

# Brain Injury, Stress, Anxiety, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Presentation

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Dealing with stress during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years can be very difficult for individuals living with the impact of brain injuries.

Difficult for these individuals because the filters with in their brains; that monitor impulsive behavior and mood changes, were damaged

With increased stress and sensory overload; during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years', damage filters are overloaded.

## **Impulse Control**

Consequently, the brain injury survivor is more susceptible to impulsive behavior and unexplained mood swings. Consequently, the brain injury survivor may feel shunned and shamed around family and friends.

Shunned by family and friends because of the invisible nature of their invisible disability and a lack of awareness The brain injury survivors lack of awareness and the lack of awareness by family and friends.

## **Feelings of Isolation and Alienation**

Consequently, my suggestion would be to be aware. Be aware when you find yourself reacting, instead of responding to people and situations. Love and accept yourself. Be your own advocate by taking care of yourself.

Rather than feeling shame and shunned, when you find yourself being impulsive and reacting be honest and share your struggles. Share your difficulty in processing with increased stress and anxiety.

Share how increased stress and anxiety make it more difficult for you. More difficult for you to process interactions and conflicts that may arise.

## **Being Aware of People We interact with During the Holidays**

In my experience, I have found that as I am honest, some family and friends are more accepting of me. These individuals love and embrace me for who I am as an individual who experienced a brain injury.

These individuals understand that increased stress and anxiety create more challenges for me. Increased stress and anxiety make me more susceptible to reacting to people and situations, instead of responding.



## **Not Everyone will Understand -- Lack of Acceptance**

I have also found that some family members and friends are unable to accept me because of what they find hard to understand. These family members tell me my problems are “in your head” and that I can change.

### **The Impact of a Lack of Acceptance**

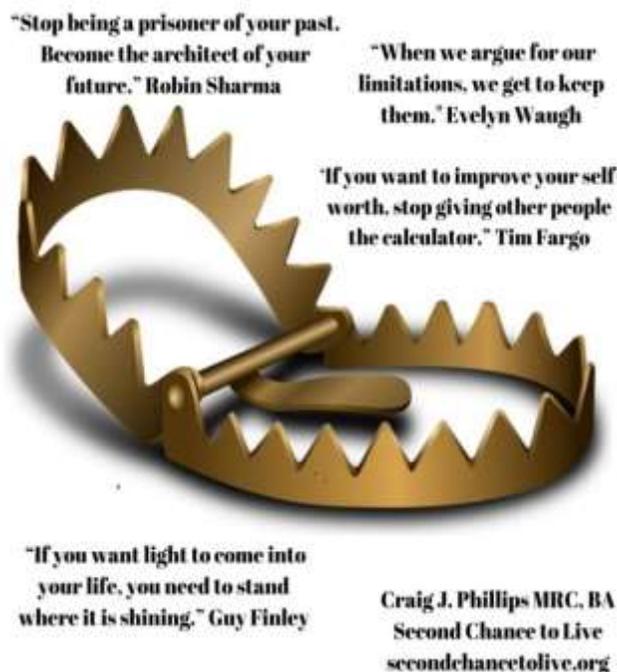
Family members, friends and foes may thus minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount the impact of our brain injury and my invisible disability. They do so because; for them, to accept my reality is too painful.

## **Practicing Healthy Self-Care**

With individuals who have a difficult time accepting me; because of my invisible disability, I have come to accept. Come to accept that I need to practice the principle of “live and let live” with these individuals.

By practicing the principle of “live and let live” I am able to accept my reality without berating my worth and value. By accepting my worth and value, when other people are unable to accept who I am, I am able to detach.

Detachment is not about keeping people out of my life; it is about keeping me in my life. Detachment is about respecting my limitations. Detachment is about realizing my filters are damaged and I have difficulties processing.



## Creating Win / Win Outcomes

Through being who I am and accepting my limitations: while allowing other people to be who they are, I can create a win/win outcome. Through being aware, I can also choose to limit the amount of my interaction (s).

By limiting the amount of time and that I interact with people I take care of myself. I show compassion for both myself and toward others for not being able to accept. Being able to accept what I am powerless to change.

**It is NOT all about Me**

I need to remember that a person's lack of acceptance is not about me. It is about their choosing to not understand. With this awareness, I can let people believe what they want to or need to believe.

**Want to or need to believe without owning their lack of acceptance.**

### **Being Aware -- Increased Fatigue**

The impact of increased stress and sensory overload may result in increased fatigue. Increase fatigue puts a strain on damaged filters in the brain. Such strain can result in impulsivity and misunderstood behavior.

### **Immune System Depletion**

Ongoing stress and sensory overload adversely impact the brain injury survivor's immune system. As a result, the brain injury survivor may become more susceptible to infection, illness and becoming sick.

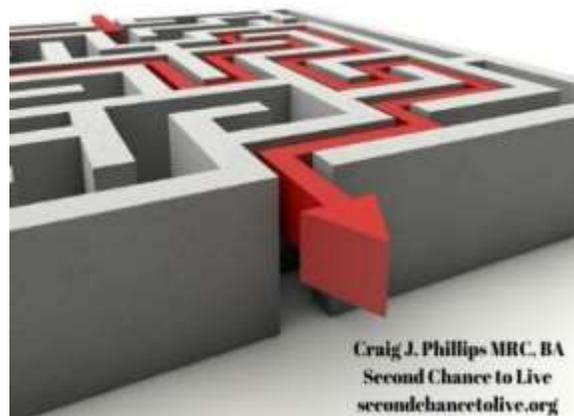
### **Consequently**

Consequently, the brain injury survivor needs to pay special attention. Special attention when they interact in situations in which they experience ongoing anxiety, stress and fatigue during the holiday season.

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With the awareness, brain injury survivor can take steps to practice healthy self-care. Healthy self-care to reduce their stress and anxiety. More info: [Traumatic Brain Injury, Fatigue, Anxiety, Anguish and Depression](#)

**Although You May Feel Stuck at Times, Don't Give Up  
Keep Searching and You will Find Your Way  
A Way That will Guide You to Your Dreams**



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## **Factors Making things More Difficult during the Holidays**

### **The Impact of “Family System Roles” – Interwoven Relationships between Family Members – Murray Bowen introduced concept**

In families where there are “secrets” and “unresolved pain” family members are often given “roles”. Roles to mask the secret (s) and pain. Roles given at an early age are then re-activated through extended family interactions.

Re-activated as family members interact with one another during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s. As these assigned or assumed roles interact, they stir up unresolved pain, disappointment and resentment.

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### **Abusive Behavior directed at Family Members**

As hustle and bustle contribute to stress and anxiety during the holiday season, so do family expectations contribute to stress and anxiety.

These expectations can be linked to repressed disappointments and resentments from past Thanksgiving’s, Christmas’s and New Years’ time together with family. Unresolved resentments come out sideways.

With increased anxiety and stress abusive behavior may be exhibited by family members. Such behaviors become apparent as family members dodge uncomfortable feelings as family system roles interact.

Because of damaged filters, individuals living with brain injuries are more susceptible to being blamed, shamed and scapegoated. Blamed, shamed and scapegoated through criticism for not measuring up to expectations.

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### **Different Family System Roles and Family Members Expectations**

Such roles that can be exhibited by family members are the — Hero, Lost Child, Mascot, Scapegoat and Identified Patient. These roles may have been given to family members to contain and distract from unresolved family pain and to mask family secrets. These roles need to be broken.

For a further explanation, please read my articles — [Traumatic Brain Injury, Family System Roles and Learning to Thrive](#) and [Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient](#).

These roles are enforced — sometimes overtly and other times covertly — by three rules. These three rules are frequently manifested in dysfunctional family systems where members do not know how to process feelings.

For further explanation please read my articles: [Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel](#), [The Three Rules Revisited — Consequences](#) and [Displaced Sadness](#).

### **Seeking Help During Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years'**

#### **What May have Remained Dormant for Much of the Year**

What may have remained dormant for much of the year now emerges to trigger memories of abusive behavior. These triggers may result in increased isolation and a greater sense of alienation by family members.

#### **Alcohol and Drugs Use and Abuse**

To compound and add to the stress of interacting with families is the use of alcohol and mind-altering substances. Abuse of alcohol and mind-altering substances exacerbate the stress and anxiety of family interactions.

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What may have been denied as a concern; a family member's drinking and drugging, comes center stage as family members interact. What was meant to be a joyous time during the holidays', instead becomes a chaotic.

Chaotic, crazy-making and a "walking on eggs shells" experience as blame and shame are passed around like a "hot potato". Passed around like a "hot potato", because no one in the family knows how to talk, trust or feel.

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#### **Learning How to Talk, Trust and Feel**

Because of the three unspoken family rules [Don't talk, Don't trust and Don't feel](#) family members are led to believe they have no other choice. No

other choice but to endure painful family interactions during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years’.

Because of the three unspoken family rules family member are left feeling isolated, alienated and confused. Because of the three unspoken family rules hope for family intimacy; during the holiday season, is thrashed on the rocks or denial, disappointment and disillusionment.

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## Good News Beyond the Conflict

The good news is that families do not have to suffer in silence. Although alcoholism and drug addiction are cunning, baffling and powerful, family members can reach out for help. They can come out of isolation.

The good news is that you and I no longer have to be alone to suffer in silence. The good news is that you and I can choose to reach out beyond our own best thinking. The good news is that you and I reach out for help and people will reach back to us, one day at a time.

## Affected by Someone Drinking

Isolation, alienation and confusion can be traded for hope. Each member of the family can attend [Alanon](#) and [Alateen](#) support group meetings.

**Alanon** and **Alateen** meeting are for individuals who have been affected by another person’s drinking or drugging — in a relative or friend.

For support, please read [Traumatic Brain Injury and Support](#)

HOPE is the Coach that Teaches me to Learn from my  
Circumstances, Experiences and Opportunities.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.”

Lao Tzu”

“Once we start walking before long we will be able to look back to  
see how far I have come because we did not give up.”

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

# HOPE

HOPE does not Disappoint if I am Willing to Learn..

HOPE Empowers Me to be a CO-CREATOR

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## **Being Aware Gives Me Hope**

Through being aware, I have been able to move beyond the drama created by Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years'. Below are links to outlines of my other 16 presentations, in which I share hope. Hope beyond the drama.

### **Focusing on Solutions, not Symptoms**

[Finding Purpose after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Acceptance and Creating a New Normal after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Neuroplasticity, Setting Goals and Creating Hope After Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Believing in Ourselves through Self-Advocacy — A Guide to Owning Our Power after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[12 Ways to Enhance Our Lives, Well-Beings and Relationships after a Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[The Progression of Living My Best Life after My Brain Injury Presentation](#)

[Making Our Lives Magical One Day at a Time after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Cultivating Healthy Relationships after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability — How are You Defining Success? Presentation](#)

[Living with a Brain Injury, an Invisible Disability and Change after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Instead, We can Create our Own Genius after Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Grieving the Guilt and Shame of a Traumatic Brain Injury and Stroke Presentation](#)

[Brain Injury — Why Do I Feel so Misunderstood and Shunned? Presentation](#)

[Living with a Brain Injury — I Can Not Do Everything, But Still I Can Do Something Presentation](#)

[Comprehensive History of Second Chance to Live — Answering the Call that never Came Presentation](#)

[Second Chance to Live and Succeeding Beyond my Special Needs from 10 Years of Age Presentation](#)

I am available to share these presentations with your group, association and organization. See this link to schedule availability. [Availability](#).



Resources Available to Encourage and Empower our Lives, Well-beings and Relationships after Brain Injury and Stroke.

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



To read more about my process and journey.

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