

The “Journey” Presentation – September 20, 2021

Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Second Chance to Live

Would you like to start with a brief introduction of yourself and how you sustained a brain injury?

My name is Craig J. Phillips. I sustained my open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement in 1967 when I was 10 years old. I am currently 64 years old at this time.

How did you happen to.....?

My open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damage, severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement occurred as a result of a motor vehicle accident, while riding with family in a Volkswagen Beetle.

What skills did you learn.....?

Throughout my 64 years I have been on a journey of developing and honing my academic and vocational skills through different mediums. Below are my/the educational paths that I have taken to explore how to use my gifts, talents and abilities.

University of Arizona – Geology, Physical Education

Pima Community College – Physical Education, Nursing, Emergency Medical Technology

Oral Roberts University – Major: Theology, English Bible Biblical Literature. Minor: Physical Education/Recreation

Asbury Theological Seminary – Master’s Degree: Evangelism Studies

University of Kentucky – Master’s Degree – Rehabilitation Counseling

Took me **10 years** (2 universities and 1 community college) to obtain my undergraduate degree. Major: Theology Minor: Physical Education/Recreation **Bachelor of Arts (BA)**

Took me **3 ½ years** to obtain my graduate degree (2 graduate schools). **Master’s degree: Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)**

Work Settings that I Sought to Apply what I Learned

I have worked to apply what I have learned through nursing, ministry, chemical dependency counseling, the department of vocational rehabilitation, workers compensation, mental health counseling, the funeral and cemetery business and through writing and public speaking. All have been done to empower.

Through Second Chance to Live and my desire to be of service, I have learned how to run a blog, write articles, e Books, slideshow presentations and posters through watching You Tube.

What interested you about this particular type of self-expression?

My passion has been to encourage individuals to not give up on their process, a loving God or themselves.

For many years I felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to go. I say this because, although I had applied myself to my academic and vocational pursuits, I kept running into proverbial “walls”. Running into “walls” despite my hard work and diligence.

Thank God that after all of my educational pursuits (see below) and my vocational endeavors I saw a light at the end of the proverbial “tunnel”.

After writing poems, an autobiography and a book, a friend encouraged me to start a blog. The blog gave me the ability to share what I had learned and had helped me to be of service.

To be of service in ways that would work for me for the people who wanted what I had to give.

On February 6, 2007 I created, my blog, Second Chance to Live.

Through Second Chance to Live I have developed as a communicator. Since creating Second Chance to Live I have written **1921 articles**, created **430 video presentations**, **12 e Books**, **20 slideshow presentations** and **36 inspirational posters**.

[Resources for Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery Empowering the Individual, not the brain injury](#)

Since June 2020 I have had the opportunity to give **36 keynote presentations** throughout the country to Brain Injury Associations, Brain Injury Clubhouses, Brain Injury Support Groups, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Settings and a state Department of Education Conference through Zoom.

[Brain Injury Support through Zoom Keynote Presentations](#)

Self-Expression through Martial Arts Disciplines

Neuroplasticity – Creating New Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization

I have also had an interest in martial arts for many years. I have been training consistently in different disciplines for the past 24 years.

Martial arts have given me a way to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally and spiritually through neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning/Relearning Skills and Skill Sets

My primary martial art has been muay Thai kickboxing which is Thailand's national sport. Muay Thai is called the art of 8 limbs. It is called the art of 8 limbs because it uses hands, elbows, knees and feet on both sides of the individual's body.

Muay Thai is great for developing large muscle groups and gross motor skills on both the side right and left sides of the body through repetitive mirrored motions.

I also train in western boxing, Filipino Stick fighting drills, Kali knife fighting drills, combining these different martial art disciplines to work on small muscle and fine motor skills. I have also trained in grappling (ground fighting).

Below are short You Tube presentations showing improvements and the skills / drills that I have been working on through repetitive mirrored motions over several years.

Introduction of the 3 Video Demonstrations of my Using Different Martial Art Disciplines to create new Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization

Stick, Knife, Western Boxing, Kali and Wing Chun Drills

Created September 2, 2021

<https://youtu.be/YLOeOUq4170>

Transition Drills to Improve Agility, Focus, Speed and Coordination

Created September 6, 2021

https://youtu.be/4JOel_4upWM

Hand Eye Coordination and Precision Drills using Fine Motor Skills

Created September 12, 2021

<https://youtu.be/seeH9xbkKDs>

Below is a progression of my development in and combination of different martial art disciplines over the years, for reference.

Neuroplasticity through Martial Arts 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snHjkxYrRYU&t=2s>

Neuroplasticity Demonstration August 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sV82V2y-Jrk>

Brain Injury, Neuroplasticity and Personal Gains August 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4BajiK5qB8>

Balance and Coordination through Repetitive Mirrored Movement 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljsr_S18Fng

Brain Injury Recovery and Repetitive Mirrored Movements 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXVq5vICWZI>

Improving Our Brain and Body's Ability to Excel after Brain Injury 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syCBmRi-P3E>

How did you find the courage to try something new?

Needed to find a way to support myself financially and a way to be of service. Wanted to find a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me to fulfill my purpose.

What did you learn about yourself?

That I could no longer deny the impact of my traumatic brain injury.

That I needed to grieve what I could not change to be able to discover what I could change.

That I am not my traumatic brain Injury. My traumatic brain injury was merely and event on the railroad of life.

I am not a label, stereotype or stigmatization. I was not created to live in any box.

That I can learn how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me.

That I learn in ways that other people may not know how to teach me. I need to discover how I learn best: visual, auditory, kinesthetic or a combination of those ways.

That no one could tell me how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me after my brain injury.

That I needed and need to depend on God's leading and guidance one day at a time. More will be revealed.

Be Encouraged my Friend

“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

What surprised you the most?

That I could do and accomplish things that I never previously dreamed were possible.

What were the biggest difficulties and challenges you faced as a result of your injury?

Being a “square peg” trying to fit into a “round hole”. Trying to fit into a round hole for many years, unsuccessfully.

What is the most enduring lesson from this experience and how has it carried over into other aspects of your life?

That I needed to grieve the reality of what I could not change – the impact of my traumatic brain injury – to be able to get into action. To get into action to change the “things” that I could in my life to create a good life for myself.

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

“Everyone 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.

“It is not as important as what happened or happens to us, but how we respond to what happened or happens to us.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Do you have any final words of wisdom you would like to share before we ask the audience if there are any comments or questions?

Grieve what you cannot change – what you are powerless to change.

“Research your own experience. Absorb what is useful. Reject what is useless and add specifically your own creation.” Bruce Lee

**“Purpose is about a process and a journey, not a destination. I cannot know until I know and knowing just takes what it takes. There are no shortcuts, “silver bullets” or “magic potions”. By accepting that reality, I am given the gift of knowing by not giving up. I am given the gift of knowing by trusting the process, a loving God and myself.”
Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

Don't Give Up!!! More will be revealed with time. The pieces of the puzzle will come together for you and for me.

More Information

[Second Chance to Live Author's Autobiography in Bullet Points](#)

Resources for Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery, Empowering the Individual, not the brain injury

