Acceptance and Creating Our New Normal after Brain Injury and Stroke

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

Car Accident 1967 10 years old, Fracture skull, right frontal lobe damage, severe brain bruise, brain stem involvement, coma 3 weeks. Fractured left femur, traction 6-7 weeks, Spica full body cast 5-6 months. Taught myself how to walk, talk, read, write, speak in complete sentences. 2 EEG's, battery cognitive psycho social testing. Results shared with my parents.

Found out the day of graduation with my master's degree from my mom, that I was not expected to succeed beyond high school academically. Took me 10 years to obtain my undergraduate degree with 4 different majors, 2 universities and 1 college. Took me 3 1/2 years to obtain my master's degree with 2 programs and 2 different graduate schools.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security Disability

Had a long history of getting and being fired from nonprofessional and professional jobs. Difficulties in undergraduate and graduate schools. Client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation 2 times. After 2nd evaluation I was told that I was unemployable. Applied for SSDI 3 times. 3rd application approved. Felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to go, despite my academic and vocational determination.

Sharing My Experience in How I Created my New Normal

Reached a Point in my Life – Definition of Insanity

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired — 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.

4. I began to embrace my power through the power of choice.

5. 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.

6. 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"**.

7. 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?"**

8. 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 begin to realize that I no longer have 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 can learn how to use my passion (what makes me feel deeply and vitally alive) in ways that will would work for me.

Work for me to Create Hope in my Life with the Help and Guidance of a loving God.

Hope that Reminds me That I Can

“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 can build something beautiful on my lot in life. I can learn how to develop my own genius.,

“When one door of happiness closes, another open, 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

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What Helps me to Create My New Normal

Importance of grieving what I could not change. I am not my brain injury. I am not my deficits or limitations. I am not a label, a stereotype or a stigmatization. I am not meant to stay in someone’s intended box for me.

Learning Styles, Railroads, Baking Cakes, Tapestries, Elephants, Light Bulbs, Strike Outs, Purpose is Process, Bruce Lee’s philosophy, Circumstances

A Fable and a Parable

Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare and **The Parable of the Cracked Pot**

Embracing my Power

The above realizations help me to embrace my power as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability. The above realizations help me to create my new normal beyond a diagnosis or a prognosis.

Not a Diagnosis or a Prognosis – What other people want or need me to believe that I can and cannot accomplish with my life.

Not a Label, a Stereotype or a Societal Stigmatization — what other people want me to believe about myself because of my brain injury.

To Be Able to Create my New Normal

Importance of looking at my reality through the eyes of **"Why not me?"** instead of **"Why Me?"** The importance of focusing on **"What Is?"** instead of **"What isn't?"**.

By looking at my reality though the "eyes" of "Why not me?" I have been able to own my power. Own the power in my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions through my ongoing brain injury recovery.

Brain Injury Recovery can be likened to running a marathon, not a sprint.

To Achieve Create my New Normal

I needed to include every part of what makes me, me. My mind, body, soul, spirit and emotions in my ongoing brain injury recovery process.

I needed to examine how my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions were are impacted by the injury to my brain and my invisible disability.

In the process, I have sought to understand and 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 and 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 on my lot and paint on my canvas in ways that work for me.

Still had a desire to find a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. I wrote poems, an autobiography and a book (not published) before a friend encouraged me to start a blog. On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live.

Since that time, I have written 1968 articles and 12 eBooks. I have created 436 video presentations and 37 Posters to share what has helped me to create my new normal. In addition, I have created 6 power point presentations to share what I has helped me throughout the United States.

Over the past 22 months I have had the opportunity to share these power point presentations with staff and members of organizations, associations, rehabilitation hospitals, clubhouses and groups throughout the United States a total of **66 times** with 7 more scheduled.

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.

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. Consequently, I need to remember that I am not responsible for how people chose to treat me.

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… Consequently, I need to remember that I am powerless over what people chose to believe.

With this awareness, I realized that I was really the only one who needed to accept my reality. Accept my reality to get on with my life. To create a good life for myself and to be of service through my gifts, talents and abilities.

Second Chance to Live – Empowering the Individual, not the Brain Injury Resources for Empowering Re-birthing

To read more about my process and journey click on this link.

Second Chance to Live Author's Autobiography in Bullet Points