

# Creating our New Normal after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation

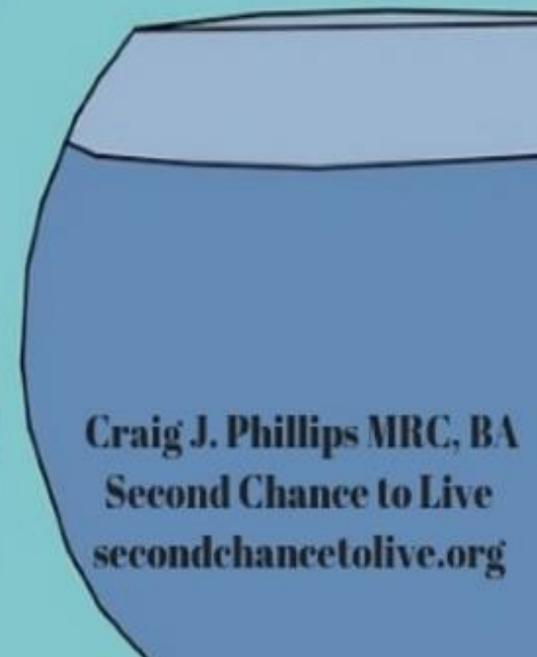
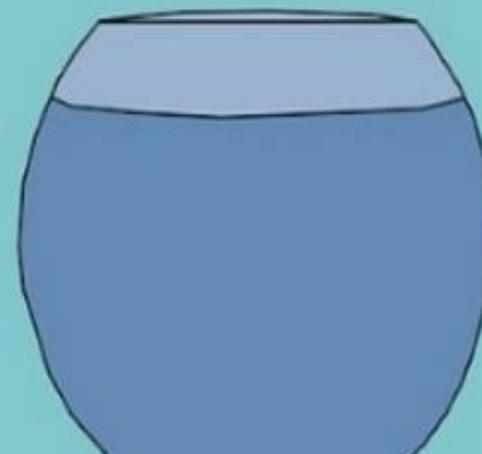
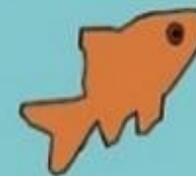
Presented by Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA  
Second Chance to Live

**“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar**

**“Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential.” Winston Churchill**

**“Goals give you a mark to shoot for and keep you motivated when you face adversity.” Benjamin Watson**

**“Don’t give up at half time. Concentrate on winning the second half.” Paul Bryant**



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# How my Brain Injury Recovery Process Began and I Created My New Normal

Car Accident 1967 Open Skull Fracture when I was 10 years Old

Right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise, brain stem involvement, coma 3 weeks

Left femur fracture, traction 6-7 weeks, full body (Spica Cast) 5-6 months

Taught myself how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences

Several EEG's and a Battery of Cognitive and Psychosocial Testing (results shared with parents), but now with me.

Tutored at home for a year, main streamed back into elementary school 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Graduated on time with high school class, obtained undergraduate degree 10 years (2 universities, 1 community college), graduate degree in 3 ½ years (2 graduate schools)

Long History of Getting and Losing Jobs, Applied 3 times for SSDI, 2 Department of Vocational Rehabilitation evaluations)

Deemed Unemployable by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Declared Disabled after my 3<sup>rd</sup> Application was approved to begin receiving SSDI in 1999

Seven years later, after being deemed unemployable and declared disabled, I began Second Chance to Live

# Sharing My Experience of How I Created my New Normal -- Definition of Insanity

## Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired – Spiritual Awakenings

- Realized that I had been giving my power away by trying to be a round peg in a square hole
- Realized that I had been fighting against myself by not accepting my deficits and limitations.
  - Realized that I could embrace the power of choice in my life.
  - Realized that I could look at brain injury and invisible disability in a different way.
    - Realized that I could reframe my life as a re-birth and as a clean slate.
- Realized that I could begin looking at my experience through the lens of Why not me? instead of “Why Me?” and “What Is” instead of “What is Not”.
  - Realized that I no longer needed to see my experience as limited.

**Realized that I could (with the help of a loving God) become deeply and vitally alive.**

“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

# Learning How to Use My Gifts, Talents and Abilities to Express my 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 open 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

## Concepts that have Helped to Empower me in the Creation of my New Normal

- Learning Styles
  - Railroads
- Baking Cakes
  - Tapestries
  - Elephants
  - Light Bulbs
  - Strike Outs
- Bruce Lee’s Philosophy
  - Purpose is Process
  - Circumstances
- Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare and the Parable of the Cracked Pot

# What I Discovered that Changed my Life and Well Being

- I am not a diagnosis – What people may want or need me to believe about myself (label, stereotype or stigmatization)
- I am not a prognosis – What other people may want me to believe that I can do and accomplish with my life and being.
  - I can look at my brain injury and invisible disability in a different way.
  - I can replace the question of “Why Me?” with the statement of “Why Not Me?”
  - I no longer need to fixate on “What Isn’t”, but can be empowered by “What Is”

## **I can Achieve my Hopes and Dreams**

- By seeing my recovery process as a “marathon” not a “sprint”. As a process and a journey, not a destination.
  - By involving my mind, body, spirit, soul and spirit in the process and journey.
    - That I can create throughout my life in ways that work for me.
    - Very important to run my own race and stay in my own lane.
  - Not compare what I am building on my lot with what someone may be building on their lot.

# **My Awareness Helped Me to Understand and Get on with My Life**

## **Through my Grieving Process I Discovered**

- That in order to be able to get accept and get on with my life I needed to feel feelings and make changes.
- That if I did not face these feelings and make these changes I would remain stuck by my denial.
- That if I did not feel these feelings and make these changes I could not get into action to create hope in my life.

## **Through my Grieving Process I Discovered**

- That for anyone to come out of denial that they too need to feel feelings and make changes.
- That the people in our lives may not know how to or want to feel those feelings to accept you and me.
- That the people in our lives may not know how to or want to make changes to accept you and me.
- That we are powerless over what people chose to feel, think or do to accept you and me in our reality.
- That we are not responsible for how people chose to treat us because what they feel or what they do.
- That we need to be responsible for ourselves through Self-Advocacy (with a Loving God's Help).

**Click on the Below Link to access Self-Advocacy Resources**

**[Self-Advocacy Resources for Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery](#)**