

Finding Freedom from Feeling Alone, Isolated, Alienated, Intimidated and Diminished Living with a Brain injury and an Invisible Disability Zoom Presentation

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

Below is what I believe needs to be a foundation upon which to build. Build upon for individuals who are living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability. Build upon to create practical hope in our ongoing recovery process.

Create Practical Hope in our Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul and Emotions

Awareness, Acceptance and Action

What I believe is so very important for individuals living with a brain injury to realize and remember.

You are not your brain injury.

Inch by inch, not yard by yard.

Your voice matters in your recovery.

Don't let anyone define who you are.

Listen and learn, but don't be bullied.

You can create a good life for yourself.

More will be revealed, so don't give up.

You have more power than you realize.

You are not a victim of your brain injury.

“Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself.” Robert Frost

Living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible disability can leave us with many feelings.

Feeling alone, isolated, alienated, intimidated and diminished by ourselves and other people.

These feelings that can leave you and me feeling stuck, trapped, crazy, ineffective and as though our lives simply do not matter.

Crazy because of what we are led to think and believe about ourselves.

Think and believe about ourselves because of what cannot be accepted.

Not accepted by ourselves and by what other people cannot accept about us.

Such a lack of acceptance leaves us feeling anxious, helpless and stuck in time.

Stuck in time by not realizing that we have the power to move on with our lives.

By not recognizing our power, we may give away our ability to trust ourselves.

In the process, we may trade our judgment for the judgment of non-acceptance.

The judgement of non-acceptance leading us to believe that there are no choices.

Believing that no other choices exist, we may start to feel like a captured victim.

A victim of our brain injury and invisible disability. Alone, isolated and alienated.

Some Things that Helped me to Stop Feeling So Alone, Isolated, Alienated, Intimidated and Diminished

You're not crazy; you have an invisible disability. Yes, I am disabled, but don't count me out and Accepting ourselves when other people can't or won't.

In this Article

What I want to share in this article is what I discovered about myself. What I discovered about my process and journey living with a brain injury and an invisible disability. Living with a brain injury and an invisible disability; because I looked normal, despite my deficits and limitations.

What I want to share with you is what I discovered that helped me to stop feeling crazy. To stop feeling like a victim of my brain injury and invisible disability. Stop feeling like a victim to live my purpose. To stop giving my power away to other people, to be able to move forward with my life.

To Accept my reality. To not give my Power away. To have a Good Life.

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

“If I begin to feel helpless or like a victim, I need to take a closer look at why and what I can do to take back and own my power.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

You’re Not Crazy, You have an Invisible Disability

In the event that you are living with an invisible disability, my hope is that as you listen to and or read this presentation you will stop feeling crazy. Stop feeling crazy because of what cannot be changed. Stop feeling crazy because of what cannot or may not be accepted.

Stop feeling limited by your brain injury and your invisible disability.

Although There May be People in Our Lives

Although there may be people who want or need to deny our realities, we can accept our realities. We can stop feeling crazy. We can accept our realities and we can excel. We can excel in our realities to move forward. We can create a good life for ourselves.

We can learn how to accept, to own our power and to excel in our lives.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race (Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare)

The Good News

Our invisible disabilities do not have to continue to make us crazy. We no longer have to deny, justify, defend, answer or explain. We can move forward with our lives to create hope. We can own our power and make a good life for ourselves one day at a time.

“Follow your dreams, believe in yourself and don’t give up.” Rachael Corrie

What Helped Me to Move Forward

I needed to grieve what I was powerless to change. I needed to grieve the impact of my brain injury and my invisible disability.

In 3 articles,

[Brain Injury and Anger](#) and **[Brain Injury, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance](#)** I shared what helped me to stop feeling depressed and despondent because of my invisible disability.

In these 3 articles, I shared what helped me to realize that I was not crazy. That I was living with an invisible disability. That although I could not change my reality, I no longer had to feel intimidated by, trapped or stuck or diminished because of what I was powerless to change.

Intimidated or stuck because of what I was powerless to change. Diminished or stuck by what other people could not, would not or cannot accept about me.

“Do what you love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still.” Henry David Thoreau

At the Crossroads on my Journey

With powerlessness came the sadness that no one wanted what I had to offer. With being powerless, came the challenge. The challenge to believe or not believe what was communicated to me. That I was unemployable and was now living on a fixed income.

With this realization came the awareness that I could either believe the department of vocational rehabilitation and the social security administration:

(and) do nothing, stay stuck and give up.

(or) I could choose a different path.

A path that would equip me and lead me to walk through other doors. A path that would empower my ability to follow my dreams, to pursue my destiny and to be of service.

My Limitations and Deficits did Not Have to Make Me Crazy

What I began to accept was that I am not equipped to walk through certain doors. With my acceptance, I slowly began to investigate how other doors might open for me. With time, I discovered what I could do to prepare myself to walk through those doors.

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“Success is where preparation and opportunity meet.” Bobby Unser

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

“Believe in yourself, go after your dreams and do not let anyone put you in a box.” Daya

“We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.” E.M. Forster.

“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

A New Freedom

With this realization, I experienced a new freedom. A freedom to look for doors that would open for me, although many doors had shut. Although I was depressed; because I could not walk through many doors, I found hope. Hope through creating opportunities.

“Create your own visual style. Make it unique for yourself, yet identifiable to others.” Orson Welles

“Ability is what you’re capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.” Lou Holtz

Awareness: My Experience with Interest Inventories

In my experience, I took many interest inventories in an attempt to find a career path. What I discovered was that interest inventories helped me to understand my interests but did not show me how I could **BEST** use my gifts, talents, and abilities.

I had to find out how to use what would work for me.

What I discovered was that these interest inventories gave me information. Gave me information but did not and could not factor in the impact of my invisible disability. An invisible disability that I had no idea was getting in the way for many years.

Just Don’t Give Up

In my experience, I would have never thought I would be using my gifts, talents, and abilities through writing. I did poorly in English class, both in high school and in college. In English class I received C ‘s and D’s for the papers that I wrote for assignments.

I share with you that I did poorly in English class. so as to encourage you. Encourage you to not count out what you may have done or did poorly in high school or college. I discovered that my ability to communicate through writing developed over years.

After being told I was unemployable and declared disabled

What I discovered was that although I could not do some things, I could learn how to do other things very well. So, I spent 7 more years exploring how I could use my gifts, talent and abilities; through writing, in ways that would work for me. Little by little.

My Process and Journey Writing

I wrote poems, an autobiography, a book (registered but not published) and then at the encouragement of a friend, a blog: Second Chance to Live. To read about my process and journey discovering what worked best for me, you are invited to click on these links:

If interested click on **Part 1** and **Part 2**

[Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 1](#) and [Back Story of Second Chance to Live Part 2](#).

Discovering What Works Just Takes Time

The reason that I share with you that it took me 7 more years before I found a way, is to encourage you to not give up. Not give up exploring how to use your gifts, talents, and abilities to follow your dreams. To stay persistent, tenacious, intentional and focused.

“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

Yes, I am Disabled, but don't Count Me Out

Have you ever had the feeling that there were people who counted you out. People who see you as less than because of your invisible disability and inability to work.

Illustration

Illustration and case in point. Several years ago, during a brief conversation with someone that I had not seen in about 6 or 7 years, she asked me, “Are you working?”

She asked me if I was working. She asked because she knew that my invisible disability had previously interfered with my ability to work. Work in traditional employment.

When She Asked

When she asked me if I was working, I told her that I was still disabled and receiving assistance. When I said that I was not working, I got the feeling from her that because I was not able to work in a traditional setting that I was somehow less of a person.

That who I was as an individual simply does matter.

Somehow Less of a Person

That being disabled, receiving assistance and not being able to work in traditional settings made me. Made me and what I was doing through Second Chance to Live of little value. I got a feeling from her that I could not really have a place of significance.

I got a feeling of “Yes, but...” coming from her and I felt patronized.

Patronize — to be kind or helpful to, but in a haughty or snobbish way, as if dealing with an inferior. Collins Dictionary

A feeling that what I was accomplishing with my time and life was of little value. A feeling of minimization and marginalization. A feeling of “that’s nice” after sharing with her what I had been doing and what I was doing through Second Chance to Live.

Needed to Remind Myself

Although I realized that I did not have to own or take those feelings personally, I realized something else. I realized that I needed to remind myself that, **“Yes I am disabled, but Don’t Count me Out because...”** Because what I do is of much value and significance.

“Those who danced were considered to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music.” Angela Monet

Although I realized that I did not have to own or take those feelings personally, I realized that I needed to remind myself. Remind myself to run my own race. Remind myself to stay committed to using my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me.

Remind Myself to Run my Own Race, Stay Committed and Stay in my Own Lane

In ways that work for me, for the people who want what I have to give. I needed to remind myself not to lose sight of my mission and vision. I needed to remind myself to stay the course, regardless of whether anyone else understands or values...

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

“You may be the only person left who believes in you, but it’s enough. It just takes one star to pierce a universe of darkness. Never give up.” Richelle E. Goodrich

Today’s Thought

In the event that you are living with an invisible disability, that interferes with your ability to work; let me encourage you. Encourage you with this my friend.

What makes you and I valuable is that we have a unique calling. We have a unique mission and purpose given to us to fulfill with our lives.

A mission given to us by a loving God that no one else can fulfill. A mission that we alone can discover. A mission that we can alone live. A mission that we can alone excel.

“You are the only person on earth who can use your ability.” Zig Ziglar

Although we may have people in our lives who leave us feeling minimized and marginalized, we can rise, we can move forward and we can excel in our lives.

**“If you want to improve your self-worth, stop giving other people the calculator.”
Tim Fargo**

And Remember Discovery is about a Process

“Everyone is trying to accomplish something big, not realizing that life is made up of little things.” Frank A. Clark

“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 silver bullets or magic potions. By accepting that reality, I am given the gift of knowing. I am given the gift of knowing by trusting the process, a loving God and ourselves.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Standing Strong

Although we may have people in our lives who dismiss and discount us, we can stand strong. Stand strong and fulfill our God-given mission and purpose.

“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 and say, “We’ll just have to see.” Dick Fosbury (Inventor of the Fosbury Flop and winner of the gold medal in the Olympics

So, stay committed to your course. Run your own race. Keep your focus on the goals in front of you. Keep using your gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for you.

“Believe in yourself and stop trying to convince others.” James De La Vega

Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can’t or Won’t

Through my experience I learned a painful reality. Learning to accept myself when other people can’t or won’t can be very difficult. Such a difficulty has left me feeling stuck behind invisible walls. Stuck in front of a wall that has no desire to accept my reality.

Interacting with such people can leave me feeling isolated and alienated. Isolated and alienated from both myself and those individuals. Trying to get those individuals to accept my reality is like going to a hardware store hoping to buy bread. Pointless.

Background Information on my Living behind the invisible Wall

As you may know, I sustained a traumatic brain injury (open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement) in 1967. In 1967 treating a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability was not on the “map”.

Consequently, once my external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was never again considered. Considered or factored into the difficulties that occurred and that I experienced in life. As a result, I found myself struggling to find my way,

Behind the Invisible Walls of a Brain Injury and Invisible Disability

Behind the invisible walls, I felt flawed and defective for many years. I felt flawed and defective because I was unable to meet the expectations of many people. People who could not accept the possibility that my life was impacted by my traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability.

But who could know as once my external wounds healed and I looked normal.

In the process, and for many years, I turned my frustration (anger) inward, which led to my low-grade chronic depression. In the process, I blamed and shamed myself. In my shame, I allowed other people to blame and shame me for not meeting expectations.

Reaching a Bottom

In my experience, when I reached a point in my life. A point in my life when the pain of denying my reality, exceeded my need to deny and defend my denial. Deny and defend what other people could not accept (so that I would not feel flawed and defective).

In response, I found myself angry, confused and depressed.

In my anger, confusion and depression I reached an emotional and spiritual bottom. An emotional and spiritual bottom in which I could no longer deny the reality. The reality that I was stuck behind an invisible wall that I was powerless to move or change.

The Impact of Shame

In May 2007 I wrote an article to share what I discovered that kept me defending what family and friends wanted or needed me to defend and maintain. The article title is **Whose Shame are you Carrying** and the link: [Whose Shame are You Carrying?](#)

The information shared in this article has and continues to help me to understand why people may want and even need me to defend their denial. The information in the article has also helped me to learn how to detach from what other people may want to believe.

“I don’t have to believe what other people may want or need me to believe about myself.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Stop Fighting against Myself

In my experience, I discovered that for people to come out of their denial to accept us would mean they would have to do 2 things. Feel feelings that they may not want to or know how to feel. Make changes that they do not know how to make or want to make.

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.” B.C. Forbes

Consequently, by accepting this reality, I am able to get on with my life. I am able to have peace by getting on with building on my lot in life. Build on with my lot, instead of waiting for them to feel and change. Both that are of my control and may never happen.

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

This awareness helped me to stop fighting against myself. This awareness helped me to stop joining in with the chorus of voices. Voices that criticized and berated me. This awareness helped me to stop focusing on what I could not accomplish, to what I could.

“Don’t quit. Never give up trying to build the world you can see, even if others can’t see it. Listen to your own drum and your drum only. It is the one that makes the sweetest sound.” Simon Sinek

This awareness and acceptance gave me the ability to discover how to use my gifts, talents and abilities. Use my gifts, talents and abilities given my invisible disability. Use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. Work for me to thrive.

This awareness helped me to learn how to respect who I am. Accept and respect who I am given the impact of my invisible disability. This awareness helped and helps me to realize that I am powerless over what people choose to think or to believe about me.

This awareness helped me to realize that I need to keep the focus on myself, stay committed to my own course and run my own race. This awareness helped me to stop being driven to live someone else’s dream for me and start living my own dream.

Finding Freedom from Behind Invisible Walls

In August of 2007 I wrote a **5-part article series** to share what I learned through my struggle of living with an invisible disability. For individuals; who are, like myself living with an invisible disability I would like to share the article series with you.

In the article series I speak to the awareness’s that I gained through my interactions with 4 different types of mindsets. Gaining these awareness’, has given me the ability to better understand and accept myself. Better understand and accept people in my life.

“Here’s to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently — they’re not fond

of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do." Steve Job

These awareness's helped and help me to detach from what other people. What other people may want, need or choose believe or think of me. These awareness's have helped me to stop picking on myself. These awareness's have helped me to let go.

"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

Being Aware Gives me Freedom

Below are links to the **5-part article series**. as mentioned above. I divided the article into 5 parts because of the length of the article. I did so to make reading the article more manageable. If I may suggest, I would encourage you to read through each part.

Each part of the article series (in their order) to benefit from the entire article.

Article Series

[**My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 1**](#)

[**My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 2**](#)

[**My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 3**](#)

[**My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 4**](#)

[**My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability — Part 5**](#)

Video Presentation Series

In April of 2014 I created a **video presentation series**; of the article series, to share the information with individuals who learn more effectively through watching and listening. I divided the video presentation series into **4 parts** to ease watching and listening.

Below are links to the video presentation series that have been uploaded to You Tube. If I may suggest, I would encourage you to watch each part of the video series (in order) to benefit from the entire video presentation series.

[**My Struggle Living with an Invisible Disability Part 1 Video Presentation**](#)

[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors—
Learning to Accept Our Reality Part 2 Video Presentation](#)

[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors—
Learning to Accept Our Reality Part 3 Video Presentation](#)

[Understanding the People we Interact with as Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors—
Win / Win Outcomes Part 4 Video Presentation](#)

To read or watch video presentations of the 3 articles spoken to in this article, please click on the below links:

To watch read and or watch video presentations of the 3 articles spoken to in this zoom presentation, please click on the below links:

3 Articles

[You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability](#)

[Yes, I am Disabled, but Don't Count Me Out](#)

[Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't](#)

3 Video Presentations

[You Are Not Crazy. You have an Invisible Disability Video Presentation](#)

[Yes, I am Disabled, but Don't Count Me Out Video Presentation](#)

[Learning to Accept Ourselves when Other People Can't or Won't Video Presentation](#)

Something Extra that Helped and Helps me to Thrive

After writing and creating the above presentation I felt led to write another article and then create a presentation of the new article.

To share that helped me to get comfortable in my own skin, to be able to live in my reality and to be able to pursue my purpose.

[Getting Comfortable in Our "Own Skin" Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability](#)

[Getting Comfortable in Our "Own Skin" Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability Zoom Presentation](#)