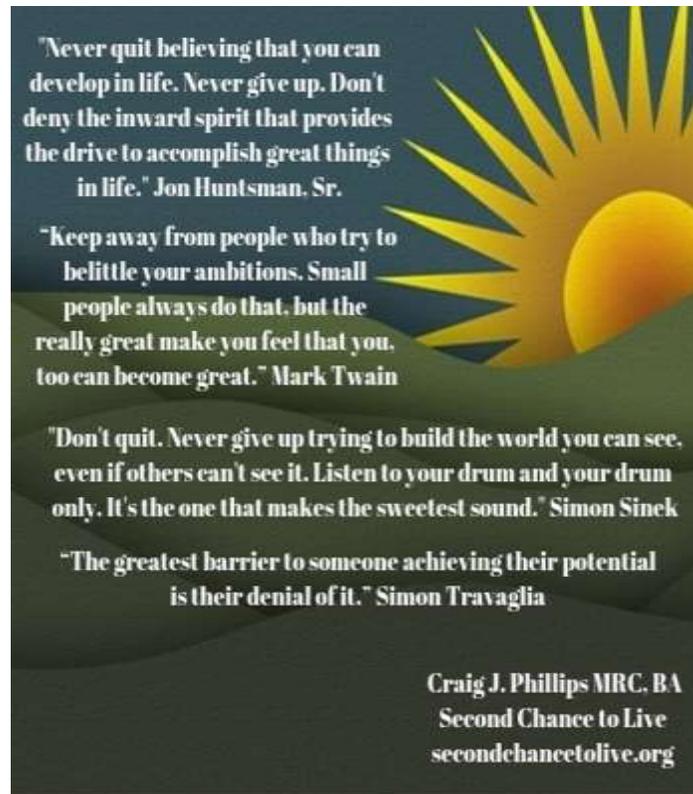


Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability

How are You Defining Success?

Second Chance to Live

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA



Introduction

As individual's living with brain injuries, we can be led to believe that our lives no longer matter. That being successful is out of our reach.

This thinking and belief can be reinforced by many sources in society as we live. Live our lives with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability.

Sources that May Minimize, Marginalize, Dismiss and Discount our Capacity to Contribute and Thrive in Society

Professionals that we interact with as individuals living with brain injuries. Family members and friends, as well as other individuals living with brain injuries. Individuals who feel stuck by their brain injuries, deficits and limitations.

As a result, we may be led to believe, “What’s the Point?”, and give up on our dreams.

Defining Success for Ourselves after a Brain Injury

In my experience I have found that there are several traps that can leave you and me feeling like we are failures.

We can be led to believe that because of our brain injuries that we are failures.

Consequently, we may find ourselves focusing on what we cannot change (what happened to us), As a result, we may find ourselves feeling trapped by the notion that we are now helpless and hopeless because of a “box” of limiting expectations.

Unknowingly and Unconsciously

In response, we may find ourselves buying into the notion that we are victims of our circumstances.

That we are subservient to a limiting societal system that communicates to us that we are unable to make empowering choices.

Empowering choices that will give us the ability to move out of and beyond the box of a label, a stereotype and a stigmatization.

That we are unable to express our gifts, talents and abilities to create and enhance our lives as individuals living with brain injuries.

That we are limited in our ability to contribute to the lives of individuals within and without the brain injury community.

How are We Defining Success as Individuals living with Brain Injuries?

Another trap that we may find ourselves falling into is believing that we are failures because our lives are not marked by what other people have acquired. That we are failures because our station in life, be it disabled by societies standards. And that being disabled does not give us the means to be able to acquire or possess what society considers to be measures of success.

In response, we may have people in our lives who, subsequently; patronize who we are as individuals by their attitudes. We may consequently feel minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted as individuals. We may subsequently find ourselves buying into the notion that our lives are of little significance and value without the ability to acquire societal measures of success.

But there is Good News. We Can Set a Different Course. We Can Make Self-Directed Choices

In the process, we may find ourselves accepting what society has set for us. Set for us to control and contain who we are as individuals. Individuals living with the impact of a brain injury through a label, stereotype and a stigmatization.

Set for us up to meet and fulfill their agendas. In the process, we may find ourselves going along to get along, not realizing that there are other choices. Choices that we can make to empower and enhance our creative capacity to enrich our lives.

Therefore we no longer have to stay stuck. We no longer have to buy into societies measure of success. Instead, we can define success for ourselves.

The good news is that through being aware of these notions, as individuals living with brain injuries; we can make choices. We don't have to buy into the impact of labels, stereotypes, and stigmatization. Instead, we can make the choice to express our unique creative capabilities and capacity.



“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

The good news is that we no longer need to focus on what we can not accomplish. Instead, we can be aware of our limitations and deficits and stop fighting against ourselves. We can use our energy to discover what we have and what we can do in ways that will work for us.

The good news is that we can stop trading our judgment for the judgment of other people.

What I have found through my process and journey, living with a brain injury and invisible disability is that **I AM NOT** my brain injury, nor my invisible disability. **I AM NOT** my deficits or limitations.

I AM WHO I AM and I AM ENOUGH

In my experience, through realizing that I was not brain injury or my invisible disability, I discovered that I am so much more than my brain injury. I am more than capable of creating. Creating with the gifts, talents and abilities given to me (by a loving God) through my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions.

I AM MUCH MORE THAN MY BRAIN INJURY AND MY INVISIBLE DISABILITY

I can develop my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions to create with my gifts, talents and abilities.

Mind — Gather information that will give me the ability to make empowering choices and decisions.

Body – Develop my ability to express myself physically to pursue my dreams and goals to empower my life.

Spirit – Develop my sensitivity to communicate with the God of my understanding and with myself.

Soul – Develop my awareness of the patterns in my relationship as I interact with the world around me

Emotions – How I interpret (respond rather than react) to what occurs in my life and relationships.

A BIG REALIZATION THAT CHANGED MY LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS

With this realization I discovered something that changed the quality of my life, well-being and relationships. I could define success for myself through my mind, body, soul, spirit and emotions in ways that would work.

Through my awareness, I realized that I no longer had to buy into a faulty belief. I realized that I no longer needed to be defined by my brain injury, invisible disability or by focusing on my deficits or limitations.

Walking Down a Different Street

The poem below illustrates my journey through the grieving process. I had to confront my denial (Chapter One). Experience and come to terms with my Anger (Chapter Two). Try to bargain my way out of what could not be changed (Chapter Three). Find myself depressed by recognizing what could not be changed (Chapter Four). By accepting what could not be changed I make different choices. (Chapter Five).

Realizing that I Could Make Empowering Choices

The good news is that we can choose to walk down a different street and try something new. Something that is unique to our gifts, talents and abilities. In the process, we can begin to define what success means and looks like to us.

The Power of Choice

There Is a Hole in My Sidewalk Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

By Portia Nelson

Chapter One

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter Two

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend that I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in this same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter Three

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit...but,
My eyes are open
I know where I am
It is my fault.
I get out immediately,

Chapter Four

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter Five

I walk down another street.

Quotes that Inspire

“I was told over and over again that I would never be successful, that I was not going to be competitive and the technique was simply not going to work. All I could do is shrug my shoulders and say, ‘we’ll just have to see.’”
Dick Fosbury (Olympic Gold Medalist. Inventor of the “Fosbury Flop” High Jump Technique)

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

“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

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

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” Mother Teresa

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

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

“Believe in yourself, go after your dreams and don’t let anyone put you in a box.” Daya

“Not everyone will understand your journey. That’s okay. You’re here to live your life, not to make everyone understand.” Banksy

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

“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 an extemporaneous half-possession...Do that which is assigned to you and you cannot hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Seek out that particular mental attribute which makes you feel most deeply and vitally alive, along which comes the inner voice, which says, “This is the real me” and when you have found that attitude, follow it”. James Truslow Adams

“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

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



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

