

## Getting Comfortable in Our “Own Skin” Living with a Brain Injury and an Invisible Disability Discussion Topic

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For many years I had a very difficult time getting comfortable with myself after my brain injury. Living with the impact of a brain injury and an invisible kept me guessing.

Guessing at how to be comfortable in my own skin. As a result, I spent much of my time and energy approval seeking and people pleasing in an attempt to get comfortable.

Comfortable in my own skin so that I would not feel alone, isolated and alienated from other people and myself.

### In “Their Skin”

Because I did not feel comfortable in “my own skin”, I tried to make other people “in their skin” comfortable with me.

In an attempt to make other people comfortable with me I engaged in a “dance”.

A dance that only reinforced my feeling anxious, insecure, alone, isolated and alienated.

### The “Dance”

**Step One:** If I sensed another person was angry or irritated, I blamed myself, if I had not already been criticized for making them feel.

**Step Two:** The next dance step involved my trying to “fix” them to make them OK (to not feel) so that I would hope to feel OK with them.

The next step in the dance involved saying I was sorry for making them feel. Feel irritable, restless and discontent. I did so in an attempt to ease their “feeling” so that the other person would no longer be angry or upset.

I said I was sorry to make them feel OK, so that they would not be angry and upset with me. I did so to “make” them OK so we could be OK. I did so in order to ease the pain of feeling alone, isolated and alienated from them.

**Step Three:** The hope in last step of the dance was that by making them OK with me, I would not feel alone in my “own skin”.

### **Needless to Say**

Needless to say, this “dance” left me NOT feeling OK with myself, because I could not make everyone OK with me. The consequence of the “dance” left me feeling intimidated and diminished.

### **For Many Years of my Life**

As a result, I found myself guessing at what was “normal” to be able to go along, to get along. Go along, to get along so as to not feel alone, isolated and alienated. Going along to get along (so as to not feel intimidated and dismissed) only compounded my inability to get and be comfortable in my own skin.

### **Becoming Aware and Accepting**

Through my recovery process I began to realize that I was/am not responsible for other people’s irritability, restlessness and discontentment. Through my ongoing brain injury recovery process, I began to understand. Understand and accept how my brain injury and invisible disability impacted my life, well-being and relationships.

### **In the Process of Getting Comfortable in my Own Skin**

Several years ago, I wrote 3 articles to share what helped me to get more comfortable in my “own skin” living with a brain injury and my invisible disability. Below are links to these 3 articles. After sharing these articles with my contacts, I received a request. A request to share a compilation of these 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](#)

### **Factors that Contribute to Feeling Intimidated and Diminished**

diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype, stigmatized, minimized, marginalized, dismissed, discounted

## Words and Meanings

Each and all of these words and their meanings can result in feeling of a sense of shame. A sense of shame for having a brain injury and an invisible disability. Words that offer little hope, support or encouragement.

### Being Aware and Understanding Terms for Clarity

I researched the above contributing factors to understand how they contribute my feeling. My feeling alone, isolated, alienated, intimidated and diminished living with a brain injury and an invisible disability.

### How they Can Serve to Limit

To understand how these contributing factors, if believed and owned, can serve to limit me. You may also find that these contributing factors; if believed and owned, can also serve to limit you.

### Definitions to Understand to Find Freedom

**Alone** — separated from others (Merriam-Webster)

**Isolated** — having minimal contact or little in common with others (Dictionary.com)

**Diminished** — to lessen the authority, dignity, or reputation of: belittle (Merriam-Webster)

**Distressed** — great pain, anxiety, or sorrow; acute physical or mental suffering (Dictionary.com)

**Alienated** — feeling withdrawn or separated from others or from society as a whole (Merriam-Webster)

**Marginalized** — to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group (Merriam-Webster)

**Stigmatized** — to treat someone or something unfairly by disapproving of him, her, or it. (Cambridge English Dictionary)

**Diagnosis** — the identification of the nature of an illness or other problem by examination of the symptoms (Dictionary.com)

**Intimidated** — made afraid; frightened, especially by the threats or aggression of another: · timid or anxious (Dictionary.com)

**Discounted** — regard (a possibility, fact, or person) as being unworthy of consideration because it lacks credibility (Dictionary.com)

**Prognosis** — the prospect of recovery as anticipated from the usual course of disease or peculiarities of the case (Merriam-Webster)

**Minimized** — reduce (something, especially something unwanted or unpleasant) to the smallest possible amount or degree (Dictionary.com)

**Stereotype** — a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong (Cambridge University Press)

**Labeled** — a word or a phrase that is used to describe the characteristics or qualities of people often in a way that is unfair (Cambridge Dictionary)

### Together in their Impact

separated from others: separated from other persons or things; alone; solitary: feeling withdrawn or separated from others or from society as a whole: made afraid; frightened, especially by the threats or aggression of another, timid or anxious: great pain, anxiety, or sorrow; acute physical or mental suffering; reduce (something, especially something unwanted or unpleasant) to the smallest possible amount or degree; to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group; to decide that something or someone is not important and not worth considering; regard (a possibility, fact, or person) as being unworthy of consideration because it (the individual) lacks credibility

### Understanding When I Feel Alone, Isolated, Alienated and Diminished

So, when I feel alone, I experience separation anxiety and distress (abandonment). When I feel isolated, I experience loneliness. When I feel alienated, I experience being pushed away (ostracized and rejected). When I feel intimidated, I experience being bullied (overtly or covertly). When I feel diminished, I experience anxiety by buying into the belief that I do not do enough, to be enough and therefore I am not enough.

## **The Impact of Intimidation**

Each of the above terms individually; as well as collectively, can leave the individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability intimidated. Intimidated resulting in the individual feeling distressed. Distressed to the point of feeling frozen. Frozen in their ability to not be limited by their brain injury and their invisible disability. To not look beyond what a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype, stigmatization communicates to them. To see their great worth and value, although minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

## **But the Good News**

The above contributing factors no longer have to limit our lives. The above contributing factors no longer leave us feeling intimidated or diminished. The above contributing factors no longer have to keep us feeling alone, isolated and alienated.

## **We no longer have to hide**

We no longer have to be intimidated or diminished by believing we need approval. Approval to be comfortable in our own skin. Approval to embrace and live out our tremendous worth and value. We no longer have to be dissuaded by what other people can't or won't see.

## **Declaration**

I no longer have to be intimidated or diminished by the contributing factors. Instead, I am free to live and express my tremendous worth and value through my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. In ways that work for me, through being comfortable in my own skin.

## **We Can Express Ourselves**

Instead, we can express ourselves. We can own our power. We can run our race. We can shine. We can come out of hiding. We can be encouraged. We can believe in ourselves. We can follow our dreams. We can trust the process, a loving God and ourselves.

## **We are free to Use our Gift, Talents and Abilities**

We can go where there is no path and leave a trail. We can build the world that other people may not see. We can listen to our own drum. We can let other people believe what they want to or need to believe. We can own our light and let our light to shine brightly.

## **Quotes to Encourage Being Comfortable in Our Own Skin**

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“Adventure is not outside man, it is within.” George Eliot

“Don’t give up at half time. Concentrate on winning the second half.” Bear Bryant

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

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary.” Robin Williams, John Keating — Dead Poets Society

When setting out on a journey, do not see the advice of someone who has never left home.” Rumi

“Create your own visual style... let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others.” Orson Welles

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

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

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

“Ideas do not always come in a flash but by diligent trial-and-error experiments that take time and thought.” Charles K. Kao

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something is more important than fear.” Ambrose Redmon

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

“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

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” —from A Return to Love, Marianne Williamson.