



**"Purpose is about a process and a journey, not a destination. I can not 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**

**Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA  
Second Chance to Live  
[secondchancetolive.org](http://secondchancetolive.org)**

# **Finding Purpose after Brain Injury and Stroke**

## **Zoom Presentation**

### **Second Chance to Live**

**Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA**

**Living with a Brain Injury can be likened to a box of jigsaw puzzle pieces that are dumped out onto the table of life. Individually the puzzle pieces make little sense, however when put together bring clarity.**

**In this presentation I will share what I discovered about these individual puzzle pieces. I will share what helped me to learn how to live and thrive with the conundrum of a brain injury jigsaw puzzle.**

**Car accident at age 10 in 1967 – right frontal lobe damage, severe brain bruise, brain stem involvement, coma for 3 weeks. Fractured left femur.**

**Traction for 6-7 weeks** to set the fractured femur, placed in a full body or Spica cast for 5-6 months. Transferred to another hospital, brain and skull surgery. Transferred back to the other hospital in Newton, New Jersey.

**Released from the hospital** a week or so later to home. Tutored at home in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Taken out of the Spica cast. Physical therapy and then on my own to learn how to walk again.

**Had several EEG's and Cognitive and Psychosocial Testing.**

Results shared with my mom, and Dad, but not with me.

Once my external wounds healed the impact of my traumatic brain injury went invisible.

**Mainstreamed** into elementary school 6th grade.

**Graduated** on time with my high school class 1975.

**University of Arizona:** Geology then Physical Ed.

**Transferred to Pima Community College** to take prerequisites. Applied to the Licensed Practical Nursing program. Obtained my Nursing Assistant Certification. Eight weeks before graduating with my LPN was asked to leave the LPN program.

**Transferred to Oral Robert's University** – parents asked to meet with undergraduate program chair due to unknown difficulties on campus?

**Graduate School** – Asbury Theological Seminary. On probation. Difficulties as a student chaplain during a J-term. Asked to meet with Department chair at the Seminary. Not admitted for my 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

**Graduate School** – University of Kentucky. Difficulties with 1<sup>st</sup> practicum, met with Department Chair Graduate program. Was given 1 more practicum, Internship difficulties. 1 hour before graduation was told.

**Passed the exam** and obtained my credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC). Worked in Worker's Comp out of Graduate School.

## **Florida**

**Employment** – fired from 4 professional jobs.

Applied 2 times for SSDI in Florida and then 1 time in North Carolina.

**Client of the Department** of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida, while I was still working as counselor on probation and then terminated as a counselor. Later terminated as a client due to an unsuccessful job placement.

## **North Carolina**

Recruited Insurance Company as a CRC – Fired 4 months later. Could not find other employment.

Applied for SSDI for the **3<sup>rd</sup> time**. Applied to the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a client. After the evaluation process, my Vocational Rehab Counselor determined that I was unemployable.

**Felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to Go although I diligently applied myself both academically and vocationally.**

Shortly after being told, I was unemployable, my 3<sup>rd</sup> application for SSDI was approved. Still, I had a desire to use my gifts, talents and abilities to be of service.

Got a computer with some back pay. Wrote poems, an autobiography, a book and then started a blog, **Second Chance to Live**, on Feb 6, 2007.

**Through my 54 years of ongoing brain injury recovery, I discovered that I needed to involve my body, soul, spirit, mind, and emotions in my process.**

I have sought to share what has helped me through my **1990** articles, **440** video presentations, **12** e Books, **20** slide show presentations, **37** inspirational posters.

I have spoken a total of **74 times** to different organizations via Zoom since June 2020 on **7** core topics throughout the United States. For more information, click [Here](#).

### **What Helped Me Tremendously**

**When I reach a point in my life that I could no longer  
I needed to stop defending the denial that was  
trapping me.**

**I Discovered that Interest Inventories and Career  
Assessments do not Factor in Brain Injuries or  
Invisible Disabilities**

### **What I Discovered about Purpose**

“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.”

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**What is VERY IMPORTANT to Remember**

**Because there are voices that want you and I to agree with their assessment of who we are as individuals living with brain Injuries we need to remember:**

**You and I** are not our brain injuries.

**You and I** are not a diagnosis or a prognosis

**You and I** are not defined by labels, stereotypes or a societal stigmatization.

**Our brain injuries** were only an event that occurred in our lives.

**Our brain injuries** do not have to define who we are as individuals.

**We are not** our deficits or limitations

### **What We Can Do to Empower our Lives**

Grieve the impact of our brain injuries. Grieve the impact of what we are powerless to change.

“Confront our Denial”, “Face our Anger”, “Work through our Bargaining”, “Embrace. our Depression”, “Accept our Reality”

### **Awareness, Acceptance, and Action**

**Rail Roads** — Brain injury was a switch on the railroad of life, pointing me in a different direction. A direction in which I get to learn how to use my gifts, talent, and abilities in ways that work for me.

**The below quotes encourage me to not focus on my brain injury, but on the possibilities.**

“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

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

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

“It is not that I am so smart, it is just that I stay with problems longer.” Albert Einstein

“Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb trees, it will live it’s whole life believing that it is stupid.” Albert Einstein

**Concepts that Empower the Process of Finding and Living our Destiny**

**Learning Styles / Strategies** — How we learn may have changed after we sustained our brain injuries. Get tested to find out how you learn –Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic or a combination of these learning styles.

**Jigsaw Puzzle** — Learning from one circumstance (puzzle piece) to be able to step on another puzzle piece. Puzzle pieces will connect as I learn each lesson.

**Baking Cakes** — learning to combine ingredients —  
Sensei gives me ingredients to put together to become a  
black belt

**Tapestries** — Each thread (combined threads) look like  
jumbled threads on one side of the tapestry, on the other  
side combined create a beautiful story.

**Elephant Riddle** — Question — How do you eat an  
elephant? Answer — One bite at a Time

**Light Bulbs** — Thomas Edison

**Strike Outs** — Babe Ruth

**Circumstances** — lessons, opportunities, more lessons  
and opportunities

The **Fable** of the “Tortoise and the Hare

The **Story** of the Crack Pot

“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

“I will prepare and someday my chance will come.”

Abraham Lincoln

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“The most common way people give up their power is by  
thinking they do not have any.” Alice Walker



Through my 54 years of ongoing brain injury recovery, I needed to involve my mind, body, spirit, soul and body.

Second Chance to Live through my articles, video presentations, slide show presentations and eBooks

**Empowers the whole person, not the brain injury.**

## **Using the Principles of Neuroplasticity to create new Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization**

Over the past 25 years I have trained in different martial art disciplines to develop new neural pathways and brain reorganization. Below are several demonstrations.

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

**Created September 2, 2021**

**<https://youtu.be/YLOeOUq4170>**

### **Hand Eye Coordination and Precision Drills using Fine Motor Skills**

**Created September 12, 2021**

**<https://youtu.be/seeH9xbkKDs>**

**Coordination of Upper and Lower Body Drills to Improve Balance, Focus and Agility Skills created February 14, 2022**

**<https://youtu.be/nBSQx0y3aP0>**

[Second Chance to Live – Empowering the Individual, not the Brain Injury Resources](#)



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

