoned. As we withdraw even more, we may crave for family members to understand. But sometimes the support and understanding that we long for in family members is not available.

This lack of understanding and support can leave us feeling angry and frustrated at life. I experienced the above for many years until I began to realize that people cannot give to me what they themselves do not possess. Not being able to give to me what I wanted did not mean that they

didn't love me. They just have a difficult time accepting what they could not see or understand. Although I tried to explain "it" to them in a thousand different ways, they could not identify with me. Instead at times they would tell me that they thought I was just making excuses. Their suggestion continued to frustrate me until I realized what they could not accept.:

Going to them and expecting them to understand and give support was like going to a hardware store looking to buy bread. Nevertheless, I continued to keep going back to people who could not give me the understanding and support I wanted. But as with hardware store not stocking bread, neither could people give me what they did not possess. Although I may be angry and frustrated with the hardware store for not having bread, hardware stores don't have bread. So, it is with certain people. Going to receive support and understanding from people who could not give "it" to me was no one's fault. It was just what it was and as I accepted that I had peace.

But I still wanted their support and understanding and I stayed frustrated until I accepted their limitations. They simply could not...

Being frustrated and angry at them did nothing to change the situation. I wasted a lot of time and energy for many years because they were not getting "it". My frustration and anger continued until I realized, like the hardware store, they just did not have nor how to give to me what I wanted and needed. Their inability to give to me was because they could not identify with what it was like living with a brain injury. What it was like living with an invisible disability. With time what became obvious was that people who did not get "it" were not evil. Nor was it that they did not love me. They just didn't get "it". And with my acceptance, I was slowly able to let go of trying to have them get "it". But thank God that I met other individuals.

Thank God that I met other individuals, who like me were living with brain injuries and invisible disabilities. These individuals offered peer support from their experience, strength and hope. They offered empathy and understanding and they encouraged me. I am grateful for the people who I have met who get "it".

On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live to offer peer support to individuals, like myself; are living and navigating life living with the impact of a brain injury. In this category, as well as throughout Second Chance to Live; I share bread with people, who like myself who get "it". All the

information that I share and the articles that I write is from my experience, strength and hope. My experience, strength and hope of living with and navigating through life with a brain injury and an invisible disability. August 2021 will mark my 54th year living that I have been living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. As you read through the articles in each of these categories may you be encouraged to live your life — with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability — to the fullest.

Category Relationships Following a Brain Injury

Relationships create challenges. Relationships after brain injury create different challenges. Each individual brings with them their history. History in terms of what was learned and experienced growing up. History also in terms of what they experienced in past relationships.

If there was dysfunction in those relationships, dysfunction will be brought into each relationship. Such dysfunction can continue to undermine and sabotage relationships. Continue to undermine and get in the way of existing relationships and other relationships... unless new boundaries and behaviors are learned and used in relationships.

Articles in this category give ways to recognize, address and change behaviors that no longer work.

Once an individual experiences a brain injury another dynamic enters into the relationship. Denial. Once external wounds have healed and the impact of the brain injury becomes invisible denial enters relationships. I can speak from personal experience. For many years I had no idea that my life was being impacted by the open skull fracture and brain injury when I was 10 years old. When asked, friends would tell me that there was something different about me, but they could not put their “put their finger on it.” I could not “put my finger on it” either because denial kept it hidden from me.

My denial and other people’s denial.

The result from this denial was alienation. An alienation from myself and from other people. People who could not or would not consider that my life was being impacted by a brain injury. People who could not or would not accept me and needed to believe that I was making excuses.

People who needed to stay in denial, because to come out of denial would mean they would need to change. Nevertheless, the reality was that I was the only one who needed to accept and own my reality. I was the only one who could do anything about how my life being was impacted by a brain injury.

I Was the Only One Who Could

I was the only one who could do anything to change the way my life was being impacted. I was the only one who could do anything about the dysfunctional way that I related to myself and to other people. I was the only one who could work a program of recovery to change my behavior.

I was the only one who could change the way I related to people. I was the only one who could stop participating in behaviors that no longer worked for me. I was the only one who could do anything to enhance to make my life better. I was the only one who could learn how to live with and to navigate through life with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

I was the only one who could change my behavior so that I could begin to have functional relationships.

In the articles with in this category I share what helped me to change the way that I related to myself and other people. Within this category I speak to how I found freedom from the denial in myself and other people. In this category I share what I learned that helped me to begin to have a relationship with myself. I share what helped me to experience a freedom. A freedom that I previously never knew existed. I share what helped me to accept myself, when other people could not or would not accept me. I share what helped me to have functional relationship with myself and with other people. In this category I share hope.