

Grieving the Guilt and Shame of a Traumatic Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation

Second Chance to Live

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Recently, I received a comment that encouraged me to share the information in this article with all brain injury and stroke survivors. As a result, I decided to create a presentation of the article to share as a keynote presentation through zoom or in conference setting.

Realization

For many years after my brain injury, I had no idea that I carried a tremendous amount of guilt and shame.

Guilt and shame because of the traumatic brain injury that I experienced when I was 10 years old in 1967.

I had no idea how much anger and frustration I internalized because of what I was unable to change despite...

Once my external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was no longer considered a factor. A factor in the difficulties that I encountered in my interpersonal relationships, my educational pursuits and my vocational endeavors. Because my traumatic brain injury was denied, I experienced guilt and shame.

Grieving the Guilt and Shame of my Brain Injury

In the process I became angry and frustrated. Because I was convinced that I did not just make mistakes, but that I was a mistake, I turned my anger and frustration inward. In the process, I developed low grade chronic depression. In my experience, I continued to turn this anger and frustration inward until I reached a point in my life when denying my reality became more painful than my need to deny my reality. When I reached this level of pain, I became willing to confront the denial that kept me stuck in turning my anger and frustration inward. When I reached this point, I began to grieve the guilt and shame of my brain injury.

Angry and Frustrated

As I began to grieve the guilt and shame of my brain injury, I grew in awareness. I started to realize that I was angry and frustrated at myself because I had tried to change what I was powerless to change. As I grew in my awareness of how guilt and shame impacted my life, I realized that I was living in a fear of abandonment. That because of what I tried desperately to change (unsuccessfully) and could not, people would go away and I would be alone. I also discovered that I practiced several strategies (that never worked) to keep people from going away. People pleasing, approval seeking and mind-reading.

A Fear of Abandonment after Brain Injury

I practiced all of these behaviors in an attempt to give people what I thought they wanted or needed. I also participated in a common “dance”. If I thought I had done something that displeased or made them feel something they did not want to feel, I said that I was sorry. Then I attempted to “fix” them, to make them “alright”. I did so in attempt to make them alright so that I could feel that we were “alright”. I did so in an attempt

to keep them from going away, so I could/would feel “alright”. Through my process I came to realize that this “dance” only made and kept me feeling crazy in my attempt to control, the uncontrollable.

Examining my Fear of Abandonment after Brain Injury

Through my process and discovery, I came to realize that I needed to grieve. I needed to grieve my anger and disappointment to ease my guilt and shame. **No one was/is to blame.** Grieving helped me to accept the things that I could and cannot change, so that I could discover what I could change. Grieving helped to give me freedom from my fear of abandonment. Grieving helped me to be able to identify what held me hostage to my fear of abandonment. Grieving helped me to discover what I was afraid about at a core level because of my brain injury. Grieving helped me to realize that I had an assortment of choices that gave me hope.

The Power of Acceptance after My Brain Injury

In **May 2008** I wrote a **7-part article series** to share what helped me to grieve and get to a place of acceptance. A place of acceptance that helped me to stop being angry at what I was powerless to change. Acceptance helped me to find a freedom from guilt and shame that I experienced because of my brain injury. Acceptance helped me to realize that I could still live the life that I had hoped for before my brain injury. Acceptance helped me to realize that I could create hope in my life one day at a time.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance

In the event that you are experiencing shame, guilt and a fear of abandonment because of your brain injury/stroke I would encourage you to click on the below links. Click and read each part of the series and/or listen to each part of the article in the video presentation series.

Please Note:

Please read each part of this article, as each part builds upon the previous part of the article. You may read each part of the article by clicking on the below links.

Article Series

[Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#), [Part 6](#), [Part 7](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Facing Denial
— Part 1](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Owning
Sadness — Part 2](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Denial Systems
— Part 3](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Anger and
Resentment – Part 4](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance — Awareness –
Part 5](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance — Acceptance –
Part 6](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Power of Acceptance – Action – Part 7](#)

Video Presentation Series of the Article Series

Below are links to a video presentation series of an article that helped me to resolve my guilt and shame after my brain injury.

[Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process Part 1
Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process Part 2
Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury and the Process of Grieving Part
3 Video Presentation](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process – Anger and
Resentment – Part 4 Video Presentation](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process – Awareness – Part 5
Video Presentation](#)

[Traumatic Brain Injury and the Grieving Process — Acceptance – Part
6 Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a Traumatic Brain Injury and the Process of Grieving –
Action – Part 7 Video Presentation](#)