

**Living with a Brain Injury
Making Sense of Why
What is My Destiny?
e Book**

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Introduction

For you who do not know me, through Second Chance to Live; my name is Craig J. Phillips. I sustained an open skull fracture and traumatic brain injury in 1967 when I was 10 years old. My right frontal lobe was damaged, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. I remained in a coma for 3 weeks. After completing 6-7 weeks of traction to set my left femur (which was fractured in the accident) I was placed in a full body or Spica cast. I was then transported via an ambulance to another hospital to undergo...

To undergo brain surgery. After the surgery, I was transferred back to the first hospital and a week later, transferred home. After being taken out of the Spica cast and learning how to walk again, I underwent 2 EEGS and a battery of other tests. In follow-up to the 2 EEGS and testing, my parents were told that the tests revealed that I probably would not be able to succeed academically beyond high school.

Once my external wounds healed and I learned how to talk, walk, read, write and speak in complete sentences, the impact of my traumatic brain injury remained hidden to me for many years. Although I was not expected to succeed beyond high school, I went on to obtain my undergraduate degree (4 different majors and 10 years) and my graduate degree (2 different grad schools and 3 ½ years).

Because my parents decided not to share the findings of the testing done in 1968, I internalized the difficulties that I encountered. Although I was able to obtain my undergraduate and graduate degrees and worked in both non-professional and professional jobs, I had a long history of getting and losing those jobs. Such an experience left me puzzle, because I worked diligently in my studies and on those jobs.

For many years, I subsequently felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to go. No one seemed to want what I had to offer. To make a long story short, after completing 2 evaluation processes with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (one in Florida and one in North Carolina) I was deemed to be unemployable. After my 3rd application was approved with the Social Security Administration.

So, in late 1998, I was told that I was unemployable and declared disabled. Although I was unemployable and disabled, I sought to make sense of “Why?” and to answer the question, “What is my destiny?”.

On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live to share some of the awareness's', lessons and discoveries that I made. That I made through my search to answer these two 2 questions “Why?” and “What is my Destiny?”. In this e Book, I offer a selection of articles, in which I share pieces of information; that have helped me to make sense of Why?” and to answer “What is my Destiny?”.

As you read through the articles in this e Book may the information also help you to make sense of “Why?”. Why and in the process help you to answer the question, “What is my Destiny?”.

“Why” and “What is my Destiny?” after your brain injury. What I share through the articles in this e Book has given me hope. May what I share in the articles throughout this e Book also give you hope.

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Traumatic Brain Injury — Making sense of “Why?”

In the last day or so I received several emails with a similar question. “Why?” I believe why is a very good question. I asked that question about God, myself and my situation for many years. As I look back on my recovery process, I believe “Why?” became an essential part of my healing process. Why gave me the capacity to move beyond my pain, my disillusionment, disappointment and discouragement.

Why gave me the ability to move beyond what I could not understand. Why gave me the ability to make sense of my reality. Why helped me to grieve what I could not change to move forward.

Why became an essential part of my healing process because why helped me to grieve. Why helped me to question and challenge the messages that **Denial** gave to me. Why helped me to process the **Anger** that I had towards what I could not understand. What I realized that I could not change once I started to come out of my denial. Why helped me to sort through the process of **Bargaining** or the “what if” stage...

The “should of, would of, could of” stage of my grieving process, as I attempted to change my reality. The reality of the impact of my traumatic brain injury. Why then helped me to survive what I considered to be the “dark nights of the soul”. Why allowed me to linger in depression until I was able and ready to surrender to and accept my reality. Why empowered my process as I reached a place of surrender...

Why helped me to get to a place of acceptance of what I was powerless to change. Acceptance then empowered my process and gave me the motivation to look for solutions. Why helped me to realize that I was not helpless or hopeless because of what I could not change. Why helped me to move beyond my disillusionment, disappointment and discouragement. Why helped me to realize that I did not have to...

Did not have to be alone in my process and that I could ask for help. Ask for help to me to realize that I could do something different. Why helped me to begin to see the circumstances of what was out of my power to change in a different way. Why then taught me that my circumstances were never meant to keep, hold me down or keep me back. Instead, why helped me to see that my circumstances were meant for...

Meant for my good and designed to build me up. Why taught me that I was being led in the direction of my destiny. Why taught me how to empower my process. Why gave me the motivation to learn from the experiences of my reality. Why prepared me to take advantage of the opportunities that became available to me. Why taught me to do the footwork and let to go of the outcomes. Why taught me to trust.

Why taught me that I no longer needed to buy into the notion that I was a victim of my reality. Why gave me the emotional fortitude to execute tenacity and perseverance, when giving up and giving in would have been much easier to do. Why taught me that I have a future and a hope. Why reinforced the reality that I will fulfill the plan and purpose for my life. Why pointed and continues to point me in the...

In the direction of my destiny as I learn from the circumstances that my reality offers. Why gives hope.

Why uses my limitations and deficits for my good. Why gives me faith because infinite possibilities exist. Why not, also gives me hope. Give me hope as I move forward, trust and believe.

What is my Destiny?

Several years ago, the movie, *Forrest Gump* was applauded by those who watched Forrest's determination. Several lines from that movie stood out to me. "**Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you are going to get**". The second line that resonated with me was when Forrest asked his mother, along the lines of "*What is my destiny, Mama?*" Both these lines rang true to me.

I felt like I had been given a box full of dark chocolate, bitter to my taste and that my destiny was fading into a dark comedy of errors. I have since discovered that I was blind and could not see what was to be.

Helen Keller summed up my plight so accurately, "When one door closes, another opens. But we often look so regretfully upon the closed door that we don't see the one that has opened for us."

I was so focused on what I wanted and expected to happen, that I could not see what was happening. **But it was not time.** I still had to learn the lessons that my journey would reveal. One such lesson was a hard lesson to learn. My training in the martial arts opened my eyes. For many years I was focused on the next promotion and the color of my belt. When I was not promoted as quickly as my peers, I asked my...

I asked my Sensei (martial arts instructor), "Why?". He told me that I was not ready. I could not grasp what he meant at the time. "Why?" I was not ready mystified me because I trained hard. As I continued to train, I struggled to understand. One day I had a spiritual awakening that changed my life. I began to realize; as with a new dawn, that the outcome of a promotion or a belt color change was not as...

Not as important as what I was learning on my journey. On my journey towards being promoted and earning the next rank and color. With my awareness my martial arts training took on a new meaning. This awareness helped me to refocus my life. In the process, my motivation in life changed forever. The process became of far greater importance than obtaining a brown or black belt or any other outcome...

Any other outcome in life. The journey of learning is more important than the goal or outcome. What you become on the way is essential to who you become, not the outcome. I am reminded of this awareness, which encourages me to live in the present. The moment is what equips me to empty my mind of the expectation of an outcome. As I focus my time and energy on what I am learning in the present moment.

I have learned that becoming fully present in the moment equips me to empty my mind of expectation. This discipline helps me to focus my energy and thus develop what works for me. I have learned that life does not have to look different than it does. My destiny is being revealed. I do not need to build a legacy. My life paints, as it were with a brush each day with each circumstance and lesson revealed to me.

Courage helps me to be willing to learn from each lesson. Courage reminds me to keep painting with what I learn. Courage encourages me to realize that with each brush stroke my destiny is being revealed. Is being revealed in the present, with each brush stroke, by not giving up on the process and myself.

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

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant." Robert Louis Stevenson

More ways to experience your destiny, **The Measure of Destiny?**

To Live Beyond Limitations Part 1

I have been thinking about a very powerful principle. I have found that this principle, when applied, helps me to step out of my limitations. Step out of my limitations into the abundance of possibilities. Discouragement is disbanded as an illusion of lack. The conceivable becomes attainable, while apprehension is traded for hope. Progress rather than perfection becomes a way of life.

The bondage of needing to be perfect is replaced with the pursuit of excellence. The voice of inadequacy is replaced with the voice of enough. I no longer have to be right to feel secure. I am free to say, "I don't know". I am made strong when I am weak. I am free to take risks because I realize that I cannot fail. I am able to laugh at myself because I know that I am learning. I am able to let go of outcomes because...

I am able to let go of outcomes because I know that more will be revealed. I am able to let go, as I trust that I will get what I need. I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I do not have to know the big picture. The principle that I am referring to is humility. Through my process, I have learned a very valuable lesson. Humility is not humiliation. Humility promotes and empowers the individual...

Empowers the individual through meekness. Humility sets the individual free to accept themselves. Accept themselves because the individual knows that they do not have to prove their worth or value. Humility gives the individual hope because the individual knows that possibilities exist. Humility encourages learning, because the individual realizes that they do not have to already know everything.

Humility encourages sets the stage for learning curves. Humility breeds brings security, because the individual knows that they can trust the process, a loving God and themselves. Humility encourages the individual to let go of that which is out of their control. Humility motivates the individual to ask for help. Ask for help because the individual realizes that they do not have to lean on their own understanding.

Lean on their own understand or dependent on their own resources. Humility empowers hope through trust because the individual knows that more will be revealed. Humility seeks to set the individual free, because the individual knows that they can practice easy does it. Humility motivates the individual to take risks because there is no threat of reprisal. Humility encourages the individual to succeed, while at...

While at the same the same time cheering the individual on for their efforts. Humility celebrates the individual as a work in progress. Humility teaches the individual to stay in the moment. Humility encourages the individual to enjoy the process, to do the foot work and to let go of the outcomes.

Humility reinforces self-esteem, self-respect and self-worth. Humility does not seek justification. Humility does not disparage, minimize or marginalize. Humility does not condescend. Humility is free of contempt. Humility is patient and kind. Humility champions and supports the individual. Humility readies the individual for service. Humility empowers with wisdom. Humility gently reveals power.

Humility teaches the individual that they are on a journey. Humility teaches the individual that on that journey, the process is more important than the destination. Humility teaches sometimes that occurs with seeming serendipity. Humility reveals that the individual is being led in the direction of their destiny.

Humiliation on the other hand

Humiliation on the other hand scorns. Humiliation's motive is to control and limit. Humiliations by nature strips the individual of their uniqueness, self-esteem, self-respect and value. Humiliation demands justification. Humiliation seeks to disparage, minimize and marginalize the individual — at their very core. Humiliation promotes fear and insecurity. Humiliation undermines enthusiasm and motivation.

To Live Beyond Limitations Part 2

Humiliation promotes fear. Humiliation cripples' initiative. Humiliation quashes hope under cynicism.

Prior to

Prior to understanding the distinction between humility and humiliation I berated myself on a daily basis. I believed that I was the problem and thus deserved to be victimized and humiliated by life and the people in my world. Consequently, I felt trapped by the voice of criticism and the clamoring of shame. My efforts to be enough were constantly chided as inadequate. Consequently, I developed insecurity, low...

Insecurity, self-esteem and low self-worth. I did not believe that I made mistakes, but that I was a mistake. At the core of my being humiliation chided me as inadequate and unlovable. My attempts to quiet the voice of humiliation; echoed by shame and criticism, only seemed to reinforce the impact that humiliation had upon my life. Unrealistic expectations kept me anxious and depressed. Humiliation reinforced the...

Reinforced the belief that I could not do enough to be enough. Humiliation stymied my being through intimidation. Humiliation consequently demanded that I be perfect before I could hope to find peace — with other people, much less than with myself. Humiliation, rather than humility subsequently reinforced my sense of shame and inadequacy. Humiliation distorted my perceptions and held me captive to the...

Held me captive to the belief that who I was and what I had to contribute in life did not matter. Because of my distorted perceptions; prior to understanding the distinction between humility and humiliation, I could not. Could not take the risk to be humble. I had to be on guard. I had to keep hyper vigilant.

With time

With time and through my recovery process I came to understand that humility validates and heralds my best efforts. My efforts as good enough, for today. Because I have learned how to trust the process, rather than trying to control the process. Humility has been able to encourage me do the foot work and then let go of the outcomes. Through maintaining humility, I am able to celebrate in what I am experiencing.

What I am experiencing in the now, without judging my efforts. Without a fear of reprisal. As I let go of my need to justify, answer and defend who I am, I am able to be. As I am able to be I am free, I am able to create without the threat of being criticized or shamed for my efforts. Consequently, I am able to focus on process and excellence, instead of striving and trying to be perfect. This too is a process for me.

In the pursuit of process and excellence, I no longer need to listen to the voice of humiliation. I no longer have to be humiliated by my efforts. Consequently, I can rest though my efforts and live beyond my limitations. Live beyond my limitations because I do not have to focus on my limitations. Humility allows me to accept who I am and where I am at today. Humility allows me to learn from my experience.

Learn from my experience, rather than judging my experiences. Humility empowers my perspective and motivates me to learn from my circumstances. Humility gives me the freedom to be who I am and where I am. Humility releases me to live beyond my limitations because I do not have to depend on my own resources. Humility teaches me to stay in the moment. Humility helps me to find my center.

Humility teaches me to that it is safe to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Not Judging Our Efforts

Over this past weekend, I attended a series of workshops. During one of the workshops the principle of “keeping it simple” was presented as a topic. As I listened to what people share on the principle of k.i.s.s.

Last night I attended a meeting where the topic of “keeping it simple” was also tabled as the topic to discuss during the meeting. Through attending the work shop and then the meeting on “keeping it simple” I heard several people refer to the principle of “keeping it simple” with an additional “s”. In this post I want to reflect on that fourth “s”. The fourth s I heard referred to as I listened to the discussion was stupid.

When the time came for me to share my thoughts on the topic of “keeping it simple” I shared some of what I have learned through my experience. I told the group of individuals that I discovered that I do not like shaming words, such as stupid. Stupid places judgments on my efforts. Judgement on my progress and process. I continued to share that I discovered that when I place judgments on my efforts, is that...

That when I place judgement on my progress and my process, I experience alienation and isolation.

With my awareness, I discovered that I could change the way in which I looked at or “framed” my learning experience. By changing the way in which I view my learning experience I am able to stop judging my efforts. Consequently, instead of placing judgments on my efforts, I am able to enjoy my learning process and applaud my efforts. I am able to enjoy the progress that I am making and my process.

I am able to applaud my efforts because I know that with all my learning there is a learning curve. I am able to applaud my efforts because I realize that I cannot know until I know. I am able to applaud my efforts because I know that it just takes what it takes for me to know. And I cannot know until I know.

Do Not Give up On Your Dreams or Your Destiny Part 1

During the past several days I have been thinking about trains and railroads. Where I live trains can be heard off in the distance as they roll through town. Their whistles announce the trains arrival and then in a matter of moments the train whisks its way down the track under the controls of the railroad engineer.

As I thought about the train, the railroad and the railroad engineer I had a spiritual awakening. For many years of my life, I thought that I was the railroad engineer and conductor of my life. Although I attempted to drive my train in the direction of my dreams, with the help of the God of my understanding, I found...

I found myself detoured again and again by events that appeared to be out of my control. It was as if someone intentionally pulled a switch on my railroad each time that I made significant gains in my life. Significant gains and about to reach a huge milestone. It was as if someone or something purposely...

It was as if someone or something sought to dash my hopes and dreams. Consequently, I found myself frustrated and wondering why my hard work. My hard work did not gain me access to the town of my dreams. For specific insight please read my autobiography in bullet points by clicking on this [link](#).

Several years ago, after praying and thinking about my conundrum, I had a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening helped me to understand why I had encountered so many switches. So many switches on the railroad of life as I traveled with purpose. My awareness helped me to realize that the switches...

That these "switches" were pulled to both protect me and to keep me moving in the direction of my destiny. I began to realize that apart from those switches being pulled I would probably have never been able to find. Been able to find, much less experience my dreams or my destiny. I began to realize that...

That the switches I encountered, on my journey, were pulled to both protect and keep me. Keep me from settling in a proverbial "town" that was not meant for me. With my spiritual awakening and awareness, I came to realize that the events. The event of my traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old...

When I was 10 years old in 1967 was a "switched" on my railroad of life to prepare me for my purpose. For my purpose of offering hope through my website some 40 years later. A switch that would point me in the direction of learning how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. With my spiritual awakening and awareness, I came to realize that what I thought was meant for my...

Was meant for my harm was in reality designed for my good. I just needed to willing to not give up.

Today's thought

Although you may not believe that hope exists my friend, it does. You are being taken care of just for today. The clouds will lift and you will gain a new perspective. What you think makes no sense to you now will become clear. You will realize your dreams and you will find your destiny. Hope will become...

Hope will become your constant companion. Your independence will become your liberation. You will learn to connect with yourself and with your fellows. Your frustration, disappointment and discouragement will be turned for your good. Stay the course, do not give up on your process...

Don't give up on your process because more will be revealed right on time. You don't have to know the big picture or how the dots will connect forward. As I have found you can trust the process, a loving God and yourself. What you thought was meant for your harm, you will come to realize was brought about...

Was brought about for your good. You will realize what you could not do for yourself was being done for you. You will be grateful for unanswered prayer. You will come to understand that the events and circumstances that led to the "switches" being pulled on your journey occurred to direct and protect you.

Do Not Give up On Your Dreams or Your Destiny Part 2

You will come to realize that you were being led in the direction of your dreams and your destiny.

If you have a hard time believing that good will come from your circumstances, discouragements and disappointments, believe because I believe. You will get what you need, one day at a time. You will come to recognize that what you have is enough, just for today. More will be revealed to you!

Be encouraged my friend, you have a future and a hope. You are being prepared for greatness. Your star will arise. You will be glad that you stayed the course and you will be so glad that you did not give up on your process, a loving God or on yourself. Be encouraged my friend. You will live your dreams.

You will find your purpose, live your dreams and experience your destiny.

“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 myself.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Triggers

Throughout my life's experience, I have come to believe that many of my reactions to people, places and situations have been impacted by previous experience. These reactions may be the result of specific smells, sounds or situations that were associated with some event or person from my past.

Consequently, I may find myself reacting in such a way that has little to do with my present circumstances. These imprinted memories can come flooding forward, sometimes without warning. Such memories can hinder my ability to grow and mature. For sake of a better word, I will call these triggers.

Triggers bring about specific responses sometimes consciously, but more often from the unconscious level. I have also found that many reactions to present day events can be traced to unfinished business from my past. This unfinished business can be linked to a variety of events, people, institutions.

The common thread that links me to those unsettled experiences, my resentment. Resentments I have had because of expectations. Expectation of people places and things. Expectations that may have been unspoken and unrealistic. This resentment may have lingered and buried under a world of pain.

A world of pain hidden under a pile of disappointments. Pain that I may not even be aware of yet triggered.

Interesting

Having these resentments can be likened to drinking poison and hoping that the person dies. This illustrates how holding onto a resentment hurts us. I have also heard that holding onto resentments is likened to picking up hot coals to throw at the resentment, while we are the ones who get burned.

The Reality

The reality is that resentments undermine my ability to make healthy decisions. Rather than being proactive for my own good, I become reactive. When I find myself reacting, I am usually trying to force a solution. I have also found that when I am trying to force a solution, I usually create more pain...

Create more pain for myself. I have also seen how resentments can negatively alter the course of someone else's life. I only have to turn on the news to see the ramifications of holding resentments.

With this insight, I realize that it is in my best interest to be rigorously honest with myself. Practically speaking, this means that I need to make a list of the people that I have held resentments towards over the years. Work, school, institutions and church can be an excellent place to look for these resentments.

I also need to place myself on this list. This exercise is not done to blame anyone, or to berate myself, but to look for patterns. Through becoming aware of those patterns, I am able understand why I react to events in my life. In so doing, I can be relieved from the debilitating effect that resentment yields.

Until I examine these patterns, I will continue to find myself reliving pain from my past expectations through current events. These triggers will remain set until I do the work to remove them from my conscious and unconscious mind. I also need to remember that I am ultimately responsible for how...

For how I chose to react or respond to any person, place of event if a resentment appears. The way that I chose to respond or react will invariably produce an outcome. My choice will either promote my empowerment or will leave me believing I am a victim of why I hold the resentment.

Teachers

Throughout my life, I have experienced many twists and turns. Many times, these twists and turns made little sense to me. Metaphorically speaking, I felt like a pinball ricocheting off a series of disappointments and resentments. This way of relating and reacting to my environment frequently left me feeling helpless.

Although I spent much of my time and energy seeking to endure and survive my circumstances, I never felt secure. Consequently, I felt like I needed to defend, answer, or explain my existence. When I got sick and tired of being sick and tired, I made some practical decisions. I no longer wanted to merely be a...

To be a survivor, tossed about by my circumstances. Consequently, I decided to embark in a new way of living. I began investing my time and energy into determining why I reacted to various people, places and things. I discovered that I was the common denominator in all these encounters. Myself.

Through my process, I came to accept my powerlessness over people, places, and things. Reality made something clear to me. Although I am powerless over people, places, and things I am not powerless over how I react to them. In addition to this awareness, I came to realize that my reactions to people, places...

My reactions to people, places and things were active choices. Active choices that I made. These active choices remained embedded in my unconscious, until I decided to stop blaming anyone or anything for my choices. And you know what, until I accepted this reality, I consciously choose to remain in denial.

When I choose to learn from my teachers, I no longer need to minimize anyone, including myself. I am able to stop looking to blame other people, places and thing for my reactions to them.

Although I may not like the people, places or things that I encounter, as I live my life, I need to remember. I need to remember that I am not helpless. I get to choose whether or not I learn from my reactions. If I chose to blame or shame someone for how I am reacting, I am only kidding and hurting myself.

Instead, as I remain committed and open to learn from my reactions, I am empowered. I find the freedom to own my attitudes and able to examine my motives. In the process, I am able to choose to do something to empower. Empower my life and relationships, instead of feeling victimized by my reactions.

Through owning my reactions to people, places and things I empower my quality of life and relationships.

Attitude

Today is the beginning of the Easter Weekend. I hope you and your family are well during this season. I am happy to be alive and to have the opportunity to share this time with you. As you may know my dad passed away on January 10, 2007. Although his passing provided sadness for our family, we were...

We were happy for Dad. Sad that he left this dimension, but happy that he began his new journey. When I worked with in the funeral business, death was described as an individual moving out of his/her house. Our bodies are what houses' our soul and the spirit that God I believe breathed into our being.

So, when my dad passed away, he moved out of his house and passed into life eternal. For those of us who believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Easter is a reminder of our faith. Faith in Christ's finished work on Calvary's cross-provide triumph over death and the power of the grave.

As He triumphed over death and the power of the grave, He provided hope to those who would believe {Read the Gospel of John in the New Testament for more details}. Although we may die, like my dad did on January 10, we can have hope in the resurrection of the dead. Because of our faith, my family...

My family knows that someday, we will see Dad again. Easter can also be representative to some as the beginning of spring. Spring is a time of rebirth and abundance. Possibilities, like flowers are in abundance. As the flower blooms, it's sweet fragrance can be valued and appreciated. And so, it is with our lives.

Choice provides the potential and our willingness opens the door to enjoy and prosper. Our decision will provide the motivation that directs our attitude. Our attitude will in turn determine how we see and experience living. Whether we see life as an ongoing challenge to be endured or as a journey to be lived.

Attitude

I am learning that my limitations do not have to be reasons for sadness. Instead, they can lead me to a place of acceptance. A place of acceptance that can be used for my good. When I am sick or bedridden, taking **time** to rest may become a tremendous gift. When I take time to rest, I take care of myself.

So many things pass me by when I am **not** taking time to rest. I have also discovered another rich truth. Many matters that are out of my control, are really gifts in disguise. The beauty in this spiritual awakening provides a simple but a profound truth. How I chose to interpret my circumstances will significantly...

Will significantly impact the quality of my life. If I decide to look for the hidden opportunity, a new zest for living will be found. The eyes of my heart, once darkened by negative perceptions, will be opened to see possibilities. Rather than being angry at my circumstances, I will learn to use them to my advantage.

I have come to appreciate the meaning of this quote, "If you do not like something, change it, if you cannot change it, change the way you think about it." Mary Englebreit

I am not suggesting or inferring that we not be sad or frustrated by events that are out of our control. On the contrary, I believe that grieving is very healthy and an essential component to our healing process. There is no right or wrong way to grieve a loss, no specific time schedules. It just takes what it takes.

So let yourself be sad and angry for a time and when you are ready, remember, changed attitudes can aid recovery, one day at a time. And as I need to remember, attitude is always our choice.

"Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice." Wayne Dyer

Happy Easter to All!

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Square Peg

I have been thinking about the topic of identity. For many years I allowed my identity to be defined outside of me. Status and monetary qualification were the measuring stick that I sought to measure up to. Measure up to so that I could establish my self-worth and self-value as an individual.

Because I focused on the status of an identity and the financial security that would attract a mate my life stayed in turmoil. The turmoil arose from my inability to secure my status in the world. Because I was unable to maintain gainful employment my financial security forever seemed to be out of my reach.

Over time and through my struggle to fit into societal and family expectations I had a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening revealed to me that for many years I was trying to fit my life into a round hole. A round hole that I was not created to fill. Living with a brain injury left me feeling like a square peg.

A square peg in a world of round holes. Through my spiritual awakening I began to realize that I could no longer base my value, worth or identity on my ability to fit into a round hole. I could no longer base my value, worth or identity on my ability to fit into a round hole, because I was created as a square peg.

A round hole because I was created to be a square peg. I could not create my own identity until I was able to accept that I was created to be a square peg. As a square peg I began to accept that my financial security could no longer be dependent upon a round peg system. I had to begin to think like a square peg.

I had to think outside the box of round pegs. With my awareness, the obvious became apparent. I could no longer find my security or my identity in a system that celebrated and rewarded round pegs. I had to find a system that worked for me. I had to find a way to celebrate my unique abilities as a square peg.

Over time I have come to accept, but more so to celebrate the beauty of who I am. The beauty of who I am as a square peg. I have come to not only celebrate who I am but to excel as a square peg through my gifts, talents and abilities. I am not suggesting that I comfortable being a square peg all the time...

All the time because I am not always comfortable. As I have gotten more comfortable being a square peg in a world of round pegs, I have stopped fighting against myself. I no longer attempt to be something that I am not, a round peg. Instead, I have learned how to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work.

Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury – Meaning and Purpose

Over the past several days I have been thinking about the concept of an identity. As I have shared in **My Journey thus Far**, for many years I felt like a man all dressed up with nowhere to go in life. Although I diligently applied myself to both academic and vocational pursuits none provided an identity for me.

In my attempt to define my meaning and purpose I sought to fulfill the requirements of specific identities. You see I bought into the notion that “if” I was able to secure an identity “what do you do for a living?” then I could find my place in the world. Due to the invisible nature of my disability, my attempts to...

Attempts to secure an identity were frequently met with disappointment. My disappointment arose because I had bought into the notion that the identity would in somehow save me. Save me by defining my meaning and purpose. Nevertheless, each of my attempts to find and secure my identity brought me...

Brought me face to face with yet one more disappointment. Although I applied diligence and persistence to secure my meaning and purpose, through an identity, I consistently found myself confused. Confused and bewildered. You see I had bought in to the notion that if I could secure an identity, then my life...

Then my life would matter, however what made matters more frustrating for me was that I believed. I believed that my identity needed to be esteemed and rewarded by the society in which I lived. Through my repeated frustration and disappointments, my eyes slowly opened to the illusion set for by an identity.

What became increasingly obvious was that I needed to independently define my own identity. I needed to replace the expectations of societal identities with my own defined identity. Defined identity given understanding who I am as an individual as I express myself creatively through and from my being.

What also became obvious to me was that my traumatic/acquired brain injury, deficits and limitations do not define my identity. Do not define my identity or who I am as I live my life. What I discovered is that my identity is defined as I creatively express my passion through my gifts, talents and abilities.

My identity is expressed through my gifts, talents and abilities, as I experience my meaning and purpose. Therefore, I no longer need to fulfill the requirements of an identity to define my meaning and purpose. Instead, I can allow my identity to evolve as I express my passion through my gifts, talents and abilities.

As I express my passion, I am free of needing to pursue and define the role of an identity. I am free to use my time and energy to express myself, instead of being driven to fulfill a societal identity. A societal identity to feel secure in society, but more importantly, secure in my own “defined identity”.

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

The Measure of Destiny?

Through my process I have grown in the awareness and acceptance to my reality. With my understanding, I have been able to embrace certain truths. My destiny becomes apparent through these truths.

“I am only one; but still, I am one. I cannot do everything, but still, I can do something.” Helen Keller

This truth reminds me that I do not have to be more than I am, today. I am enough. In actuality, I am more than enough. Consequently, I can learn use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. In the process, I fulfill the measure of my destiny. The measure of my destiny, a little at a time.

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.” Mother Teresa

I do not have to be concerned with numbers, because I can be a blessing where I am — now! I do not have to concern myself with outcomes because I can trust the process. I can impact the person next... The person next to me in small but profound ways. In the process I fulfill the measure my destiny.

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

Consequently, I do not have to wait to measure my destiny. I can measure my destiny by one act of kindness, one breath of hope, and by one word of encouragement. I can measure my destiny one person...

On person at a time and the one nearest me. Consequently, I don't have to do everything, but I can do something. I can give out of that which I has been given to me. I can plant seeds. In that way I contribute...

I can contribute to my destiny, a little at a time.

“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

Today's Thought

Today you may be questioning the measure of your destiny and the value of your life. You may be discouraged because you have a disability, a traumatic brain injury or some other life...

Life challenging circumstance. My encouragement to you is to relax. You do not have to be more than who you are. You are enough. Because you are enough, you do not have to prove anything to anyone.

You can freely give of who you are in ways that work for you. You do not have to do everything, but what you can give something. You can fulfill the measure of your destiny one act of kindness at a time.

You don't have to reach the masses. You can start with the person nearest you.

We don't have to do something big, but you and I can plant seeds of kindness, encouragement and hope. We don't have to have all the answers, but we can be part of the solution. We don't have to know the...

Know the big picture, but we can contribute to our destinies each day a little at a time.

How to Remember what I Forgot

Recently, while speaking with a friend she suggested that I share something with you that I shared with her. Sometimes I lose my bearings, my focus and my center. When I find myself in this space, I use...

I use this tool.

As we spoke, I shared with my friend that I have a “built-in forgetter”. Consequently, I need to be reminded of the principles that help me find my center, my bearings and my focus.

I do not know if my built in “forgetter” is the result of getting older, being caught in the “head lights”, or because of my traumatic brain injury.

In the final analysis I do not know if the “why” really matters. What matter is that I am willing to remember. I have discovered that because I want to remember I am open to being reminded.

In my experience I have found that these reminders come in different forms and through various venues. Simplicity sometimes speaks the loudest when I sit down with a piece of paper and a pen.

Sometimes all I need to do is to sit down with a piece of paper and a pen and begin to write. The clarity that once seemed to allude me manifests itself before my very eyes. Slowly I am able to see my...

Able to see my experience in a different light. What was once confusing, takes on new meaning. My heart speaks to my head and my head to my heart and I am revived. Through the process I hear the voice,

I hear the voice of hope and I am able remember what I forgot. What helped me to find my center.

Today's Thought

My friend, in the event that you are going through a difficult time in your life, or if you are merely searching for clarity may I encourage you. Encourage you to be present for yourself.

Sit down with a pen and a piece of paper and begin to write.

Let your heart speak to your head and your head to your heart.

What was forgotten will come into focus. The answers will come.

Consequently, you will gain your bearings and you will find your center.

You will be ushered into the light of hope and you will remember what was forgotten.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living

Following a brain injury individuals may experience changes in their personality and in their ability to learn. Consequently, both the traumatic brain injury survivor as well as their family and friends may experience an unfamiliar frustration. Frustration may be compounded because the brain-injured person...

The brain injury person may look “normal”. Normal, as though nothing has happened to them. Recently I heard someone say, **“She was in a car accident several months ago, but she is fine. She just had a head injury.”** A lack of understanding that brain injuries are invisible subsequently complicates matters.

People who have experienced brain-injuries may have changes in their ability to learn, remember and grasp new tasks or remember old ones. Activities of daily living may subsequently become laborious and even daunting for the individual. For the individual impacted by a brain-injury. Once simple tasks take...

Once huge amounts of effort and energy are needed to do and repeat once familiar tasks. As a result, frustration can be seen in both the individual living with the brain injury and for family, friends and caregivers. As a result, doing and repeating once familiar tasks bring increased anxiety and fatigue.

Through my experience I have found that there are different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Some people learn best through a combination of these three learning styles. Other people learn predominantly through the use of one or two of these styles. Through testing, I discovered that I...

I discovered that I learn best through two of the three styles. When auditory (listening to instructions) and kinesthetic (show me and let me do) are combined my ability to learn increases. If I am taught in a way that I do not learn, this can lead to frustration in both the person teaching and the student.

My learning disability, created by my brain injury necessitates that I learn through repetition and persistence. I have also discovered that my ability to learn tasks is hampered when sequences of information are presented to me. I am unable to remember those sequences even though they are given...

Even though they are given to me auditorily. As a result, it may appear that I am not paying attention, but I am. I just have a difficult time learning through merely listening. My learning as a result comes at a slower pace. Because I have difficulty learning new sequences of information, I need to have a list of...

A list of the steps in the sequence of information to follow while I learn the task. I also need to have more time to process new information. Through my ongoing process as an individual living with a brain injury, over time I developed other strategies. Other strategies to enhance and help my process of learning.

Your learning style may have changed following your brain injury my friend. Consequently, the manner in which you learn may have changed; resulting in you and those teaching you becoming frustrated.

Please Get Tested

My encouragement to you my friend would be to get tested. Tested to discover how you best learn. Are you a visual learner, an auditory learner or a kinesthetic learner? In the event that you have experienced a traumatic brain injury, the way you learn may have changed for you. As a result, you may be...

You may be attempting to learn in ways that no longer work for you. Consequently, you may need to ask your counselor or caseworker to test your learning style. Knowing how you learn best can maximize your rehabilitation process. Letting other people, who may be trying to teach you, will help both you and them.

Once you have explored and discovered how you now learn best, you can develop strategies. Strategies that will improve and enhance both your current rehabilitation and your long-term recovery process.

Resolution to Succeed — Awareness, Acceptance and Action

Recently, I had a gracious reader of Second Chance to Live leave a comment. The comment generated some thoughts that I would like to share with you. I believe that we are uniquely different, which qualifies us to leave a set of foot prints on the sand of time. As a different and unique individual, I have come to...

I have come to realize that I was never meant to be anyone but myself. My specific set of circumstances, have equipped me to excel and flourish in life. But to excel and flourish in my life, I have needed to become comfortable in my own skin. To be comfortable in my own skin, I have needed to grow in both...

Grow in both self-awareness and self-acceptance. Growing in acceptance helped me to realize that being a unique individual, living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury and an invisible disability, equipped me. Equipped me to do things uniquely and outside the box. I just needed to learn how to excel and...

Excel and flourish outside the box of limitation by accepting what I was powerless to change. Excel and flourish by identifying and developing what I have power over in my life. By developing my gifts, talents and abilities, in ways that work for me, I have been able to stop fighting with and against myself.

Along the way I Discovered

What I discovered through my process, was that I fought against myself by struggling to justify the denial that kept me believing. Kept me striving to prove that I had the power to not be affected by a brain injury. Striving to prove, by trying harder, I could bargain my way out of having my limitations and deficits.

Stop Limiting Myself

Through growing in awareness and acceptance, I was able to stop limiting myself by using my time and energy. By using my time and energy to create hope in my life. Hope by learning how to not be limited by my deficits and limitations by learning to work around those limitations and deficits. In the process...

The hope that I have gained has given me the ability to share that hope with individuals. Individuals, who like myself are living with limitations and deficits because of their brain injuries. To encourage them to create hope in their lives despite having their limitations and deficits resulting from their brain injuries.

Epilogue

With my awareness and acceptance, I came to realize what works for other people does not have to work for me. What works for me, may not and does not have to work for other people. With this awareness, acceptance I have been able to get into action. Action to create hope in my life by using what works.

What works for me, which has given me the ability to get out of the “rat race”. The “rat race” of competing and comparing myself. Comparing myself to what other people are doing that I can’t. By accepting the reality that I don’t have to compete or compare I have become a much happier individual.

In my experience, as I have grown in my awareness, acceptance and taken action I have been able to focus. To focus on what I do best, instead of focusing on my deficits and limitations.

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

**“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.”
Abraham Lincoln**

“Though no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending.” Carl Bard

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets Part 1

During the past 26 or so years I have trained pretty consistently in various martial arts. I have engaged in countless repetitions and drills in muay Thai Kickboxing, Western Boxing, components of Wing Chun, Kali and Jeet Kune Do. During the past 22 months I have trained with endless repetitions in modern arnis.

Endless repetitions using single and double rattan sticks. In each of these martial arts I have worked diligently to mirror both my dominant side of my body with my non dominant side of my body. By doing so, I have developed new motor and fine motor skills. Through my process, I discovered that I had been...

Been engaging in the process of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity by creating new neural pathways and brain reorganization through my repetitive mirrored movements. In the process, I have been creating new neuropathways and brain reorganization through engaging in different martial art disciplines.

As explained in MedicineNet.com, I had been using the principle of concept of neuroplasticity:

“Neuroplasticity allows the neurons (nerve cells) in the brain to compensate for injury and disease and to adjust their activities in response to new situations or to changes in their environment. Brain reorganization takes place by mechanisms such as “axonal sprouting” in which undamaged axons grow new nerve endings to reconnect neurons whose links were injured or severed. Undamaged axons can also sprout nerve endings and connect with other undamaged nerve cells, forming new neural pathways to accomplish a needed function.”

Recently I wrote and published an article, **Living Life on Life’s Terms and Small Successes**, in which I spoke to life as a process and a journey, not a destination. As I embrace life, as a process and a journey I am able to live life on life’s terms. As I live life on life’s terms, I am able to celebrate the progress.

The process that I make through small successes. These small successes have been gained through working on each part of a desired skill. These small successes have been gained through endless repetitions. By breaking the skill down into individual parts, I have been able to enjoy the process.

I have been able to enjoy the process, instead of judging my individual efforts. By working on individual parts of the skill, I have been able to celebrate the small successes (progress). I have been able to celebrate small successes, instead of focusing on the destination, (having the skill), as I combine individual parts...

As I combine individual parts of the skill (small successes) I learn the desired skill. As I combine learned skills, I am able to combine those skills into a series of learned skill sets. As I combine these skill sets, I create new neural pathways. In the process, I participate in the practice of reorganizing my brain.

In the process, I am able to re-learn skills and or learn new skills.

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets Part 2

As I have been able to combine a series of small successes, by becoming proficient in specific drills I have been able. Been able to learn how to execute a series of skill sets in each martial art. These small successes (parts) of my drilling and training, have not only improved my abilities as a martial artist...

But have improved my ability to perform various activities of daily living. My abilities as a martial artist have, given me the ability to apply those developed skills. Developed skills such as body awareness, hand-eye coordination, agility, motor and fine motor skills, muscle memory, speed, precision and focus.

Drilling, training and mirroring of skills and skill sets, on both sides of my body, has improved communication between my right and left hemisphere. Right and left hemisphere of my brain through the corpus callosum. As a result, the affected side of my body from my brain injury slowly improves.

As I engage the unaffected side of my body with the affected side of my body through repetitive mirrored movements the quality of my life has improved. My encouragement to you my friend would be, to start a program. Create a program to use repetitive mirrored movements to relearn or learn new skills.

Learn one new skill and then a skill set through a series of small successes. By doing so you will improve the quality of your life. By doing so you can move beyond a diagnosis or prognosis. By doing so you will move beyond the confines of any "box". The "box" of your limitations and deficits a little at a time.

I share this Information

Applying the principle and concept of neuroplasticity may help to improve the quality of your life. Neuroplasticity can also improve the quality of life of the individuals whom you serve. Through persistence and tenacity those individuals may find, as I have, that they are able to accomplish.

Able to accomplish and learn / relearn skills. Skills and abilities that may have previously seemed out of their reach. Skills and abilities that they may have lost due to a stroke or other cognitive changes. Skills and abilities that may have help to improve the quality of their lives, well-being and relationships.

Exercise:

Whatever you are able to do with your dominant side of your body, start doing. Start mirroring the same movements with your non dominant (or affected) side of your body. Start out slowly, but be persistent in your commitment. Work on one part (drill) of the skill at a time. As you become comfortable with that...

With that particular part of the skill, move onto the next part of the skill. By combining each part of the skill (small successes) you will find that you have learned or relearned a new skill. As you master that skill, begin working on parts of another skill. Combine those parts into learning that skill. As you...

As you continue in that process, you will be able to combine each skill into a skill set. And as I have found, by doing so you will be able to learn or relearn new skills sets. In the process, you will create new neural pathways and brain reorganization through small successes. In the process create hope in your life.

Riddle:

"How do you eat an elephant?", one man said to the other. The man asked, "Tell me the answer". One bite at a time. What you see as an elephant (skill or ability) may seem overwhelming.

My encouragement to you, my friend; as I need to remember too, would be that you work on consuming the elephant, one part at a time. By doing so, your elephant will be reduced (through small successes).

Reduced, consumed and accomplished. In the process, you will have learned or re-learned a skill. So, my encouragement to you is that you keep chewing and don't give up. kept "chewing".

Although I May Be Powerless, I am Not Helpless because of my Brain Injury Part 1

Recently a friend shared a comment in response to an article. An article that I wrote on the topic of feeling like I should be able to...

What was Shared

I can definitely identify with you on this front. I attempted to prove that I was “not” disabled for many. To prove that I was not “defective” and that there was not something “wrong” with me. Something wrong with me and as a result, I felt that I needed to prove to people that I was not powerless over the impact...

Prove to People

Over the impact of my traumatic injury and “if” I just tried harder and “if” I did not do this or that, then I would not be impacted by my brain injury. In my experience, I reached a point in time. A point in time when the pain of denying what I could not change exceeded my need to prove that there was nothing, ...

Wrong or defective with me to avoid being blamed, shamed and criticized for the impact of my brain injury. You see up to that point in time, I bought into the denial and also defended the denial. The denial of how my life had been impacted by my traumatic brain injury. I then strove to defend the denial...

The denial of what I was powerless to change attempt to defend and prove. Deny, defend and prove that there was nothing wrong or defective about or with me. I did so to avoid being shamed, blamed and criticized. But my attempts to defend the denial of the impact of my brain injury only reinforced.

Nothing Wrong

Only reinforced that I needed to strive all the more in my attempts to disprove that there was something defective and wrong with me. Defective and wrong with me, over which I was powerless to change. Powerless to change, but for which I was being shamed, blamed and criticized. Powerless to change...

But left me feeling as though I could do nothing to change being shamed, blamed and criticized. To change why I was shamed, blamed and criticized until I reached a threshold of emotional and spiritual pain and anguish. A threshold of pain and anguish in my life that motivated to examine. Examine why...

Why I was unavoidably being shamed, blamed and criticized. As I examined the common thread, I became ready. I became ready to look more closely at what I had sought to deny and defend for nearly 40 years after my traumatic brain injury. The reality that I was living with the impact of a brain injury.

A Turning Point

After 20 + years of being hired, fired and terminated from jobs (non-professional and professional), 2 State Vocational Rehabilitation experiences, deemed unemployable by the 2nd State Voc Rehab, and after 3 applications for SSDI (the 3rd approved) I could no longer deny/defend my brain injury as a non-issue.

Although I May Be Powerless, I am Not Helpless because of my Brain Injury Part 2

If Nothing Changes

In my experience, I discovered that in order for me to learn to love and accept myself, I need to grieve. I needed to grieve what I sought to deny and defend for many years. To do so I found a strategy to grieve. I needed to move through the 5 stages of grieving, as explained by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book:

On Death and Dying

With my pain and anguish, I confronted my denial and the denial of family and friends. The denial that actively sought to dispel, dismiss and discourage. In my experience, after I confronted my own denial, I became angry at what I was powerless to change. After being angry for a time, I bargained. In the...

In the bargaining stage of my grieving process, I tried once again to disprove the impact of my brain injury. This continued until I found myself fired again, from one job after another. When I realized that none of my efforts changed anything, I became depressed over that which I was powerless to change...

But then I Found Hope

After being depressed over what I could not change, I became willing. Willing to accept what I could not change. And what I found was that by accepting what I could not change, I found hope. Hope, because I realized that I could do something different. Something different despite being powerless to change...

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

To change the impact the traumatic brain injury that occurred many years before. My realization helped me to turn the page to get into action. To turn the page so that I could begin the next chapter of my life. The chapter in which I could see that although I was and am powerless, I am not helpless.

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

"Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement." Golda Meir

“When you dance to your own rhythm people may not understand you; they may even hate you. But mostly they’ll wish they had the courage to do the same.” Sue Fitzmaurice

“Your time is limited so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of other’s opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” Steve Jobs

“Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.” Mark Twain

“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

Living Life on Life's Terms and Small Successes Part 1

In the past several articles, I have spoken to **Is the Medical Model of Treatment Defining and Keeping You in a “Box”? How I Found Freedom from the “Box” and Societal Stigmatization, How are We Teaching People to Treat Us?** and **Getting Comfortable in Our Own Skin Being Outside of the “Box”**. The awareness I gained and shared in these articles came over a period of time and as a result...

As a result of my own pain and discomfort. As I shared in my most recent article, **Getting Comfortable in Our Own Skin Being Outside the Box** I discovered that through grieving the loss. Grieving the loss of how I thought my life should be. In the process, I was empowered see life and my circumstances in a new way. In a way that was meant to prepare me empower me to live and thrive living with a brain injury.

I was also able to begin seeing life as being done for me, instead of being done to me. Pain, once seen as my nemesis, became an ally in my healing process. Instead of seeing myself as a victim, I began to see myself as an empowered being who has choices. Through grieving the way that I thought life should be, I was able to begin to accept the way that life was. The way that life was because by accepting the way...

By accepting that my life was because I was able to start living life on life's terms. By living life on life's terms, I discovered that I could get into action. By learning how to live life on life's term, I discovered that I could see life as a journey, not a destination. By living life on life's terms, I discovered that I could explore beyond the “box” of the way that I thought life should look. By living life on life's terms, I...

I discovered that I could stop fighting against myself. By living life on life's terms, I discovered that I could see my circumstances in a different way. By learning to live life on life's terms I discovered that although there were people in my life who wanted me to remain in the “box”, for various reasons, I could learn how to live and thrive outside of the “box”. The box of my limitations and deficits.

In February 2007, I wrote an article to share what helped me to learn how to live and thrive outside of the “box”. Live and thrive, apart from an “all or none”, “black and white” filter or perception. I would like to share that article with you. The article title is **Small Successes**.

Small Successes

This simple but profound concept alluded me for a large part of my life. You see, I thought that perfection was the benchmark of success. The demand of perfection clouded my eyes and I was unable to celebrate the progress I was making in my pursuits. Perfectionism kept raising the bar of expectation. The fear of failure coupled with a pervasive sense of shame seemed to be my constant companion.

My constant companion, dissuading and discouraging me from trying new projects, activities or goals. I found myself stuck in an abyss of fear and anxiety. The fear of failure was fueled by my fear of being shamed, blamed and criticized for not getting “it” right. Perfection crippled my desire to try new things.

Living Life on Life's Terms and Small Successes Part 2

In my attempt to silence the voice of shame and inadequacy, I found myself tenaciously pursuing the illusion of perfection. As I continued to overcompensate, I found myself in a dilemma. Because the good that I did rarely seemed to be good enough, I found myself in an endless cycle of striving to be more and do more. As I began to realize the futility of my efforts to do enough to be enough, the clouds that once...

The clouds that once kept me under a yoke of oppression began to "part" and my spiritual eyes were opened.

Freedom from a Faulty Belief System

Through my pursuit to be free from this faulty belief system, I had spiritual awakenings. I began to realize that life is a process, not to be defined by outcomes. I also discovered that when I attempt to define my life by potential outcomes, I set myself. I set myself up to be irritable, restless and discontent. In my process of growth, I have discovered that I could be satisfied with small successes brought about by...

By doing the footwork that I set forth in all my endeavors. I have also discovered that it is in my best interest to trust the God of my understanding with any and all outcomes. With my belief system changing, I find the freedom from having to overcompensate in order to prove my worth and value.

I am continuing to realize my efforts are good enough. As I trust God with the outcomes, I am able to enjoy the footwork. I now find myself encouraging people I meet along the path of life with this statement, "Take one step at a time, keep going at what you are doing and before long you will look back and see how far you have come". This philosophy has and continues to inspire me to enjoy the process of living.

Incorporating this philosophy into my process and journey helps me to not judge my efforts.

Pieces of the Puzzle of Social Conditioning

As each person grows and develops, they learn patterns. These patterns for living and relating help the individual to interpret and adjust to their specific environment. In environments where unresolved conflicts persist, these learned patterns can have a debilitating affect. Additionally, the person often integrates the patterns that are accepted as norms early in life, as they age. These patterns may consequently set the individual up to be used, manipulated and controlled by other people later in life.

In families where the threat of emotional abandonment is covertly used to both control and temper its members, a trigger pattern is set. With repeated reinforcement the individual becomes conditioned to a specific response. When compliance becomes the expectation, shame can be used to manipulate the individual. Such subtle conditioning often occurs gradually over a period of time. The individual slowly begins to unconsciously connect associating with people to painful outcomes. Consequently, the...

The individual may consciously believe that apart from maintaining rigid control and compliance to those expectations, they will experience some type of emotional duress. Until pieces of the puzzle started coming together, I found myself baffled in my attempt to understand and anticipate what was expected of me. In my experience this produced both stress and anxiety, because I was afraid of being rejected and minimized. Over time, I have come to recognize the debilitating impact produced by this type of...

By this type of conditioning that gradually depletes the individual and drains them of any ambition to explore and use their unique creative expression. Moreover, when individuals seek to integrate socially, similar contingencies can be seen deployed. If the individual does not comply with the group's covert or overt expectations, the previously set trigger is tripped. The individual, again, is led to believe that they must discard parts of themselves. Discard parts of themselves in order to embrace what is expected of ...

If the individual is expected to discard parts of themselves to comply, the group is probably not healthy. In the event that such expectations are used to control and manipulate the individual, the group may be toxic. The leaders of the group, as well as the members of the group may collectively be acting out toxic patterns in relating to other people. When I recognize that rigid control and overt/covert compliance is being used to herd the members of a group I cease to be a part of that group. I am all too familiar with...

I am all too familiar with this type of social interaction. Today, I am very aware and choose to disengage. Disengage from individuals and groups that are using such behavior to control and manipulate. I choose to practice live and let live detach myself. Practice live and let live instead of trying to change the group. I realize that such individuals and groups are not good for me. Does not make them bad individuals or groups, just not good for me. Recognizing these dynamics help me to avoid slippery and dangerous slopes.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Overcoming through Learning Curves

Yesterday I started a new chapter in my journey with Second Chance to Live. I created and published my first video on YouTube. This was on July 29, 2011. To view my 1st You Tube video presentation, click [HERE](#) I have since created **451 video presentations**. Click [Playlist](#), if interested. Through my recovery process I have learned a life changing lesson: With everything there is a learning curve.

In my experience, I have learned that life is about a process, not a destination. What I learn on my journey is more important than any destination. Consequently, as I allow myself to progress through my “learning curves” I give myself the permission. Give myself the permission to celebrate because of my process. Celebrate instead of judging my efforts because I am not moving more quickly through my process.

In the process of making my 1st YouTube Video, I took approximately 7 “takes” before I decided to upload the one, I did to YouTube. Although, at the time, I realized that the 7th “takes” to be uploaded to YouTube was not perfect, I was satisfied that the “take” was good enough. With my realization and though remembering the lesson of “learning curves” I accepted the reality that, with time, I will...

I will undoubtedly grow in my ability to produce better videos for the Second Chance to Live You Tube channel. And so, I have during the past 12 years since that 1st video presentation uploaded to You Tube.

The Lesson

By celebrating the lesson of the “learning curve”, I am able to celebrate the gains that I make. Gains that I make in my process instead of fighting against myself. By celebrating the gains that I make through my learning curves, I am able to stop comparing my process and journey to the journeys of my peers.

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

Today’s Thought

My friend, I would encourage you to start on a new chapter of your journey, today. And as you start of that journey remember, you don’t have to do “it” perfectly. Instead, you can use the principle of the “learning curve”. By doing so you can give yourself the permission to explore, grow and mature in your process. By doing so, you can celebrate your gains. By doing so, you can stop judging your efforts.

By doing so, you can stop fighting against yourself. By doing so, you can stop comparing yourself.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Relationships

Today is December 24 — Christmas eve. First let me say, Merry Christmas to you and your family. Over the past several days I have been experiencing some sadness. My sadness has been because I would like somethings to be different than they are in a few of my relationships.

“If you do not like something, change it, if you cannot change it, change the way you think about it.” Mary Engelbreit

After years of struggling in my attempt (s) to change these individuals’ point of view; concerning how my tbi has impacts my life and my relationships, I am learning to let go. Although I would like to change people’s perceptions concerning how my traumatic brain injury impacts my relationships, I realize...

I realize that such an awareness may never occur. Therefore, acceptance of this reality will give me peace.

“When you are in a state of non-acceptance, it is difficult to learn. A clenched fist cannot receive a gift, and a clenched psyche — grasped tightly against the reality of what must not be accepted — cannot easily receive a lesson.” Roger John

Through my process, I am coming to accept a reality, **it is as it is**. With my growing acceptance I realize that I too have choices. Consequently, I am choosing to change my perspective. By doing so I validate my reality while learning to let go. Let go of my sadness and disappointment. By doing so I am learning...

Learning to practice live and let live, when people are unable to accept me in my reality. By doing so I am able to move forward with my life. By doing so I am able to learn the next lesson. The next lesson that is not dependent upon whether people in my life choose to minimize or marginalize my reality.

Today’s thought

A friend of mine reminds me when I look to specific people; to give me what they do not have to give, I set myself up to be hurt and disappointed. My friend also reminds me that when I look to people to give to me what they do not possess I am essentially going to a hardware store. Going to a hardware store...

looking to find bread, when they do not have or sell bread.

As a traumatic brain injury survivor, you may want to have better relationships with specific people. However, their lack of acceptance gets in the way of that from occurring. As a result, you may find yourself both sad and disappointed. Although those relationships may never go back to the way they...

We can live in peace with ourselves.

We can live in peace because we own our reality.

We can be at peace with ourselves because we can let go.

The way they were before our tbi, we can have peace.

We can live in peace because we know that we are doing our best.

We can be at peace because we no longer need to live in denial.

EEG's, Neuro Psychological Evaluations and Brain Injury Recovery Outcomes

For your information, the blue links with in this article are links to previous articles that I have written. The articles will give further insight into what I discuss in the below article. Click on the blue links to open and read the article. Any questions, please ask.

Over the weekend I engaged myself in a discussion that opened a door that I had kept closed. As the door opened, I realized that I needed to further engage myself in the discussion. As with each article that I write and publish on Second Chance to Live, my motivation is to share my experience, strength and hope.

To share from a lived experience, and in the process identify with individuals living with brain injuries. I believe that identification empowers each individual to come out of shadows of isolation. Come out of the shadows of isolation by realizing that they are not alone. Not alone in the struggle to understand.

Understand and live their lives as an individual who experienced an injury to their brain.

A question was sent to me asking about the experience of individuals surrounding neuropsychological evaluations. In **1968** I underwent **2 EEG's** and a neuropsychological exam. The results were shared with my parents, who decided not disclose the results with me. Some **29 years** later I found out the results.

My Mom shared with me that the results from the 2 EEG's and the neuropsychological evaluation showed, that I would probably not be able to succeed beyond high school academically. In **1993** I underwent another **EEG** and a **neuropsychological evaluation** in Florida through the Dept. of Voc Rehab.

The results showed that I had succeed far beyond all reasonable expectations through sheer persistence and motivation. After my 2nd evaluation process with the Florida Dept. of Voc Rehab the determination was made that I was unemployable. For those individuals who are not familiar with my process...

With my process and journey, I obtained my undergraduate degree in 10 years and my graduate degree in 3 1/2 years. I have a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Kentucky.

In preparation for a keynote presentation that I gave to the Southwest Conference on Disability in 2013, I wrote an article. I wrote this article to share some back ground information with individuals attending the presentation. I wrote this article to give people background information being that I would only...

Only have 25 – 30 minutes to share my keynote presentation. In this article, I shared what I experienced since the **1st 2 EEG's**, a neuropsychological evaluation, through my **3rd EEG**, **2nd** neuropsychological evaluation. I would invite you to read the article that I wrote in preparation by clicking on this: [Article](#).

The reason why I share the above information with you is encourage you to live your life to the full. Live your life to the full regardless of what the results/findings may show from an EEG (s) or a neuropsychological evaluation (s). Tests that you may undergo as a result of your traumatic brain injury.

Lessons Learned from my undergoing 3 EEG's and 2 Neuropsychological Evaluations

An EEG (s) and a neuropsychological exam (s) can give us insight into how our brain and personality have been affected by your brain injury. But realize they do not have to define who we are my friend. We can live outside and beyond of the **box** that an EEG (s), neuropsychological evaluation (s) and reports may communicate to us. We can succeed far beyond all reasonable expectations, through sheer persistence and motivation. We can do so by not giving up on our process, a loving God or ourselves. Move will be revealed to you and to me in time. We can learn to use our passions, through our gifts, talents and abilities, in ways that will work for us. Work us for people who want what we have to give. Consequently, my friend: We can run our own race, at our own pace. We can celebrate our efforts. We can map our own course, and be ourselves. We can live in hope and we can live our dreams.

Achieving My Brown Belt in International Martial Arts and Boxing after my Brain Injury Part 1

For many years of my life, I felt confused by what I could not put my finger upon. Confused because of what I experienced — frustration, disappointment and discouragement. I believe that my confusion gained clarity and my frustration, disappointment and discouragement took on new meaning. Took on new meaning through training towards becoming a black belt – a little at a time, one day at a time.

Scroll down to the bottom of this article to read about the requirements to qualify to test for the black belt.

My Sensei's, instructor's original instructor was Bruce Lee. Bruce Lee founded a martial art style that he called Jeet Kune Do (JKD) in 1967. The principles Bruce Lee taught my Sensei instructor ([Sigung Richard Bustillo](#)) were passed to my Sensei. My Sensei, in turn, shared those lessons with his students. I was and am very fortunate to have gained wisdom from Bruce Lee through my Sensei.

The lessons that I learned from Bruce Lee; through my Sensei, helped me to make sense. Make sense of what I had a hard time making sense of, understanding and accepting for many years of my life.

The Process and Journey... is More Important Than the Destination

The lessons I learned on my journey of mastering the basics helped me to see life in a new way. In a way that I base much of my ongoing martial arts development and my ongoing brain injury recovery process. What I am referring to is the principle of and behind Jeet Kune Do. Bruce Lee's philosophy surrounding Jeet Kune Do (JKD) involved fluidity of movement. Discovering what works, what does not work...

What works and what does not work and then creating our own style. Our own style, be it in our martial arts development or in our ongoing brain injury recovery development.

The Art of Jeet Kune Do — Bruce Lee

"I have not invented a "new style," composite, modified or otherwise that is set within distinct form as apart from "this" method or "that" method. On the contrary, I hope to free my followers from clinging to styles, patterns, or molds. Remember that Jeet Kune Do is merely a name used, a mirror in which to see "ourselves" . . . Jeet Kune Do is not an organized institution that one can be a member of, you understand or you don't, and that is that. There is no mystery about my style.

My movements are simple, direct and non-classical. The extraordinary part of it lies in its simplicity. Every movement in Jeet Kune Do is being so of itself. There is nothing artificial about it. I always believe that the easy way is the right way. Jeet Kune Do is simply the direct expression of one's feelings with the minimum... With a minimum of movements and energy. The closer to the true way of Kung Fu,

the less wastage of expression there is. Finally, a Jeet Kune Do man who says Jeet Kune Do is exclusively Jeet Kune Do is simply not with it. He is still hung up on his self-closing resistance, in this case anchored down to reactionary pattern, and naturally is still bound by another modified pattern and can move within its limits. He has not digested the simple fact that truth exists outside all molds; pattern and awareness is never exclusive. Again, let me remind you Jeet Kune Do is just a name used, a boat to get one across, and once across it is to be discarded and not to be carried on one's back."

Achieving My Brown Belt in International Martial Arts and Boxing after my Brain Injury Part 2

What helped me

What Bruce Lee's JKD philosophy helped me to recognize is that what had occurred over much of my life prepared me. Prepared me to be effective in what I am doing today. By drawing from and upon my experiences, circumstances, lessons and opportunities I have been able to discover. Been able to discover what works best for me. In the process of discovering what works best for me, I have been given the freedom to stop judging myself for what does not work for me. I have been able to adapt and adjust.

“All fixed set patterns are incapable of adaptability or pliability. The truth is outside of all fixed patterns.” Bruce Lee

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

Following Our Own Path and Running our Own Race

The principles that Bruce Lee taught inspires me to celebrate my process and to focus on what is useful. What is useful as I look to creatively express myself in every area of my life. The principle of absorbing what is useful and adding what is specifically my own has encouraged me to follow my own path. To follow my own path and progress in my own capabilities. In the process, I find my own way. In the process, I know myself, bend with adversity and use economy of motion. Economy of motion...

Economy of motion in ways that work for me. In the process, I stay open to learn and adapt. In the process, I do not give up on myself. I let go of what does not work for me and adapt what does work.

“Freedom lies in understanding yourself from moment to moment.” Bruce Lee

“Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man. But sooner or later to the man who thinks he can win.” Bruce Lee

“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times. Bruce Lee

“Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it.” Bruce Lee

No Guarantees

Per your information I will include below requirements that we had to accomplish the day of the progress check on November 8 from 9 am – 5 pm. To accomplish and pass to quality to be able to be able to participate in the 10 month long black belt cycle. The 10-month long Black Belt Cycle Progress Period, to qualify the student to enter the 2-day Probationary Black Belt test.

Achieving My Brown Belt in International Martial Arts and Boxing after my Brain Injury Part 3

Engaging in the 10-month long cycle would not guarantee your being able to test for your probationary black belt. The black belt test at the end of the 10-month cycle testing would last for 2 days. Going through the 10-month long cycle process and the 2-day test was no guarantee. Completing the 10-month Black Belt Progress Cycle only qualified the student to enter the 2-day test to obtain the Probationary...

Probationary Black Belt. Engaging in the 2-day test, at the end of the 10-month long progress test did not guarantee achieving the probationary Black Belt.

I passed the 6 1/2-hour Black Belt Cycle Qualifying Progress Check, But...

I passed the 6 1/2-hour Black Belt Cycle Qualifying Progress Check (see below what was required). After qualifying, I began the 10 month long black belt cycle. Two months into the 10-month long cycle I tore the anterior hood of the lateral meniscus and the medical meniscus of my right knee. As a result, I had to drop out of the 10 month long black belt cycle test. For more information on what I learned...

Learned through having to withdraw and drop out from the goal of obtaining my black belt, click on this article: **When Circumstances change Our Plans and Dreams** link:

[When Circumstances change Our Plans and Dreams](#)

Black Belt Cycle Qualifying Progress Check — November 8, 2008, Saturday

Two months, before this qualifying progress check test I was discharged from a local hospital. I had been in the hospital for 16 days before discharge because of Orbital Cellulitis.

The Qualifying Progress Check Required

The test began at Freedom Park at 9 am. This is how the test evolved. We had to first run three laps around the park, lake -- 2 miles. The next phase of the test was to do 500 jumping jacks and then run 3 more laps around the park lake -- 2 more miles. After running the 2 miles, another 500 jumping jacks all within 30 minutes. The next phase involved 4 different stations, to rotate through with 5 minutes at each station. One station was to do 100 pushups in five minutes, the next station was to do wind sprints, 75 feet over and over again every 30 seconds for 5 minutes. The next station was to do 500 crunches in 5 minutes. The final station involved doing 10 froggy jumps followed by 5 push-ups, over and over again for 5 minutes. The 1st phase of the progress test lasted 1 hr. and 40 minutes.

When we completed this part of the test we drove back to the martial arts school. When we got there, we got dressed in our Gi's, martial arts gear, and then the 2nd phase of the progress check began. The 2nd phase lasted for 2 hours. During the 2nd phase, we did a tremendous amount of jump roping, demonstrating various types of punches, kicks combinations, Kata's (forms) and grappling skills. Grappling skills such as, chokes, armbars, and other skills. We then did focus mitt drills, with a teammate, jabs and crosses for 10 minutes each, with a teammate doing punches (jabs and crosses) at various speeds and degrees of power in our punches. Following the jab and cross drills on the focus mitts, we switched to doing alternating hook punches on the focus pads. Each teammate, doing these punches at various speeds and degrees of power in our punches. We then had to do 250 hard round kicks on a heavy bag.

Achieving My Brown Belt in International Martial Arts and Boxing after my Brain Injury Part 4

Once we were done with this gauntlet of physical activity Sensei dismissed us for our lunch break which lasted from 1-2:30 pm. After speaking with a marathoner at a local running shoe company on Friday concerning what would be good to have for lunch the day of the test, I brought a few protein bars. A MOJO bar and a Cliff Bar Friday afternoon at Wal-Mart. I had these 2 bars with 2 Propel vitamin drinks.

At 2:30 we began the 3rd phase of the project test. The 3rd phase consisted of 80 minutes of grappling, each lasting for 3-minute rounds. With the end of the 3-minute round, we grappled with another student. In total we grappled with about 15 or so different students and instructors. Right after grappling ended Sensei had us pad-up to begin the next activity. Put protective pads on to start free sparring.

Free sparring lasted for 60 minutes with 3-minute rounds. 3-minute rounds with about 15 different students and instructors. At the end of sparring Sensei gave us our last assignment to be done with a 3-man team. The assignment consisted of 2 rounds. Each round consisted of each member doing 100 gut busters with the second team member pushing the legs of the first team member to the ground and counting

to 100. The 3rd team member held a left leg side kick out above the ground until the person doing gut busters completed their 100 gut busters. Once each person had done their 1st 100 gut busters, we repeated the process with the 3rd member of the team holding their right leg side kick above the ground. The team rotated through once and then repeated the cycle as the one team member held their right leg side kick out until the 1st team member completed their second set of 100 gut busters. When our team completed the 2nd rotation of gut busters our test was over. We ended a little after 5 pm.

We waited for 3 weeks to find out whether we passed the Black Belt Cycle Progress Check. After meeting with Sensei, I was told that I passed and would be granted permission to begin the 10-month long Black Belt Cycle. I was thrilled to find out that I had passed the test.

When I Find Myself Practicing Old and Limiting Behaviors

Yesterday I finished and published an article: **Brain injury and Learning How to Connect with Ourselves and Other People**. In that article I shared with you that I had been struggling with on my journey. This has been going on for the past several weeks. Last night I was able to speak with my mentor.

Speak with my mentor and in the process, I gained some clarity.

Late last night and early this morning I did a lot of journaling, reflecting and reading. In the process I gained further clarity as to what and why I had been struggling with what I spoke about in yesterday's article. As I encouraged you to read, I re-read the articles as provided in the next article in this eBook.

What dawned on me was that my struggle entangled me in an old and limiting behavior. Old and limiting behavior that ensnared me in fear. The clarity helped me to realize that I had been unconsciously comparing myself with and to other people. I had been doing so in my attempt to connect with other...

Connect with other people so that I would not feel isolated. In the process I internalized what I perceived what other people thought about me. In the process, I experienced what I sought to avoid, feelings of isolation. In my feelings of isolation, I lost sight of my reality. I lost sight of the reality that I am a...

I am a unique individual who is called to live my destiny, not the destiny of anyone else. I lost sight of the reality that I am enough by being who I am, not by being who other people may think. Who and what other people may think that I should or should not be in this life. I lost sight of the reality that my...

The reality of my mission and vision, which calls me to do. Which calls me to be of service, not to seek to gain the approval of other people. Which calls me to remember that I need to run my own race.

Today's thought

When I find myself practicing old and limiting behaviors. I give my power away to other people. I trade my judgment for the judgment of other people. I practice behaviors that lead me to believe that I do not have choices. I forget to remember that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself.

I forget to realize that I have opportunities to learn from my circumstances. I forget to remember that I am not stuck. I forget to remember that God is my source, not people. I forget to remember that I am to be led by peace, not by fear. I forget to remember to stay in today and to not project into the future.

With my awareness, I need to remember that I have choices. Choices that remind me that I am not limited. Choices that remind me that I am in the care of a loving God. Choices that encourage me to remember to stay in the day. Choices that remind me to be led by peace, not by fear. Choice that helps me to...

To remember that I choose to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

Brain injury and Learning How to Connect with Ourselves and Other People Part 1

After our brain injuries, we may have a difficult time connecting with ourselves and with other people. As a result, we may find ourselves isolating from both ourselves and other people.

Several days ago, a reader sent me a comment with several questions. I thought about those questions and answered this individual. The answers to the questions that helped me to sort through something. Something that I have been struggling with of late. What I shared with this individual was that I have...

I have found that there are no silver bullet, magic potions or easy answers. Easy answers to the dilemma that we experience in learning how to connect with ourselves and other people. That we all, many times, experience as individuals living with traumatic or acquired brain injuries. I then shared that I found that...

Found that there is **HOPE**. I shared that in my quest to find answers I grew in my awareness. And as my awareness grew, so did my ability to connect with both myself and people.

In My Quest to Connect

In my quest to grow in awareness, I examined what was working and what was not working for me. I then examine what was getting in the way of what was not working for me and why? Several years ago, I wrote articles and published those articles on Second Chance to Live. I wrote these articles to share...

To share what I discovered that helped me come out of isolation. Come out of isolation to be able to begin to connect with myself and other people. Connect with both myself, and with other people in ways that would work for me. I would like to share what I discovered with you through a series of articles...

A series of article that I wrote and published on Second Chance to Live. What I discovered helped me to grow. Grow in self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-worth and self-value. Because of the length of some of the articles, I have divided the articles into parts. Each part of the article has a link...

Articles that Helped me Learn to Connect

A link to the next part of the article at the bottom of each article part. If you have any difficulty opening each part of the article, please let me know. Let me know and I help you. As you read through each article part, I believe that you will be able to identify with me, my friend. The awareness' that I share with in...

With in these articles have helped me to realize that although I am powerless. Powerless over how people chose to interact with me, I am not helpless. I can choose to reach out to and connect with the people who care about me. Who care about me, want what I have to give, and want to connect with me.

With the understanding gained through what I share in the below articles, I have been. I have been able to practice the principle of live and let live with the individuals who do not want to have a connection with me. I also need to remember that whether people choose to connect with me, is not all about me.

Their choice to not connect with me may be because of their lack of awareness and acceptance.

Brain injury and Learning How to Connect with Ourselves and Other People Part 2

May the information in these articles benefit you. Benefit as you learn to connect with yourselves and with other people. Connect with yourself and other people after your brain injury.

The Article Links

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

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Having a Disability and Learning New Skills — Part 1

Over the weekend I decided to purchase my first deluxe food processor. Per my experience, over the years I have used smaller vegetable choppers to make preparations to cook the meals that I enjoy. These smaller vegetable choppers were adequate at the time; however, I grew weary of having to use these...

To use these choppers 2-3 times each time I wanted to cook a big meal. By the way, I cook large portions so that I have left overs to eat throughout the week so that I do not have to stop to make meals. Consequently, I am able to devote more of my time to working on Second Chance to Live.

Well, after 2 hard workouts at the martial arts school (cardio fitness training and then grappling), I decided to do some grocery shopping at one store. I and then purchase my deluxe food processor at another store. As you might imagine, after my two hard workouts and my shopping I was tired. Nevertheless, I wanted...

I wanted to use my new food processor when I got home to do some cooking. After lugging my groceries, a large martial arts bag and the food processor up the stairs and into my apartment I was excited to cook. Cook my lunch using my new food processor. Once I opened the box containing the food processor...

Opened the box and began examining the contents I saw all the assorted parts. The parts that came with the food processor. I then attempted to figure out how to use the processor. In the process, I started to feel anxious and frustrated. And then I remembered something that I had forgotten in my anxiety.

Through my recovery process, I remembered that when I am hungry, angry, tired or fatigued I am more susceptible. More susceptible to becoming anxious and frustrated. With my awareness I made the decision to place the food processor, with the assorted parts, back into the box, and wait.

When I noticed that my level of frustration was increasing, I made a conscious decision. A conscious decision to use my smaller vegetable chopper to prepare my meal. I realized that I needed to wait until another day to use my new food processor. Another day to figure out how to use my new food processor.

Once I was able to relax, while I cooked, I made another conscious decision. I decided to read the food processor's manual/instructions over the next several days. I decided to take this step, in order to slowly absorb the material, in small doses. Consequently, I made the process of learning how to use and...

Learning how to use and operated my new food processor into manageable parts. By making this decision I was able to learn and discover how to use the new food processor at my own rate and pace. Instead of putting pressure on myself. I decided to enjoy the process of learning this new skill.

Having a Disability and Learning New Skills — Part 2

You may say to yourself, “What’s the big deal, it is just a food processor?” As a traumatic brain injury survivor who has a learning disability, I have discovered how I best learn. How I best learn, absorb and grasp new information. By slowly absorbing the information I am able to apply the material at my own...

At my own rate and pace. Through my awareness I have been able to learn new skills. New skills, such as how to use the food processor, while at the same time minimizing. Minimizing the amount of anxiety and frustration that comes with the learning of new skills. Subsequently, I have come to accept that...

That when I am presented with new information, rather than being demanding of myself I need step back and breath. Through being gentle rather than demanding of myself, I empower my ability to learn the new skill. Also, by accepting that I am susceptible to anxiety and frustration, when hungry, angry, tired...

When hungry, angry, tired or fatigued I am able to make better choices. Consequently, I know that I need to take care of those needs, before I attempt to learn a new skill. Therefore, instead of continuing to be frustrated with myself and the skill I am attempting to learn I take care of first things first.

Today’s Thought

As a person with an invisible disability, I needed to teach myself how to compensate. How to compensate for my difficulty processing and learning new information and sequences. As a recovering perfectionist; out of the fear of being shamed, abandoned and rejected, I had to learn how to lighten up on myself.

With time, I have conditioned myself to remember that with everything, there is a learning curve. I have also learned, through my process, that I need to be gentle with myself as I learn. I need to also celebrate the progress that I make while I learn. Although I may be anxious and frustrated when presented with...

When presented with new information, thank God, I no longer have to be paralyzed by my anxiety and frustration. I can instead decide to learn at my own pace, while accepting that I get anxious and afraid.

My Encouragement to You

As a person with or without a disability, learning and remembering new information may overwhelm you. My encouragement to you would be to make your learning process manageable. Your learning style and disability may be different from mine. What works for me may not work for you, and that is fine.

You can have the freedom to find out how you learn best. Ask your counselor to have you tested to see how you learn, now. How you learn may have changed after your brain injury or how you became disabled. My encouragement to you, as I need to encourage myself is to be gentle with yourself as you...

Gentle with yourself as you learn. Take small steps, if needed so to say, and then celebrate. Celebrate the progress you are making at your own rate and pace. And don’t compare yourself to anyone. Run your own race and stay in your own lane. Take the learning process one day at a time and you will win!

“If we take the first step in our learning process, and decide to keep walking, before long we will be able to look back and see how far we have come in our learning process because we did not give up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

How are you Framing your Life?

Through my experience I have come to value how I choose to “frame” my experience. What I mean by “frame” has to do with the way that I choose to perceive and define my experience. My experience has taught me that when I frame or assign negativity, defeat or a belief of victimization to my circumstances I internalize a sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

Consequently, I have found that what happens to me is not as important as what I do with what has been given to me.

On the other hand, when I frame or assign a position of empowerment to each of my circumstances regardless of how they may look, I am emboldened to believe. Emboldened to believe that my circumstances are designed to work together for my good. When I choose to see that my circumstances are designed to work together for my good, my process takes on a different meaning.

A feeling of hopelessness and helplessness is replaced by encouragement, motivation and empowerment because I am free to trust the process, a loving God and myself.

In the process, I become solution focused, instead of focusing on what I may not understand or value at the present time. Value at the present time, because I know that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down, but they are meant to build me up!

Traumatic Brain Injury and Letting Go of Control

For the past several days I have been experiencing some unrest. In my unrest I found myself becoming anxious and fearful. In my state of mind, I opened the door to feeling less than, inadequate and unlovable. As the door stayed open, I allowed the recipe of fear and doubt to delude me. Delude me into believing that my good was simply not good enough. That I had to do more, to be more, to be enough.

You see I allowed myself to slip back into believing that because I was not experiencing specific outcomes there was something wrong with me. Like a knee jerk reaction from of old, I experienced debilitating shame. Shame for not being “good” enough. In my attempt to invalidate my sense shame; that who I am and what I do is enough, I found myself comparing myself to other people.

In my comparing myself to what I thought I should be I found myself experiencing a series of reactions. None of these reactions provided a reprieve or alleviated my sense of inadequacy. Instead, these reactions perpetuated the notion that I needed to answer, defend, and explain who I am to my sense of shame. Because I felt inadequate, I experienced some jealousy toward some of my peers, who I perceive are...

Who I perceive are receiving more opportunities than I am in life. I then experienced some frustration because I felt powerless. In my powerlessness I bought into the notion that I needed to do more to be more in order to be given more. In my delusion I lost sight of my being. As I lost sight of my being, I found myself becoming competitive in an attempt to overcompensate for my insecurities.

When I realized that I had lathered myself into a frenzy of anxiety, I made a wise decision. I decided to call a trusted friend. I realized that I needed to find a solution. From past experiences, I knew that I did not have to be alone in my struggle. During our conversation my friend helped me to see that my unrest stemmed from self-centered fear. You see, my self-centered fear was connected to specific outcomes.

My self-will frustrated me because I was not getting what I expected and wanted in the time frame that I expected and wanted. In the process, I let pride enter into expectations, while I unconsciously eased God out of the process. EGO – Easing God Out. Not a good decision. When I eased God out of my process, I adopted the notion that I alone was responsible to and for whether I could achieve specific outcomes.

I could achieve things in a prescribed amount of time. In the process I found myself needing to defend, answer and explain my worth to my insecurities, pride, EGO. I felt as though because I was unable to meet these specific outcomes that there was something wrong with me. Because I was unable to achieve those specific outcomes my self-centered fear continued to deluded me to think I was and am not enough.

In the process I became anxious because I was unable to achieve specific outcomes. You see, my self-centered fear was connected to my self-will. Consequently, my self-will perpetuated my fear and anxiety because I had connected my worth and value to those specific outcomes.

As my friend and I spoke I regained my spiritual bearings. In the process, I recalled my truth. I don't have to be more than I am. I am enough. I can let go of outcomes. I can let go of the timing. My footwork is enough and I don't have to be more than. I don't have to force solutions. I can surrender my process to a power greater than myself. I can let things happen at the right time. I can trust the process...

I can trust the process, a loving God and my ability to learn. I can make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of the God of my understanding. I don't have to strive to make anything happen. I don't have to rely on my own understanding. I don't have to produce to be enough. I don't have to compete to be enough. Instead, I can relax and run in my own race. I don't have to be critical of my...

Critical of my process. I don't have to judge my efforts. I don't have to compare myself to anyone. I don't have to be controlled by self-centered fear. Instead, I am free to trust the process because I know that more will be revealed. I can let go of control. I am free to be in the moment. I am free to trust.

Hope, Encouragement and the Parable of the Cracked Pot Part 1

Earlier this evening I felt led to share the parable of the cracked pot with a group of my friends. The message of the cracked pot appeared to have a profound impact on several of my friends. I am not sure who is the author of the parable of the cracked pot, however to the author I would like to say thank you.

You are a very wise person. Because the message of the parable is so very powerful, I decided to share the parable of the Cracked Pot with you. May you be encouraged too just be ...be yourself.

The Parable of the Cracked Pot

A Water Bearer in India had two large pots; each hung on each end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pot's full of water in his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water-bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts." The pot said.

The Water Bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion, he said, "As we return to the masters house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the Pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Today's Thought

We may have bought into the notion that our lives are too are cracked to be of use. We may find ourselves comparing our vessels to other vessels. We may be experiencing shame and sadness because we see ourselves as failures. In the process we may have developed a fear of failure. Consequently, we may be thinking about giving up.

We may want to give up trying to make a difference. We may be saying to ourselves, "What's the use in me trying anyway and anymore?". To that I would say, please continue to read.

Hope, Encouragement and the Parable of the Cracked Pot Part 2

Because of You and I

With out you and I being just the way we are, hope would remain only a concept. With out you and I being the way we are, to some, hope would be lost. Because of who you and I are, vision (s) becomes reality to some. Because of you and I, some people's prayers are being answered.

Because of you and I, people are being set free. Because of you and I people are blooming and blossoming into creation. Because you and I, those individuals will ultimately feed the masses. Because of you and I, people believe in miracles. Because of you and I, destinies are being birthed and dreams realized.

Because of you and I, people have an advocate. Because of you and I, people choose to get up, one more time. Because of you and I, people learn to trust, again. Because of you and I, people learn to love and be loved, again. Because of you and I, people are inspired to pursue new opportunities.

Because of you and I, people are seeing new possibilities. Because of you and I, people take risks. Because of you and I, people are be drawn to the light of God's love.

Be encouraged – You are much more that a Cracked Pot!

So, when you remember or someone else reminds you of your crack (s) in your pot be encouraged my friend. Rejoice that cracks exist in your pot. Without there being cracks in your pot, flowers would not be watered and people's lives would not be enriched. Without you being you, they may not see light.

Light at the end of their "proverbial tunnels". So, PLEASE REMEMBER, "You are a Gift to your world."

Freedom, Courage and the Flight of the Butterfly — Revisited — Part 1

Several years ago, I wrote an article that was widely read at the time. Over the past several days I have felt impressed to revisit that article. I will revisit that article below and add to its original content.

Isn't it great to be alive today! Springtime is in the air. The days are lengthening and the temperature is rising. With spring, comes the rebirth of life itself. New generations of creatures will greet the morning sun. I too, find myself longing to greet the morning sun and be warmed. As a young man, I enjoyed this...

Enjoyed this time of the year. I remember finding delight as I watched each butterfly monarch, swallow tail, whites, sulfers and skippers. Watched them as they hovered and fluttered above the cornstalks in the fields behind our home. In the process of watching the butterflies I noticed how effortlessly their wings...

How effortlessly their wings allowed them to move from one flower to another flower. During elementary school I remember learning about the stages in the butterflies' development. First the egg is laid, that later becomes a larva, which then develops into a caterpillar. As a pupa, the caterpillar attaches itself...

Attaches itself to a leaf and proceeds to spin a cocoon around its body. From within that cocoon the caterpillar develops into a form that becomes the butterfly. But that was not the end of the story. Years later; after I began my recovery process, the final stage in the butterfly's development took on a whole...

Took on a whole new meaning. What was once seen as a biology lesson, became a life changing awareness. The natural had become supernatural, as my eyes were opened to a life changing metaphor. Once fully formed in the cocoon, the butterfly is faced with a struggle and a challenge to move beyond...

Beyond the confines of the cocoon. To the observer, the butterfly's struggle to break free from the confines of the cocoon may seem unfair. Consequently, the observer may find themselves saying, "Why must the butterfly struggle so? Why not have an easier or softer way for the butterfly to escape the cocoon?"

The butterfly's predicament just does not seem fair. To break free from the cocoon the butterfly needs to undergo a struggle. To fly the butterfly has to free itself from the confines of the cocoon. To free itself from the cocoon the butterfly has to expand its wings. To find freedom the butterfly needs to expand...

To expand its wings with enough force to break through the walls of the cocoon. To be able to fly, the butterfly has to undergo a process of struggle. The struggle to both break free from the confines of the cocoon and to strengthen its wings. And so, the lesson was learned. Apart from struggle the butterfly...

Apart from struggle the butterfly would be constrained by the cocoon. Apart from struggle the butterfly would be unable to fly. Apart from the struggle, the butterfly would be unable to meet the possibilities of the day. Apart from the struggle, the butterfly would never experience freedom to be a butterfly.

Apart from the struggle of breaking free from the cocoon the butterfly never be able to fly. Apart from the struggle the butterfly would not have the strength or fortitude to move beyond the cocoon. Apart from the butterfly's struggle possibilities would not exist for the butterfly. And so, the flight of the butterfly...

And so, the flight of the butterfly provides wonderful insight. Life presents challenges that often come disguised as change in the form of struggle. Change provides the motivation to strengthen the wings of our flight, to our destiny. Change through struggle prepares you and I to move beyond the constraints...

Freedom, Courage and the Flight of the Butterfly — Revisited — Part 2

The constraints of our perceived limitations to find a way that will work. In a way that will work for us. Change through struggle prepare you and I for opportunities that would otherwise not be available to us. Change through struggle opens our eyes to the possibilities that exist. Change through struggle...

Prepares you and I for something far greater than we could have otherwise imagine. So, rejoice when you encounter change through struggle. Your destiny is being formed within you. You are not walking in darkness. The eyes of your understanding are being opened. You are beholding what is being formed...

What is being formed in you through struggle. You are realizing that the process is meant for your good and not for your harm. You are experiencing life in ways that you never dreamed to be possible. You are realizing that you are a beneficiary hope, not of dismay. In the process you are gaining new strength to...

To fulfill your mission and purpose. You are being prepared to walk in your destiny. Be encouraged because what is being formed in you is majestic and divine. What is being formed in you will reveal what is beyond your wildest imagination. Be encouraged my friend. You are being changed from one glory...

One glory to another glory and your light is shining brightly. Although you may feel as though you are in the valley of the shadow of death, you shall not be harmed. Your experience and struggle is preparing you to soar beyond your understanding. Your lessons are teaching you hope. So, I would say to you...

Say to you, "Trust the process, a living and loving God and yourself". More will be revealed to you with time. You will get what you need to fulfill your destiny Rest assured in that reality. And if you have a hard time believing that you will make it through, believe because I believe. My experience has proven...

My experience has proven that reality. You will not be left behind. You will arrive on time. Trust the process, for what, is being formed in you. Trust the God of your understanding, because you do not have to know or have the big picture. Trust yourself, because you are learning the lessons you need to...

Need to be strengthened and empowered in your process. Trust that you will get what you need to "fly" in your purpose. Trust that you will learn how to use what you have to give. Give to those individuals who want what you have to give, in ways that will work for you. Trust that you are being led in the...

Led to fulfill your purpose and destiny Consequently, be encouraged when you encounter struggles. Struggles that you may not understand. Be of good courage, for your wings are being strengthened.

Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Predictions — What May be Limiting Your Recovery Process? Part 1

In this article I will share **3 contributing factors** that I believe influence recovery predictions. Recovery predictions for individuals who sustain and are living with traumatic brain injuries. In my experience, these 3 contributing factors, in effect; kept me focused on what I could not change. These 3...

Contributing factors, in effect; kept me fighting against myself. Fighting against myself instead teaching me how to champion the gains that I was and am making. Making as an individual who is living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury. Fighting against myself by focusing on what I could not accomplish.

As your read, watch / listen to this article, may you be encouraged to change your focus. Change your focus from what you cannot change to what you can accomplish. What you can accomplish with in your set of circumstances. As you read this article, may you be encouraged to stop fighting against yourself.

Stop fighting against yourself and start championing the gains that you make my friend. As you read this article, may you grasp hope and move forward in your recovery process. In your recovery process as an individual who is living with the impact of a traumatic brain injury. As you read this article, may you...

May you be encouraged to run your own race and in your own lane.

My Observations of the 3 Contributing Factors

In my experience, I believe that no 2 traumatic brain injuries are the same, as no 2 individuals are the same. To give predictions concerning the recovery process of each individual is to place limits on each individual's recovery process. I recently wrote two articles in which I spoke to two contributing factors...

Two contributing factors that, effect, undermine and limit the recovery process of individuals living with brain injuries. These 2 contributing factors: **“struggling to accept myself when other people can’t or won’t”** and **“it’s all up in your head”**. Both of these messages imply and assign blame to the...

To the individual (s) living with brain injuries. Blame for something that they are powerless over being able to change. Both messages communicate to brain injury survivors that there is something wrong with us. That it is our fault and that is the reason why people do not accept us. That is our fault for not getting...

Getting over what is all up in our head. The implications of these messages can lead individuals living with brain injuries to believe. Believe that “if” they do not recover in specified ways that there is something inherently wrong with them. The implications of these messages also serve to set individuals...

Set individuals who are living with brain injuries set up to fail. What I mean by setting to fail is that they can be led to believe that if they do not meet. Meet specific “criteria” that demonstrate recovery gains, then they are not “recovering”. They may subsequently become frustrated and disheartened in their...

In their recovery process because of these two messages.

For many years I found myself frustrated and disheartened because I bought into the two messages. Messages that set me up to believe there was something wrong with me. That it was my fault and that I was the reason why people did not accept me. These messages undermined my capacity to recover.

These messages undermined my ability to recover because I didn’t know any better.

In my recovery process, I discovered a **third contributing factor**. A third contributing factor that can limit and undermine the recovery process of individual living with brain injuries. Let me explain. During this past weekend, I spent some time with a friend. During our time together I asked him to show me...

Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Predictions — What May be Limiting Your Recovery Process? Part 2

Ask him to show me how to back up a browser profile. He showed me and then wanted me to duplicate what he showed me. As I attempted to recreate what he showed me, he became frustrated with me. I then proceeded to sit down and write down each step of the process of backing up a browser profile...

To write down what he explained; through a list of 9 steps. I share the interaction with my friend to illustrate the third contributing factor. The way that people may be trying to teach you as an individual living with a brain injury survivor may not be the way in which you learn. The way in which you learn...

The way in which you learn, after your brain injury, may leave you frustrated and disheartened. May leave you frustrated and disheartened because of the way you are being taught. In a later conversation, during our visit; my friend said that he does not know how to teach me. That is no one's fault.

His statement reinforced the significance of the 3rd contributing factor. I did not learn, not because I did not want to learn. I did not grasp (learn) what he was trying to teach me because of my learning style.

Solution

What the experience, with my friend over the weekend; reinforced was that the recovery process. The recovery process of individuals living with brain injuries may be limited. Limited, not because of our inability to learn, but because of the way in which people have been trying to teach us.

With this consideration, I would encourage you to challenge the prediction of your brain injury recovery. **Maybe** you have not been making gains in your recovery process the recovery gains. Gains that you would like because of the ways that people have expected you to learn. Something else that you may...

May like to consider is that maybe your learning style has changed. Has change from how you used to learn before your brain injury to how you now learn after you sustained your brain injury. Consequently, the recovery predictions that have been given to you may be because of the way you learn.

With the **3rd consideration** you may want to have your learning style tested to determine how you best learn. In September of 2007 I wrote an article to share some information that has benefited me: **Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living**. Here is a link to a video presentation of the...

Video presentation of the article **Traumatic Brain Injury and Activities of Daily Living Video Presentation**. I would encourage you to read, watch or listen to the article and then ask your counselor to test your current learning style (s). By understanding and incorporating your true learning style, you...

You may find that recovery process will take on new life. By doing so, you may find yourself surpassing the predictions that were made; concerning your recovery process. I have written sever other articles that may help you understand, love and accept yourself when you interact with people who can't or won't.

These articles are included in this eBook.

Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't

Living with a Brain Injury — “it's all up in your head” — Lest I be lulled back into Denial

Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't Part 1

As you may know, I sustained my brain injury in 1967. Once the external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury was never again factored into the difficulties. Factored into the difficulties that I experienced for the next 39 years of my life. Consequently, I found myself living with the bewildering conundrum of living with an invisible disability. [Detailed About Page](#). In my experience, when I...

When I reached a point in my life when the pain of denying my reality, exceeded the pain. The pain associated with my needing to deny my reality (so that I would not feel flawed and defective) I found myself. I found myself angry, confused and depressed. The reality was that I had felt flawed and defective for many years. I felt flawed and defective because I was unable to meet the expectations of many...

Of many people who could or would not accept the possibility that my life was being impacted. Impacted by the open skull fracture that I experienced when I was 10 years old. I have heard that anger turned inward is depression. Because I received blame and criticism for not meeting expectations, I internalized my inability to meet those expectations. Internalized them as a reflection of who I was as an individual.

I wrote an article in May 2007 to explain what I discovered as I came out of denial: **Whose Shame are you Carrying**. Here is a link to that article [Whose Shame are You Carrying?](#) The information that I share in this article helped me understand why people wanted and even needed me to maintain the denial. As I moved through my denial, I became aware of the struggle that I faced when I interacted with...

When I interacted with people as an individual living with an invisible disability. In August of 2007 I wrote a **4-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 this article series with you. In the article series I speak to the awareness' that I have gained through my...

My interactions with 4 different types of mindsets, as an individual who is living with an invisible disability. Gaining these awareness' has given me the ability to better understand and accept myself. Understand and accept myself and the people I interact with as an individual living with an invisible disability. These awareness' have helped me to detach from what other people may choose to think...

May choose to think about me. These awareness's have helped me to stop picking on myself. These awareness' helped me to stop fighting against myself. These awareness' helped me to stop joining in with the chorus of voices that criticized and berated me. These awareness' have helped me to stop focusing on what I could not accomplish because of my invisible disability. Stop focusing on what I could not...

Could not do, so that I could learn how to use my gifts, talents and abilities. Use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for me. These awareness' helped me to learn how to respect who I am. Learn who I am given my limitations; although I may not understand them. These awareness' helped me to realize that I am powerless over what people chose to believe about me. These awareness' helped me...

Helped me to realize that I need to keep the focus on myself. I need to stay committed to my own course and run my own race. These awareness' helped me to stop being driven to live someone else's dream for me and start living my own dream. Below are links to the 4-part article series. as mentioned above. I divided the article into 4 parts because of the length of the article. I did so to make reading the article...

Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't Part 2

To make reading the series more manageable. If I may suggest, I would encourage you to read through each part of the article series to benefit from the entire article.

[My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability](#)

[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](#)

In April of 2014 I created a video presentation series of the article to share the information with individuals who learn more effectively through watching and listening. I also divided the article into 4 parts to make watching and listening to the presentation more manageable. If I may suggest, I would encourage you to watch each part of the video series to benefit from the entire video presentation series.

Below are links to the video presentation series that have been uploaded to You Tube:

[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](#)

Living with an Invisible Disability – Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't Video Presentation

[Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't Video Presentation](#)

[Living with a Brain Injury — “it’s all up in your head” — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Video Presentation](#)

Living with a Brain Injury — it's all up in your head — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Part 1

The reason why I am writing this article is to share what I discovered through my own process and journey of being told, **“It's just up in your head and if you just...then you would not be impacted by your brain injury”**. If you have heard this phrase or something similar, I believe you will benefit from reading this article. Several days ago, I wrote an article:

In my article; **Living with an Invisible Disability — Accepting Ourselves when Other People Can't**, I shared how I became aware. Became aware of the impact that denial was having upon my life and well-being. In my experience, I stayed in denial for many years because I internalized what was denied and defended. Denied and defended surrounding the impact of the traumatic brain injury that I experienced...

That I experienced when I was 10 years old. And after my external wounds healed, the impact of the traumatic brain injury became invisible. Consequently, the impact of my brain injury was no longer considered relevant. Additionally, I bought into the belief that my traumatic brain injury did not factor into my difficulties. Difficulties that I experienced because of what I unaware and powerless to change.

Unaware and powerless to change I bought into the belief that there was something wrong with me. In response by my actions; I engaged in validating and defending the denial system that kept me striving. Kept me striving in my attempt to overcompensate for what was not seen or understood. As a result, I found myself engaging in a cycle of justifying, answering, defending and explaining why I could not...

Could not do more, to be more than what was being denied and what was expected of me. This ongoing cycle left me in loose /loose relationship with denial, myself and others. The loose/loose relationship with denial, myself and others held me captive to a system that “promised” me freedom, but kept me deceived. Let me explain. As time continued, I remember my dad telling me, “It's just up in your head”.

That you just tried harder and kept your mouth shut then you would not be affected by any brain injury. So, for many years I strove to get over what was, “all up in my head”. I strove so that I would not be blamed and criticized for the difficulties that I encountered. The difficulties that I encountered because of what needed to be denied. Needed to be denied so that changes did not have to take place in the family.

For more insight read my article **Traumatic Brain injury and the Identified Patient** which is included in this eBook. Because, I bought into this message, that it was my fault for not getting “it” right, I strove all the more. All the more to over compensate for what was, “all up in my head”. What made matters more difficult for me was that I had no idea how to “get over: what was all up in my head. My striving...

My striving to overcompensate until after being employed by the Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a rehab counselor. Because I was having difficulties on the job, I disclosed to my supervisor that I sustained a traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. She told the manager, who told the district supervisor and I was made a client of the DVR while I was still employed as a counselor.

After becoming a client, I underwent another EEG, which confirmed the impact of the open skull fracture that I experienced at 10 years of age. I also underwent a neuro psyche evaluation. The results revealed how the injury to my brain impacted the difficulties I encountered throughout my life time. Upon sharing the results of the EEG and the Neuro Psyche with my dad, he told me that the neuropsychologist, who...

Living with a Brain Injury — it's all up in your head — Lest I be lulled back into Denial Part 2

Who did the neuro psyche eval; did not know what he was talking about and his findings were wrong. Other family members tended to side with my dad, which led me to continue to believe. Believe that, the difficulties that I encountered were just “up in my head” and that if I just...then I could get over “it”. I was later terminated as a counselor, but remained a client of the Florida Department of Rehabilitation.

Although I completed the vocational rehab process in Florida there was no suitable job placement. As a result, I was terminated as a client. For the next 5 years I continued to buy into the notion that “it was up in my head” and if I just...” then I would and could get over “it”. The proverbial “last straw that broke the camel’s back” of denial resulted from a series of events. A series of events that occurred after being...

After being recruited to begin a job in North Carolina as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. These are the events that led to my no longer being able to deny my reality. I was fired from that job 4 months later. I had an unsuccessful job search. I applied to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and went through the evaluation process. At the end of the evaluation process my counselor reported that I was...

Was unemployable. Several months later my 3rd application to receive SSDI was approved. went through that process, was told at the end of that of the evaluation process that I was unemployable. So, after being told I was unemployable and being approved to begin receiving SSDI benefits I found myself on a fixed income Although I had a long history of not being able to work and being told I was unemployable...

That I was unemployable, the Social Security Administration determining that I was disabled and finding myself on a fixed income, I still found myself. Still found myself struggling with the notion that maybe, “it was all up in my head”. That if I just... then I would not be affected by a brain injury. But then I remembered the emotional and spiritual pain that I experienced over the course of the past 38 years.

For more detailed information, click on this link: [Detailed About Page](#). With the emotional and spiritual pain, I finally admitted to myself that I was indeed powerless over, “what was in my head”. With my emotional and spiritual bottom, I realized that I could no longer validate and defend the denial system. The denial system that held me hostage for many years. I realized that I needed to guard myself, lest I...

Lest I be lulled back into the denial system that kept me in a loose/loose relationship with myself and other people. I realized that I could no longer attempt to fit into the “mold” that denial set for me. I realized that I needed to break free from that “mold” to create my own “mold”. I realized that I could learn how to excel beyond the limitations set forth in “It’s just up in your head and if you just, then you...

In August 2007 I wrote a 2 Part article to share what I discovered that keeps me, lest I be lulled back into denial.

[Having an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying my Reality — Part 1](#)

[Having an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying my Reality — Part 2](#)

I have created a video series of the article and will include links to the presentation below:

[Living with an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying My Reality — Part 1 Revisited Video Presentation](#)

[Living with an Invisible Disability — The Consequence of Denying My Reality — Part 2 Revisited Video Presentation](#)

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient Part 1

I am sorry I have not been writing more recently. I have been preoccupied with taking care of some other business for Second Chance to Live. Although I have been distracted, I now believe I have clarity. I want to share a concept with you that I learned through studying Family Systems Theory. The information has enriched my life tremendously. First of all, let me say that I do not believe there is any added value in...

No added value in pointing my finger in anyone's direction. As an adult I am responsible to and for my decisions my choices and myself. What I have learned through my recovery process has empowered and continues to empower my ability to pursue my unique creativity. What I am going to share with you has helped me make sense of what made little sense to me before. The awareness helped me to have peace.

In families where there is conflict, secrets or unresolved emotional pain different members of a nuclear family are assigned. Are assigned and or assume different roles with in the family system. These roles are a way to contain the displaced sadness. Please read my post, **Displaced Sadness**. One of these roles is the scapegoat or the identified patient. The identified patient with in the family system absorbs the...

Absorbs the dis ease within the family. The identified patient becomes the focus and the distraction. The identified patient or the scapegoat invariably has to carry the shame. The shame of unresolved pain, secrets or conflicts. Please read my post, **Whose Shame are You Carrying?** Shame is different than guilt, in that guilt can be resolved. Resolve through making an amends, whereas shame is a being wound.

Shame leads the individual to believe that they do not just make mistakes, but that they are a mistake. The identified patient is led to believe that they are responsible for the pain and conflict in the family unit. Unknowingly, the identified patient is made to responsible for they are powerless to change. In the process of carrying the family's shame, the individual is unknowingly shackled to the shame created...

Created by the unspoken conflict, secret or unresolved emotional pain. The identified patient is led to believe that they are the reason for the conflict with in the family. Consequently, the identified patient develops a hypervigilant a sense of responsibility for the conflict. In the process the identified patient is led to believe that there is something inherently wrong with them. In response the identified patient...

The identified patient may act out the conflict through anti-social behavior. They may attempt to do more to be more in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Through an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, the identified patient may become depressed or grandiose. Because the identified patient or scapegoat believes they are responsible for the family conflict, debilitating shame keeps them trapped in the role.

Overcompensation becomes a way of life for the identified patient as they attempt to resolve the conflict. In my experience, I found myself in the role of an identified patient at a very early age. In the process I embraced an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. I did so in my attempt to be more and do more. In response, I believed that if I was more than, then I could avoid my inherent sense of shame for not...

Not being enough or doing enough. I also believed that if other people were irritable, restless or discontent I had to somehow make them "OK". Make them OK so we could be "OK" so that I could be "OK" with myself. In my attempt to anticipate what was expected of me I spent considerable time people pleasing, approval seeking and mind reading. None of these strategies proved to be effective, but only...

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient Part 2

But only reinforced my sense of inadequacy and self-contempt. Nevertheless, I still strove to be perfect in my attempt to resolve the family conflict. Self-loathing distracted and perpetuated my grandiose sense of responsibility. As I have mentioned previous posts, I was in a motor vehicle accident in 1967 at the age of 10. I sustained an open skull fracture with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with...

A severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. Denial of my brain injury became a familiar component within my family because I was able to teach. Teach myself (with the encouragement of my mom) how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. Although I sustained an open skull fracture and a severe brain injury, after my external wounds healed the invisible nature of my brain...

My brain injury placed my invisible disability in an all too familiar mindset," if we cannot see the disability, no disability exists". Nevertheless, the impact of my traumatic brain injury presented me with cognitive and psychosocial deficits and limitations. My previously assigned role as an identified patient in took on a new meaning. As an individual living with an invisible disability, I became susceptible to...

To being blamed and made to be the reason for conflicts that people experienced.

My experience has taught me that assigned or assumed family roles, such as the scapegoat, hero, mascot or lost child, seek to control and constrain. Control and constrain parts of the individual that displease or disrupt the family system. In the process the individual is covertly or overtly expected to discard parts of themselves. Discard parts of themselves to maintain the system and contain the conflict, secret or...

Contain the conflict, secret or unresolved loss. The roles become substitutes as individuals in the family unit become reactors. Become reactors to the conflict, instead of as actors seeking to resolve the conflict. In the process, roles within the system become the identity of the individual. Rather than knowing and being who they are as individuals, they take on the false self of the role. The false self becomes the...

Becomes their identity and evolves out of the individuals drive to comply in order to avoid being. Being criticized, shamed, blamed and/or threatened with emotional or physical abandonment. When the individual seeks to maintain the identity of the role or identity to avoid losing. To avoid losing love/approval or to prevent being shamed, blamed and criticized they become hyper vigilant. Like a cat...

Like a cat on a hot tin roof as they seek to avoid conflict in order to maintain the role. In the process of complying, the individual's creative energy is redirected to enforce the unspoken code of the role. The individual's creative energy is used to validate their role and to maintain denial. Denial is used to dismiss any need to address or process the conflict, secret or loss. When an individual with in the family system...

With in the family system of "roles" has or acquires an invisible disability, denial is used to dismiss the need to address the disability. Consequently, the individual with the invisible disability internalizes their struggles. Such internalization sets the individual up to be blamed, shamed and made to be the problem with in the family. The individual becomes the identified patient and is led to believe that they are...

They are the reason for the family's unrest and discontent. In these circumstances the individual then takes on the responsibility for what is out of their control. The unrest among members of the family, is then directed at the individual who may not even be aware of what they are powerless to control. The impact of their invisible disability and the reaction of family members that have nothing to do about them.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient Part 3

Their invisible disability, for which they may be unaware of themselves, is blamed for the irritability, restlessness and discontent of the family system. When the individual leaves the nuclear family system, they take their role with them. The role once again becomes the vehicle that drives them as they interact with other people, places and things beyond the family system. Consequently, life for them becomes a...

Life for them becomes gauntlet as they attempt to fix and compensate for the restlessness, irritability and discontentment around them. Their overdeveloped sense of responsibility is mirrored through and in other interpersonal relationships. The identified patient or scapegoat consequently becomes hyper vigilant in their relationships as they attempt to repair. Repair or fix the restless, irritability and...

Irritability and discontent in the relationship (s) to avoid being criticized, blamed, shamed or abandoned. In the process, these individuals become human doings, as they react to what is out of their control. In the process of “putting out fires” their creative energy is exploited to manage the unmanageable. As with other roles with in the family system, the identified patient trades their creative energy for a crusade...

For a “crusade” that cannot be won. In the process, their time and energy will slowly be drained and depleted. In the event that the identified patient continues in that crusade they will live their lives. Live their lives distracted as a human doing, instead as a human being. A human being, for which they were designed to create with their lives, not to resolve other people’s unresolved conflicts. In my experience...

I had to begin to accept myself as a person with an invisible disability before I could begin to break free from the role. Free from the role of an identified patient, absorbing conflicts that were out of my control to fix. I had to learn how to accept myself as a person who has an invisible disability, rather than a person who is disabled. I had to realize that although I have deficits and limitations, I am not those deficits and...

I am not those deficits or limitations, for which other people wanted to blame me. I had to stop living the lie that I am responsible for other people’s irritability, restlessness and discontentment. Through identifying and accepting my reality, rather than buying into the belief that I was responsible. Responsible for other people’s beliefs and attitudes. By respecting my limitations, I have been able to use my...

My time and creative energy and learn from my experiences rather than internalizing my deficits and limitations through the eyes of shame. The eyes of shame that want me to believe that I am responsible for other people’s irritability, restlessness and discontent. Sure, I realize that I play a part in some conflicts, but not in all conflicts. By being responsible to, but not for I can keep my “side of the street” clean.

In Closing

I sincerely believe that I became an identified patient because of a lack of information. No one is to blame and pointing the finger in anyone’s direction is of little value. My motivation in sharing the above is not to complain, but to use my experience to illustrate a reality. People with invisible disabilities many times are criticized, belittled, ostracized and shamed for matters that are out of their control. The sad reality...

The sad reality is that as an individual with an invisible or visible disability, you may have people in your life. People in your life who want or need to make you the problem, the identified patient. I have good news for you. You are not the problem. The problem exists because of a lack of willingness to take responsibility, understand and empower. In the event that you have people in your life, who for whatever.

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Identified Patient Part 4

For whatever reasons want to make you responsible for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment I want you to know, you have a choice. You no longer need to buy into the belief that you are responsible for all their irritability, restlessness and discontentment. Like you, they need to take responsibility. Take responsibility for why they may be irritable, restless or discontent. The good news is that we can be...

We can be part of the solution, instead of continuing to feel shamed, blamed and scapegoated. We can keep our side of the street clean by making amends. We can make living amends by changing our behavior and how we react. We can allow other people to also, if they choose to do things differently. Although other people may want to blame us for our deficits and limitations, we can be aware and...

And decide not to buy into the notion that we are at fault. At fault for other people's irritability, restless and discontent. We are not our disability (visible or invisible), our deficits and limitations. We no longer have to feel shame or guilt for what other people may not be able to understand or accept. We no longer need believe that we deserve to be bullied. Deserve to be bullied because of what other people choose...

What other people choose to or not to take responsibility. We no longer need to live in the shadows of shame or contempt. We are beautiful people, who are living with the impact of an invisible disability. An invisible disability with deficits and limitations. We are remarkable and resilient. Through accepting ourselves as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability, we will find new vitality.

We will learn to embrace ourselves apart from the role of an identified patient. The role that anyone may want to define who we are as individuals. We can learn to fly like a bird that is set free from the cage that once limited the bird's flight. We will discover how to use our creative energy through our gifts, talents and abilities. We will move in the direction of our dreams and fulfill our destinies. More will be revealed.

“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.

Whose Shame are you Carrying? Part 1

I want to share something with you that has helped me. My motivation is to provide insights to the parents who read my blog. My motive is to provide awareness. The beauty in living is that we can make a decision to change our behavior at any time. The process of behavior modification usually begins with awareness. Awareness that is followed by acceptance and results in action. Awareness provides the opportunity to...

The opportunity to address whatever is not in our best interest or in the best interest of the people we love. Acceptance acts like a balm to soften the walls of resistance. Acceptance brings down the walls of resistance and bring us to a place of action. The action that we take to provide the momentum that resolves our guilt and shame. Awareness, acceptance and action all bring about a healing process.

Carrying Shame

When parents do not deal with their shame and guilt, they make their children carry it for them. In many instances, the shame transfer is a learned behavior that is passed from one generation to the next. Through my recovery process, I have learned many valuable lessons. One of the most valuable lessons is that I am not responsible for anyone's shame or guilt. I do not have to carry the burden of unresolved conflicts.

The burden of another person's unresolved guilt or shame. Each person is given an opportunity to learn and grow from his or her individual experiences. If they chose to avoid or deny the reasons for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment, I do not have to absorb their pain. Debilitating guilt and debilitating shame can only be resolved through rigorous honesty and a commitment to accountability.

In transactional analysis there is an expression that sums up such a process. It goes something like this; we will work it in, work it out, or project it onto other people. Project it on to other people through blame, shame, or scapegoating. As I understand this concept, when a person chooses to work it in, they chose to deny that they have shame and guilt and act as though it does not exist.

When a person represses shame and guilt, addictive behavior is frequently used to avoid responsibility. When people chose to work it out, they become involved in a recovery process / program to identify and repair the reasons for that shame and guilt. When people are unwilling to take responsibility for their shame and guilt they blame, shame and scapegoat. In the process they stay stuck as a victim.

My Experience with My Dad

In my experience, my dad's inability or unwillingness to accept that I had a disability motivated his behavior. He blamed me for not being able to be more and do more. His criticism of my best efforts made me responsible for his disappointment. My Dad could not or would not accept that I was doing the best I could. The best that I could, given the fact that I was living with the impact of a brain injury.

But who knew?

My traumatic brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. In 1967 little was known about traumatic brain injuries or their impact. Nevertheless, I grew up with an invisible disability.

I also believe that my dad transferred his guilt and shame onto me for his driving the night of the car accident. The car accident that caused the open skull fracture and right frontal lobe damage to my brain. Because my dad was unable and did not know how to process his own guilt and shame, he transferred. Transferred his guilt and shame on to me. Onto me in the form of blame and criticism.

Blame and criticism which resulted in my sense of shame for not being able to overcome. Overcome the impact of my brain injury and unknown invisible disability, leaving me feeling like a mistake.

Whose Shame are you Carrying? Part 2

I am not Angry or Bitter

I am not angry or bitter at Dad. I am glad I have been able to work through and identify what I experienced for many years. Identifying that my dad did not have the awareness or acceptance that I was doing my best, helped me. Helped me to accept that my dad did not have the tools to be able to work through his own guilt and shame (not only because of the accident, but from his own childhood).

As a result of growing in awareness and acceptance of my dad's lack of awareness and acceptance I have slowly been able. Been able to stop carrying my dad's guilt and shame. My dad's shame and guilt for not being able to meet his expectations. As I have grown in my own awareness and acceptance, I have come to realize. Come to realize that I have limitations, but I am able to thrive, not just survive.

I believe that I am more than enough, although people like my dad can't accept. Can't accept my disability and that I am doing the best I can. Best that I am able, just for today. I am not my traumatic brain injury, although my brain injury changed the course of my life forever. I wish my dad could have accepted that I was doing my very best, rather than wanting me to be someone without a disability.

I am sad for both my dad and myself, because we could have had a much better relationship for many years before he died. His acceptance of my disability came in the last 3-4 years of my dad's life and he was able to accept that I was doing my very best. He also told me that he was proud of me on many occasions during those last years.

With my awareness and acceptance, I created Second Chance to Live a month after my dad died.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, I would encourage the parents that are reading this post to encourage your children. Your child may have an invisible disability that has gone undetected for many years. If you want your child to excel avoid blaming, shaming and criticizing them for not being more.

They may not be able to reach your expectations, however they may be doing the best that they can. By acknowledging this reality, you will be able to cultivate an empowering relationship. An empowering relationship with your children that will last a lifetime.

Parents, by nature want their children to grow up to be professional adults. Having such a hope is not wrong. Nevertheless, your child may never be able to become a doctor or a Lawyer or some other dream you have for them. Encourage your children, teenagers and young adults to follow their dreams.

Encourage them to follow their dreams, not yours. Nurture their strength, talents and abilities and you will both get what you desire. An empowered individual who is following after their hopes and dreams.

Lessons I Learned — When I Maintain the Three Rules — Don't Talk, Don't Trust, Don't Feel Part 1

In the past 2 articles I spoke about what I discovered that helped me to begin to heal on a spiritual, emotional and physical level. In this article I will share an article that I wrote in follow up to that article 5 years ago, [How to Heal Spiritually, Emotionally and Physically – Break the Three Unspoken Rules](#). In the below article I will share what I discovered and would invite you to share any other...

Other consequences that come to mind as you read my article.

The Three Rules Revisited — Consequences

Hi, and welcome back to my web log. I am glad you decided to stop by and rest. Last night I introduced three rules that need to be broken. Today I will briefly sum-mate those rules and then provide some of the consequences of maintaining those rules. The list is not comprehensive. You may also want to add to the list of consequences.

Don' Talk

This rule is often burned into the subconscious of the individual through threat of reprisal. The individual has to live their life from the lie based on the denial inherent in the secret or conflict. The secret is more often than not connected to shame and guilt. The secret becomes more valuable than the individuals. Shame and guilt perpetuate the denial that debilitate the individual. Denial promotes dysfunction in an attempt to justify the secret or conflict. Within a family that promotes the Don't Talk rule, each member assumes or is given a role to mask the secrets or conflicts.

Don' Trust

This rule isolates the individual from the help that could be found to resolve the conflict. The individual also learns to trade their judgment for the judgment of other people. When the individual does not trust their judgment, they become vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals. The individual becomes conditioned to accepting abuse from and by the judgment of other people. As the abuse continues the individual internalize the reasons for the abuse as being their fault. The abuse confirms that they cannot trust themselves or their judgment.

Don't Feel

This rule alienates the individual from themselves. When the individual discards the part of themselves that connects them to their creativity, they slowly die from the inside out. Feelings are the mechanisms that connect our soul to our spirit, which in turn enables us to interpret our environment (Please read, [A tool from my toolbox](#)). When I feel, my brain connects with my heart, which makes me unique. In families where feelings are considered a threat, the individual learns to shut down emotionally. Feelings are often seen as a threat because they are connected to an unresolved conflict or secret. In many dysfunctional group settings feelings are also minimized and discouraged for this very reason.

The Consequences – Don't Talk, Don't Trust, and Don't Feel

- Each of these rules — in effect — minimizes the quality of life for the individual.
- These rules impede the individual from discovering who they really are – their authentic creative self.
- If I am sworn to secrecy or told that I cannot trust anyone, I will have a difficult time trusting anyone, including myself
- I will see little value in feeling my feelings.

Lessons I Learned — When I Maintain the Three Rules — Don't Talk, Don't Trust, Don't Feel Part 2

- I will become a reactor to what occurs in my life, instead of being an actor or proactive participant in my life.
- I will believe that life is merely a gauntlet of obstacles to overcome and struggles to hopefully survive.
- I will become preoccupied with people pleasing and approval seeking and I will be afraid and reluctant to think outside the box. (Please read my post, [Are You Living in a Box?](#))
- I will be in a constant state of anxiety, without knowing how to stop the madness.
- I will buy into the notion that someone is to blame. Personal responsibility will be replaced with control and manipulation to take the focus off of myself.
- I will believe I am a victim of my circumstances and an heir to misery.
- I will not look for solutions, but will be satisfied with being abused by strong willed individuals.
- I will seek to justify my behavior, because I am not at fault.
- I will live my life in quiet desperation, because I have no hope.
- I will question faith and buy into the notion that if it is meant to be, it is up to me.
- I will live in insecurity, as I ease God out of my life (EGO).
- I will see myself as a statistic, instead of as an empowered being with specific meaning and purpose.
- I will minimize, marginalize, dismiss and discount my capacity to positively impact and influence my world.
- I will believe that I am responsible for rather than to other people. I will be preoccupied with other people's restlessness, irritability and discontentment.
- I will not develop faith in a power greater than myself, because no one can be trusted.
- I will seek out drama to feel alive. I will seek to live in the identity of a role to qualify my worth.
- I will never be satisfied with life and my relationships. Good will never be, good enough.
- I will unconsciously seek to be involved in relationships that perpetuate my despondency.
- I will remain in denial and trade the truth for a lie to conceal the family's pain or secret.
- I will seek to stymie, ridicule and criticize anyone who makes me feel my feelings.
- I will merely survive and exist in a universe that cannot be trusted.

How to Heal Spiritually, Emotionally and Physically — Break the Three Unspoken Rules Part 1

In today's article I am going to share what I discovered that helped me to heal spiritually, emotionally and physically. What I discovered was that I needed to break the three unspoken rules. I needed to break the three unspoken rules to begin to heal. About 12 years ago, I wrote an article to share what I discovered concerning how the three rules impacted my life. May my experience help you to begin to heal on a new level. Heal on a new level to see a new light. May my experience empower your process and journey.

Don't Talk, Don't Trust, and Don't Feel

I believe that the above title sums up a central theme, wreaks havoc and set many people up to defeated. Sets people up to feel defeated by interfering with their ability to be themselves. Their ability to explore and develop their creative uniqueness The three rules (don't talk, don't trust and don't feel) mandate that the individual's adhere without question. In the process, the individual has to discard parts of themselves in order to avoid negative repercussions within relationships. In the process of maintaining/adhering...

Maintaining and adhering to these rules, the individual's creative energy and uniqueness is crushed. These rules keep the individual isolated and victimized by their circumstances. Although these rules appeared to protect me, in reality they entrapped the individual in a web of deception. These rules become the standard which alienate the individual from God, from others, and from myself. Unknowingly, the individual "feeds" off of their and the denial of family and friends in compliance of maintaining the rules.

How I became aware of these three rules: **Don't Talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel.**

When I began attending 12 step support meetings in August of 1986, I heard these rules discussed by the people attending the meetings. At first, these three statements sounded like clichés. As I continued to attend meetings and listened to what people shared, I started to understand how these three rules laid the foundation. Laid the foundation for many dysfunctional behaviors and beliefs. When I first heard these rules discussed I was isolated, afraid of being rejected, in a frozen emotional state and feeling alienated.

Through attending meetings and becoming involved in my own recovery process, I slowly became aware. Became aware of how these rules had unknowing kept me feeling rejected, isolated, alienated and frozen emotionally. As I continued to attend meeting, and listened to other people as they shared their experience, strength and hope I started to thaw emotionally. In the process, I discovered how important talking, trusting and feeling would be to my healing process. As I continued to attend meetings, I arrived at...

Some definite conclusions.

I am an adult. I am responsible for my happiness and well-being. Blaming anyone does me no good because I am the only one who can live my life. Pointing fingers in anyone's direction also does no one any good. I began to realize that I was the one who needed to change. Change to get different results in my life and relationships. I did not arrive at these conclusions over night, but over time by not giving up on the process. Like I heard said in meetings, "It just takes what it takes". It just took what it took for me.

Took for me to come to this and other conclusions. In my experience, I discovered that pain was my friend. Pain motivated me to make changes. Pain helped to motivated me to confront my denial through grieving what I could not change. Through growing in my awareness and acceptance I was able to do something different. Different to find freedom from feeling rejected, isolated, alienated and frozen.

How to Heal Spiritually, Emotionally and Physically — Break the Three Unspoken Rules Part 2

In my experience, I have found that the journey to living life on life's terms comes through awareness. Awareness that develops into, acceptance and the blossoms through action. In the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, there is one line that my mentor reminds me. Reminds me of at times when I am frustrated with people, "It is better to understand than to be understood". As I have worked on the reasons for my own restlessness, irritability and discontent, I have been able to own my responsibility instead of using blame.

Using blame to make the other person (individuals) responsible so as to not have to own our responsibility. Our responsibility for being restless, irritable and discontent. In the process of being responsible to and for myself I have also been able to have developed empathy. Empathy for the people in my life when they are irritable, restless and discontent. Irritable, restless and discontent for reasons they not even be aware.

Below I will share some of what I learned. Learned about the impact of these three rules.

These three rules are often used to deny and mask reality. These three rules give way to a state of helplessness. Helplessness to do anything different. When helplessness becomes a learned behavior, individuals may unconsciously believe they are trapped by their circumstances. Instead of seeking to explore, these three rules slowly drain and deplete the individual. Like the below illustration, although the individual can do something different, repeated reinforces leads to the individual slowly dying inside.

Illustration – The Pike Syndrome

Tank of water with a big fish at one end of the tank. Little fish at the other end of the tank. Pane of glass separating the big fish with the little fish. Big fish hits the pane of glass attempting to get to the little fish (food). Over time the big fish begins to associate pain with getting to the little fish. After a period of such conditioning the pane of glass is removed. Although the big fish can now readily get to the little fish, because of the learned pain associated with the little fish, the big fish gives up. The little fish can then swim around the big fish without a fear of being eaten. The learned helplessness results in the big fish going without food and starving to death. Starving to death although the fish could have eaten the fish.

When people stay stuck in the three rules

Instead of learning and growing from their circumstances, being a victim becomes an alternative to living. Living is reduced to a series of events to be endured and hopefully survived. Drama replaces vitality. Rather than seeking to be empowered, these individuals consent to the notion that success is measured by merely surviving the next crisis. Surviving each crisis becomes the unconscious mindset. This mindset and motivation not only undermine the creative capacity of that individual, but it also perpetuates a fear.

A fear of failure and a cynical outlook upon life. Circumstances and opportunities are equally revered. Revered as a nemesis to be reckoned with on a daily basis. Life itself is reduced to merely clocking in and out each day (as a disgruntled employee) hoping that the minutes and hours pass with increasing speed. In my experience, I spent a large part of my life running as fast as I could to avoid the drama. Avoid the drama, while at the same time believing the surviving the drama defined who I was in my life.

Define who I was in life through being responsible to make sure no one was out of sorts, so I would not be blamed, shamed and made to feel responsible. Responsible for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment. Through maintaining the belief, that I could do nothing more than survive what was doled out to me, I became a resident reactor. I found myself jumping "like a cat on a hot tin roof" in life.

How to Heal Spiritually, Emotionally and Physically — Break the Three Unspoken Rules Part 3

Sure, I trusted God with my life, but I saw the actual living part as a battlefield. I felt like a soldier who found himself in a foxhole, attempting to protect himself from every direction. This way of life drained and depleted me spiritually, emotionally, and physically. But thank God that I reached an emotional bottom, when a relationship ended. The disappointment and pain from that break up motivated me to examine all of relationships. The emotional pain proved to be the catalyst that motivated me to seek...

Motivated me to examine the familiar pain that I experienced in many of my relationships. With my awareness, I realized that to find freedom I needed to begin talking, trusting and feeling. I began to break the three rules, Don't talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel when I started attending support group meetings. As I attended these meetings I listened to other people as they shared their experience, strength and hope. With time, I began to have the courage to share what was going on in my life. I began to trust people.

As I share my pain with them, they listened without judgment. In the process, and over time I began to "thaw" emotionally. In the process, I developed an ability to trust the process and a loving God. The God of my understanding and myself. Slowly I began to see myself as an empowered individual. An empowered individual who no longer needed to be jostled about by people, events or my circumstances. For me, learning and being willing to break the three rules took time, but I am glad that I started to learn.

Epilogue

If you have bought into these 3 rules, I would encourage you to find a safe place. A safe place where you can begin to process the reasons why you have sought to follow these three rules. My suggestion would be that you begin attending a 12 Step meeting in your area. Attending the 12 Step meeting where you can find the courage to break these unspoken rules. Where you will learn how to talk, trust and feel to heal.

Per my experience, my recovery started when I made a commitment, to myself, to regularly attend these meetings. My recovery accelerated when I began working with someone who had what I wanted, serenity. Through working with a sponsor (mentor), who protected my anonymity, I learned how to trust and how to speak my truth. As I was given and gave myself permission to talk and trust, I began to feel and heal.

You may want to work with a counselor or with another group, other than a 12 Step group. What every environment works best for you. What is most important is that you begin to talk, trust and feel. As you begin to heal through this process, you will learn to love and trust yourself. As you learn to trust the process, a loving God and yourself, you will find a freedom from the cycle of being blamed or blaming.

A tool from my toolbox Part 1

Today I feel led to share a tool (from my living life on life's term's toolbox) with you. Each time that I use this tool I am able to connect my head to my heart. Because I have a tendency to live in my head, I am susceptible to believing I can think my way through anything. The brain is a wonderful tool; however, I have come to accept that I cannot always live in my head. My life and my experiences are more than...

More than just data to be analyzed. Consequently, if I rely solely on my ability to analyze, my brain can lead me to negative conclusions. More so, I have found that my head/brain can easily rationalize and discount what I am feeling. As I have grown in this awareness, a truth has become apparent. Although my head wants to dominate my way of living, I no longer need to be limited by my ability to reason. Some things in life cannot be reasoned through or away. When I am irritable, restless, or discontent...

My brain realizes its limits. My heart wants to help my brain, but my brain is resistant.

I have found a solution that helps my heart make the spiritual connection to my brain. When I am restless, irritable or discontent I take pen to paper and begin to write. Writing in a journal connects my heart to my head. My heart begins to communicate to my head, and my head to my heart. As I write I am able to determine what is creating my restlessness, irritability or discontentment. Invariably my mood and my outlook on life begin to change and I am empowered. Empowered to look at life differently, now.

Today's Encouragement

Although this exercise may seem pointless to you at this present time, I would encourage you to find a quiet place and begin to write. If you have never done anything like this exercise, that is fine. Take your time. You may also ask yourself, "What am I going to write about?" My suggestion would be to write about your day, or what you experienced. How what occurred leaves you with maybe unsettled feelings. Maybe a get together with some friends, or even what you felt when watching one of your favorite TV...

Your favorite television shows. As you become comfortable with this exercise, you may want to write about people, events or situations that annoy you. You may also ask yourself, "Well how long should I write?" Time is not so important as is getting in touch with yourself. As you take time to journal each day, you will begin to experience more awareness. Your awareness will bring clarity. Clarity will help you understand why you react, what you feel, and what you have a difficult time accepting what you feel.

Writing may also provide insights into what you may have forgotten. Writing may bring up feelings you experienced in your past. Comfortable and uncomfortable feelings. Over time and by engaging in this exercise you will begin to develop a new relationship with yourself. That was my experience. You will find yourself being empowered. Your creative uniqueness will blossom. You will experience a new freedom as you get in touch with what you feel as you interact with people, places and things in your life.

A personal account that was written several years ago

Recently I found myself reacting to my own insecurities. As a result, I decided to write down some of my thoughts, but more importantly, what I was feeling. I decided to write, because writing has proved to be an effective tool in the past. As I processed what I was feeling the reason for my insecurity became apparent. My sense of shame (believing that I was defective) led me to feeling isolated and afraid. Through this identification process, I gained specific clarity. Consequently, I began to feel secure.'

A tool from my toolbox Part 2

I began to feel more adequate and empowered. I felt empowered because I was able to differentiate between being insecure and being a bad person. A bad person for experiencing a feeling of shame. A feeling of shame for feeling inadequate socially. Therefore, I was able to accept that being insecure did not make me a bad person, who needed to feel shame. As I was honest with myself, I was brought to a place of security. A place of serenity. Through being committed to the process of identifying whatever...

Whatever triggers my emotional unrest, I find freedom. I discover what helps or hinders my growth as a person. My growth as an individual as I interact with both other individuals and myself. Consequently, as I grow in awareness, so does my ability to experience the freedom to be me. My growth is enhanced as I continue to be honest with myself. In the process, I am empowered to live life on life's terms. I am able to accept, honor and respect my limitations, instead of judging my limitations as I interact with life.

Displaced/Unresolved Sadness — Why You May be Feeling Depressed?

Part 1

Understanding

In many dysfunctional families systems shame seems to be the core driver. Shame can be used in various ways. Shame is used to avoid uncomfortable feelings and/or personal accountability through blame. Shame can also be deployed to prevent physical and emotional abandonment.

Shame manifests itself through blaming, shaming and scapegoating.

Shame through blame mandates compliance to avoid the threat of abandonment. In such family dynamics, each individual has to discard parts of themselves in order to avoid being shamed or abandoned.

Such a dynamic can be seen in the individual's physical, emotional and spiritual development.

Disowning and Discarding

Early in the child's life, disowning or discarding occurs each time a trait, quality or characteristic displeases the parent or caregiver. Unconsciously the child learns through the parent's eyes and gestures what pleases/displeases them and what needs to be discarded and denied.

The child begins to associate any quality, characteristic or behavior that does not please the parent as bad. In the event that the parent withholds affection or attention from the child –when the child does not “please” the parent– the threat of physical and/or emotional abandonment is instilled in the child.

Withholding of affection or attention can be a terrifying event for any child. The child unknowingly begins to associate certain behaviors with specific responses from the parents or caregivers.

Learned Behavior

As the child continues to develop, they learn that repressing what does not please the parent is a way to avoid making Mommy or Daddy angry. **{Repression –The unconscious exclusion of painful impulses, desires, or fears from the conscious mind}**.

Over time the child learns that in order to please his or her parents they must discard any trait, characteristic or quality that displeases the parent. Unconsciously the child may fear the threat of emotional and/or physical abandonment.

Depending upon the level or dysfunction in the family system, the child may begin to use active suppression to protect themselves from feelings of annihilation. **{Suppression –the conscious exclusion of unacceptable desires, thoughts, or memories from the mind.}**

As repression turns into suppression, denial becomes the operative mechanism to discard what is perceived as being unacceptable to the “love object” or parent.

Internalization

Because the child learns to associate negative outcomes with specific qualities, characteristics, and traits, they may continue to berate themselves for having “those” unacceptable qualities, characteristics and traits.

As the child continues to develop – from an adolescent to a teenager — they may be unable to differentiate between what makes them valuable, special and unique and what they had to discard.

Displaced/Unresolved Sadness — Why You May be Feeling Depressed? Part 2

Relationship Development

As the individual gets older and begins to seek to form intimate relationships, an interesting phenomenon occurs. The traits, qualities or characteristics once discarded (as they were growing up) are now admired in the new relationship.

Initially, these traits are valued and appreciated in the beloved and then something horrible seems to occur.

The shame once assigned to those discarded parts of the individual is now transferred onto the beloved. Insidiously, the beloved is now expected to carry that shame for having those once admired traits.

Instead of these traits being encouraged and nurtured, they are now viewed as a threat. If the two people stay together in the relationship, those qualities, traits, and characteristics will again have to be discarded.

Shame has thus again won in the squelching of those qualities. If this goes unchecked, creativity is often lost and thrown by the wayside of life itself.

A Way Out — Awareness, Acceptance and Action

In my experience, I have found that the solution to ending the cycle of displaced/unresolved sadness resides in my being honest with myself. As part of being honest with myself, I needed to stop shaming and blaming myself for who I am as an individual.

Although the other person in the relationship may shame me for being myself, I don't have to carry their displaced/unresolved sadness. Displaced/unresolved sadness for not being able to own and celebrate once discarded parts of themselves.

Owning the Freedom to be Me

With this awareness, I began to realize that I no longer had to discard parts of myself in order to maintain relationships. With my awareness, I grew in awareness. Through being aware, I grew in my ability to recognize when someone wants me to carry their displaced sadness.

Through growing in awareness and acceptance, I was /am able to take a different course of action. If someone wants me to stop being who I am (through blaming and shaming me) to stay in a relationship with me, I need to remember that I have choices.

Evaluating

Growing in awareness helped and helps me to evaluate if staying in the relationship is good for me. If I continue in that relationship, I may continue to find myself being dragged under emotionally and spiritually. Each person needs to do their own work to resolve their own sadness and shame, as it hinders them.

This process ultimately needs to be their choice. With my awareness and acceptance, I no longer want to discard parts of me to be loved or valued by another person.

Especially at the expense of carrying someone's unresolved sadness.

Traumatic Brain Injury, Learning Styles and Activities of Daily Living

Following a brain injury, individuals may experience changes in their personality and in their learning style. As a result, their ability to learn and accomplish activities of daily living may result in frustration. Frustration may also occur when individuals living with brain injuries hear, “You Look Normal.”

As though looking normal means nothing happened to them. Recently I heard someone say, “She was in a car accident several months ago, but she is fine. She just had a head injury.”

Being Aware after a Traumatic Brain Injury

People who have experienced brain injuries may have changes in their ability to learn, remember and grasp new tasks or remember old ones. Activities of daily living may become difficult and even daunting for the individual impacted by a brain injury. Once simple tasks may take huge amounts of effort...

Huge amounts of effort and energy. Executing and practicing once familiar tasks become a struggle resulting in increased stress, anxiety and fatigue.

Different People Learn in Different Ways

Through my experience, I discovered that there are different learning styles. Visual (watching), auditory (listening) and kinesthetic (doing). Some people learn best through a combination of these three learning styles. Others learn predominantly through the use of one or two of these styles.

Through testing, I discovered that I learn best through a combination of these three styles.

My learning disability, created by my brain injury necessitates that I learn through repetition and persistence. I have also discovered that my ability to learn tasks is hampered when sequences of information are presented to me. I am unable to remember those sequences even though they are given...

Even though they were given to me as I listen. My learning, as a result, comes at a slower pace. I learn best when I combine watching as I listen and then doing the task.

How they are Teach you May not Be the Way you Learn

Your learning style may have changed following your brain injury my friend. As a result, you may be attempting to learn in ways that no longer work for you. As a result, you may be frustrated and want to give up on life. How people may be trying to teach you may no longer work for you. You may need to...

You may need to be taught in a different way.

But there is good news

Ask your counselor or case worker to test your learning style. Are you a visual learner, an auditory learner or a kinesthetic learner? Do you learn through watching, listening, doing or a combination of watching, listening and doing?

Understanding how you learn most effectively will give you hope. Understanding how you learn best will help you to develop strategies to learn activities of daily living. Understanding how you learn will help to empower your ongoing brain injury recovery.

Understanding your learning style will help you to build your life after your traumatic brain injury.

The Measure of a Champion

I have been thinking about what makes a champion, a champion, and then who certifies the individual as a champion. Society as a whole seems to promote several notions that, by nature disqualify most of us from believing we are champions. Some of these notions include the following scenarios. Being a star athlete or a professional athlete who makes millions of dollars. Being an Olympian who has achieved...

Received a bronze, silver or gold medal in the Olympic Games. Being a race car driver who wins a certain number of races or someone who has won the Nobel Peace Prize. I am sure you could think of other instances where society deems a person worthy of being a champion. Each of the scenarios stress achievement and recognition. From an early age, many of us get duped into believing that being a...

Being a champion was the goal to strive for in life. Consequently, we set off on personal crusade to win the prize and become a champion. I spent many years of my life attempting to qualify to be some one's champion. I was convinced that if I could just win the prize (education, athletic superiority and a high paying job) then I could, too be a champion. Through my process, I learned a valuable lesson. If I am...

If I am waiting for someone to certify that my efforts are in league with other champions, I may find myself. Find myself chasing after the wind. Subsequently, I may find myself frustrated and despondent. Despondent because I am not able to achieve the milestones of being a champion.

As an individual living with a disability, I need to remind myself that I do indeed have a disability. I need to remember lest I fall into someone's denial system. Please read my article, **Traumatic Brain Injury and Denial—My Perspective as a TBI Survivor**. Although I am not my disability, I do have specific deficits and limitations. Although I have limitations and deficits, I am not those limitations or deficits.

You may have a disability, but you are not your disability. You may have limitations, but you are not those limitations. You are a champion because you pursue excellence on a daily basis. You are a champion because you do not give up on yourself. You are a champion because you get up more times than you fall down. You are a champion because you chose to live as an empowered being. You are a champion...

Because you learn from all of your experiences. You are a champion because you refuse to believe that you are a victim of your circumstances. You are a champion because you are doing your best. We are champions because we live life on life's terms. We are champions because we trust the process. We are champions because we know that we are not alone. We are champions because we celebrate small...

We celebrate small successes. We are champions when we take advantage of the opportunities that become available to us each day. We are champions when we follow our passions. We are champions when we refuse to be ignorant or arrogant. We are champions when we are accountable to other people and for ourselves. We are champions when we look for solutions. We are champions when we think...

When we choose to think outside the box. We are champions when we are honest with ourselves. We are champions when we trust the process, the God of our understanding and ourselves one day at a time.

We are champions because we are... You are a champion, because you are... I am a champion, because I am... not because I have been approved by...

Traumatic Brain Injury and Denial—My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 1

I met with a group of friends tonight. During the time together, I felt led to share some of my perspective and struggles as a traumatic brain injury survivor with a friend of mine. A friend of mine who was also impacted by a brain injury. A brain injury resulting from cancer treatment.

My Friend's Girlfriend

My motivation in sharing this information was to provide encouragement and insight. Insight and encouragement from my experience, strength and hope as a traumatic, brain injury survivor. You see, her boyfriend went through a series of treatments several years ago to treat a malignant melanoma. The interferon saved his life, but in the process caused some brain damage.

The damage to his brain has limited his ability to function at the level prior to the cancer treatments.

Once My External Wounds Healed, I Looked Normal. You May Also Look Normal once Your External Wounds Healed.

As I have shared in my series, [My Journey thus Far](#) my brain injury occurred in 1967 when I was 10 years old. I was in a coma for 3 weeks and in traction to set my left femur, which was also fractured at the time of the accident. After being placed in a Spica or full body cast (for my left femur after completing traction) I was transferred to another hospital. There I underwent brain and skull surgery.

Several months after the surgery I went through a battery of cognitive, psychological, and social tests. I also had 2 EEG's done—the first was done with metal spikes. Thank God technology improved by the time I had the second EEG, which was done with electrodes pasted onto my head.

My Denial

The results from these tests were shared with my parents, however they decided to keep the findings from me. I did not find out about those results until after I finished graduate school. My Mom told me that the test results (the EEG's and the Cognitive and Psychosocial testing, done some 30 + years before, showed. Showed that I was not expected to be able to get beyond high school academically.

Another piece of the puzzle became apparent approximately 3 years after I completed my graduate degree. While working as a master's level rehabilitation counselor in a state department of vocational rehabilitation, I began having difficulties performing job duties as well as interacting with other staff.

This experience was not unlike many of my professional and nonprofessional jobs that I had throughout my 20 + years in the work force.

After working on the job for several months as a master's level rehab counselor, I started having difficulties completing some of the job duties, as well as interacting with other staff members. In my frustration, I decide to disclose to my supervisor that I sustained a traumatic brain injury when I was 10 years old. She in turn told the office manager, who in turn told the district supervisor of Voc Rehab.

The district supervisor, who in turn had a meeting with me. She determined that it was in my best interest to become a client of the department of vocational rehabilitation. I continued working (on probation) as a voc rehab counselor, while receiving services as a client of the department of vocational rehabilitation. Several months later I was terminated as a counselor, but continued as a client of DVR.

As you might imagine, this period of time in my life provided confusion and depression.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Denial—My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 2

My 3rd EEG

After being given my own rehabilitation counselor, I was scheduled to undergo another EEG. My counselor also arranged for me to undergo a neuro psyche evaluation. The results from the EEG confirmed that I had some brain damage. I then met with the neuro psychologist to complete the neuro psychological evaluation. Several weeks after I completed the evaluation, I received a detailed report.

A detailed report of his findings. The long and the short of the findings showed that I was functioning at a level above my abilities. The second revelation that the neuro psychologist shared in his report raised a key question. He stated that I had somehow had been able to obtain both my undergraduate and graduate degrees despite my cognitive and psycho social deficits related to the injury to my brain.

The Dr. went on to say in his report that he attributed my success to sheer persistence and motivation.

Key Question

When I said his report raised a key question, I was not making an understatement. How could I be able to obtain my undergraduate, graduate degree, as well as my national credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor, but not be able to function at an undergraduate or master's level in the work force. The conclusions drawn by the neuro psychologist seemed to be in direct contradiction.

Be in direct contradiction with what I had been able to accomplish. His findings did not make any sense to me. I was both frustrated and bewildered after reading his report.

Results of the Neuropsychological Evaluation Shared with my Family

When I shared the results of the tests with my family, they all thought the neuro psychologist did not know what he was talking about concerning my level of functioning. For the next 3 to 4 years, I continued to work under the assumption that the neuro psychologist findings were rubbish. My parents and brother continued to concur with the assumption that the reason I was having difficulty.

Difficulty maintaining employment was because I did not try hard enough. Nevertheless, I continued to get and lose job, despite my best efforts to succeed vocationally.

Even after I had been declared disabled, part of me continued to believe that my parents and my brother were right and the test results were bogus. What made matters worse for me was that I berated myself for my inability to maintain employment. My Dad also mercilessly criticized my inability to get along with people. His denial crushed my ability to love and accept who I was in the face of what I could not.

What I could not understand or overcome. My Dad wanted to believe that if he pushed me hard enough that I would straighten up. That I could overcome what was all up in my head, as my dad said.

Information Shared with My Friend's Girlfriend

I share the above information with you, as I shared with my friend's girlfriend to illustrate a point. Traumatic brain injury in many instances is an invisible disability. Although the individual may appear to be functioning well on some levels, they may still have a brain injury. Still have a brain injury which grossly interferes with their ability to function on other levels. Other levels to be successful.

My interest in sharing my story is to illustrate how a person with a traumatic brain injury can be misunderstood and minimized. What I needed most from people was understanding. I needed support and understanding because I had experienced a significant brain injury. But this understanding did not come for many years. I shared this information with my friend's girlfriend tonight in an attempt to help her understand that her boyfriend's acquired brain injury should not be denied.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Denial—My Perspective as a TBI Survivor Part 3

I told my friend's girlfriend that denying the reality of his brain damage would not change that reality. Denial would only perpetuate his feeling of inadequacy and anguish. I also encouraged her to support her boyfriend and to not place demands on him. I encouraged her to accept his reality and to love the person as the man she loved. As we spoke, I emphasized that he was not his brain injury.

You are Not your brain injury. Please read my article by clicking on this link: [Traumatic Brain Injury — Following your bliss...regardless](#). Thank you.

For My Brothers and Sisters Living with Brain Injuries

For many years, I bought into different denial systems. I believed that I should be able to function as a person without a brain injury. My denial was encouraged by those who could not or would not accept that I was indeed disabled because of a traumatic brain injury. Consequently, I continued to berate myself for what I was powerless to change, until I began questioning the denial I was told to deny.

As I was able to slowly stop trying to be someone not impacted by a brain injury, I was able to accept myself. Able to accept myself as an individual who is living the impact of a brain injury.

For those individuals who love people living with brain injuries

In the event that you have someone in your life who has experienced an acquired or traumatic brain injury, please understand we are not faking it. We are not fudging or making excuses. You may have a hard time accepting our reality, but that does not change reality. We are not like people who have not experienced a brain injury. What we need most from you is support and understanding.

Don't make us live in your denial. Please understand that we are doing the best that we can, today.

For my brother and Sisters living with Brain Injuries

For my brothers and sisters who are traumatic brain injury survivors, do not give up on your selves. Keep the faith and keep trucking. Your brain injury makes you unique and magical. Revel in your position. You are beautiful just as you are. Follow your dreams. Dream big and do the footwork. Live each day with zest and vigor. I guarantee that more will be revealed in time, one day at a time.

Most of all please remember that you are undoubtedly a very valuable and special person. You are not your acquired/traumatic brain injury. You are a bright and shining star and you are a gift to your world.

Accept Who We Are as Individuals Living with the Impact of a Brain Injury

So where do I go from here as an individual living with a brain injury?

Please read this article, by clicking on this link: [When will I find my Destiny?](#)

For a full list of resources that have empowered me in my ongoing brain injury recovery process, click on this link:

[Self-Advocacy Resources for Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery Empowering the Individual, not the brain injury](#)

Taking Care of First Things First

Over the past several days I have been thinking about the practical nature of the principle of “First things First”. In conjunction with that principle, I have been thinking about the principle of **H.A.L.T.** — Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. Night before last I did not get enough rest. When I awoke, I thought I slept well, however as the day evolved, I realized that my outlook turned negative. Stinking thinking slowly crept...

Stinking thinking slowly crept into my perspective. Although I attempted to change my perspective, I lost my focus. My attitude took a nose dive. Although I attempted to regain my focus by reading positive and uplifting material, I felt stuck. When I realized that my thinking had turned negative, I decided to apply both principles. Through applying the principle of “First things First” and “H.A.L.T.” I realized...

I realized that I needed to stop what I was doing and take a nap. Upon waking from my nap, I found that my perspective had changed. My outlook rejuvenated. After waking from my nap, I realized that my negativity and stinking thinking had dissipated. Because I had taken the time to rest, I found that I regained my focus.

Another realization

Today, in my focus to work on my computer I put off getting something to eat. When I found that my perspective was turning bleak, I decided to take care of first things first. I decided to get something healthy to eat. I fixed myself a protein shake with banana's, blueberries, strawberries and natural peanut butter in soy milk. By taking the time get something healthy to eat I found that my perspective changed...

My perspective changed for the better and I regained my focus.

Today's Thought

My encouragement to you my friend would be to consider the principles of “**First things First**” and “**H.A.L.T.**”. When you find yourself hungry, angry, lonely, tired or sick please take care your needs.

As my perspective and focus changed, so did my attitude. Through taking care of my need to rest and be nourished, I was able to see things differently. My experience reminded me that by taking care of first things first, I am able to see things in a different way.

Living with a brain injury — Not letting your Past spoil your Present Part 1

In April of 2007 I wrote an article to share some thing that I learned through my process: If you do not make peace with your past, it will spoil your present. In today's article I would like to share some of what I have learned through my process that has helped me to be able to make peace with my past. What helped me to realize that if one does not make peace with their past, the past will spoil their present.

Throughout my life's experience, I have come to realize that many of my reactions to people, places and situations have been impacted by previous experience. These reactions may be connected to and as a result of specific smells, sounds or situations that were associated with some event or person from my past. Consequently, I may find myself reacting to present day events, people or circumstances that are...

That are connected to past events, people and circumstances. The past that I may have forgotten about, but imprinted memories can come flooding forward. Come flooding forward, sometimes without warning. Such memories can hinder my ability to grow and excel in my present because they keep me tied to unresolved pain in my past. In my experience, I have come to realize that these reactions and triggers...

Reactions and triggers remind me of what I have not made peace with in my past. Triggers bring about responses and patterns of behaviors that sometimes are conscious, but more are often unconscious. As a result, I may not even know why I am reacting to present day events. Through my process, I discovered that my triggers had a common thread that linked me to the pain of my unfinished business. Through...

My process, I have discovered that the common thread that linked me to the pain of unfinished business were my resentments. Resentments seeded in what had been done to me. Resentments seeded in the unrealistic expectations that I had for other people and myself. Resentments that; regardless of their justification, were spoiling my present. What I have found is that resentment undermines my ability to...

My ability to make healthy and empowering choices. Instead of looking for solutions, resentments unconsciously keep me stuck in patterns of reacting to the pain of my past. Resentments amplify and exacerbate my reactions to present day triggers. Resentments can come out sideways in the form of over reacting to present day people, places and things. Matters that have little or nothing to do with those...

With those unresolved resentments event, people and circumstances.

What I have found is that when I find myself reacting to present triggers, I am attempting to force a solution. Force a solution to avoid having to deal with the pain from my past. What I have found is that in my attempt to avoid the pain, I perpetuate the pain. I have also seen how resentments can negatively impact and alter the course of other people's lives. People's lives in devastating ways. One only needs...

Needs to turn on the local news to see how resentments have changed the course of many lives. With this awareness, I am motivated to make peace with my past so that I do not complicate my life.

“Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.” Confucius

Living with a brain injury — Not letting your Past spoil your Present Part 2

Today's Thought

With this awareness, I realized that it was and is in my best interest to be rigorously honest with myself. Practically speaking, this means that I needed to make a list of the people that I have held resentments towards over the years. Work, school, institutions and churches were places from my past that I needed to examine. I also needed to place myself on this list. I was told that this examination was not done to...

Not done to blame anyone, nor to berate myself, but to look for patterns. Through examining patterns, I was able to understand why I reacted to events in my life. By examining these patterns, I was able to find freedom from the effects of those resentments. By examining patterns, I was able to make peace with my past. Until I examine these patterns, I will continue to find myself reliving pain from my past expectations.

Expectations and resentments through current events. Triggers will remain set until I do the work to remove them from my conscious and unconscious mind. If triggers exist, I need to address the "why". With this awareness, I need to remember that I am ultimately responsible for how I choose to react or respond to people, places and things in my present. By being accountable to myself, I am empowered.

I am empowered to live my life in my present, instead of being hindered by my past. In the process, what I have resolved from my past will no longer be able to spoil my present.

For a method to address triggers and resentments, please see my article:

Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set Me Free

Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set Me Free Part 1

“If nothing changes, nothing changes. If you keep doing what you’re doing, you’re going to keep getting what you’re getting. You want change, make some.” Courtney C. Stevens

In my experience, I have found that I determine how I choose to experience my life. I am not saying that I am able to control people, places and events because I am not. To think that I have the power to change people, places and things is foolishness and a waste of time and energy. With my awareness I have come to realize that having control or asserting control is merely an illusion of power. When I let go of the...

When I let go of the illusion of control, I am able to accept. Accept that I am powerless over people, places and things. As I practice the power of acceptance new doors are open to me. When I admit my powerlessness, I am able to admit my limitations. Through admitting that I have limitations, I discover that I am not helpless. When I realized that I was not helpless; in my process, I had a spiritual awakening.

Because I am not helpless, I always have a choice. The choice to look for solutions. The choice to work through the below Action Steps. Action steps that help me to realize I can find freedom a little at a time.

Action Steps

These action steps enable me to accept the things that I cannot change, to be able to change the things that I can. The difference between what I can and what I cannot change. Through my process I have grown to trust a power greater than myself. Consequently, I have made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of that power. In the process I make the decision to become actively involved...

Actively involved in my recovery process, one day at a time.

Active in my ongoing recovery process and in my life. Subsequently. With this decision I have been empowered to change. Change the things that I can. As a proactive participant in my life the obvious became apparent. I needed to change my attitudes and the perspective (s) that I placed on my experiences. I needed to be honest with myself. I needed to be accountable to myself. I needed to stop blaming anyone.

I needed to keep the focus upon myself. I needed to take a fearless moral inventory of myself, not to berate who I am but to free the negative energy. Free the negative information and energy that unknowingly trapped me. Through changing the way that I see my recovery process I can create hope. I discovered what was getting in my way. that my defects of character were in essence the defense mechanisms.

I am able to understand my defense mechanisms; that over time, I used to protect myself. Through examining my motives and by being honest with myself I began to realize. Realize that my defense mechanisms were no longer serving me or enhancing my relationships. I found that my defense mechanisms were hindering me. Hindering my ability to truly live my life. Through being honest with myself I was...

I was slowly able to come out of hiding. My isolation was broken when I met with my mentor and shared what I discovered about myself. As I trusted the process and shared my story, I discovered that I was not terminally unique. As my mentor listened without judgment I began to learn to trust again. In my trust I became willing to have my defects of character removed. In the next action step, I humbly asked the...

Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set Me Free Part 2

A list of persons that I had harmed throughout my lifetime. I placed myself on that list. Next, I became willing to make direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or other people. In my process I shared such amends with my sponsor to determine what amends I needed to make and those I needed to wait to make. I make amends to keep “my side” of the street clean.

In the next action step, I made a decision to continue to be honest with myself. In the process keep my side of the street clean by continuing to make direct amends. Next, I made a decision to trust again by praying for the knowledge of God’s will for me. God’s will for me and the power to carry that out. Carry that out on a daily basis. I took this process one day at a time. In the final action step, as a result of...

As a result of completing the previous 11 action steps, I became willing. In the process, I had and continue to have spiritual awakenings. Consequently, I am motivated to share my experience, strength and hope with others, as I have the opportunity, while letting go of the outcomes. My spiritual awakening (s) also inspires (s) me to practice the principles of 12 action steps in all my affairs. Through my spiritual awakenings I am able to grow in my ability to have healthy relationships. Healthy and function...

Through my spiritual awakenings I develop a healthier relationship with myself, the God of my understanding and other people. In the process, I am able to create hope in my life, Create hope in my life as an actor, instead of as a reactor, in my life through a relationship with myself, a loving God and myself.

Synopsis of the 12 Action Steps

In the spirit of sharing the power of these action steps I have compiled a synthesis of the action steps. I will include that list below.

1– You may be powerless over many things but you are not helpless. Although your life may seem unmanageable now, you no longer need to feel like a victim (helpless).

2– You do not have to be alone anymore to figure it out on your own. You can ask for help.

3– By making the decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of a power greater than yourself, you will find an unlimited source of encouragement, motivation, empowerment and hope.

4– You can find out what you have been doing to sabotage your life. You can look for patterns that have undermined your life. Consequently, you will be able to stop shooting yourself in the foot of life.

5– You no longer need to hide in the shadows. You can begin to trust. By admitting to a loving God, to yourself and to another human through what you found in step 4 (that has been sabotaging your life), you can find a new freedom. A freedom that you never knew existed. Through the process, you can make peace with the God of your understanding and with yourself.

6– You can become entirely ready to let go of the behaviors that you have been using to defend, answer and explain. Defend, answer and explain what you thought was protecting you. You can become ready to stop sabotaging your relationships and yourself, by asking a loving God for help.

Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set Me Free Part 3

7– You can be actively involved in the process of seeing the behaviors that have sabotaged your life removed. You can work toward changing your behavior in ways that will enhance your life and all your relationships. Have those behaviors removed by humbly asking a loving God to remove the behaviors that have sabotaged your ability to live and blossom in your life and relationships.

8– In working in partnership with a loving God you can make a list of the persons. Make a list of people; including yourself, who you have been harmed. Who you have harmed by participating in behaviors that have sabotaged your life and your relationships.

By making a list of the people you that have negatively impacted or harmed (that you have gleaned through completing your 4th action step) you become willing to make direct amends to them all.

9– You make direct amends (once you have completed the first 8 action steps and you have talked with your sponsor). Make direct amends to the people who have been negatively impacted by the behaviors that you have previously used to cope. Consequently, you can make peace with your fellows, and in the process make peace with yourself.

By completing this amends step; making amends, you can be released from the burden of guilt and shame. You can find a new freedom to live your life while giving other people the permission to do so.

10– On a daily basis, you continue to take a personal inventory. When you recognize that you have harmed others you promptly admit those wrongs to the person (s). On a daily basis, you continue to be accountable to and for your behavior. You choose to keep your side of the street clean.

11– You do not have to live life each day by yourself. You can rely on a power greater than yourself to lead, guide and direct your steps, one day at a time. You don't have to lean on your own understanding. You can pray for the knowledge of God's will; for you, and the power to carry that out.

You can trust the process, a loving God and your ability to learn from your circumstances and experiences. In the process, you will be empowered to live the life that you have imagined.

12– Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of working these 12 action steps you attempt to carry the message of the 12 action steps to other people. Carry the message of hope through the 12 action steps. Carry the message of hope by practicing the principle of the 12 action steps in all your affairs.

Note: The 12 action steps are not meant to be punitive in nature. Instead, the 12 Action Steps are designed to empower you and I to live life on life's terms. Living life on life's terms, while succeeding. The 12 action steps are meant to free the individual of self-defeating behaviors that sabotage and undermine. Undermine the individual's life and their relationships. The 12 action steps empower the individual to be of maximum service to the God of their understanding and to their fellows.

Note: In the original text the 12 Steps “We” has been used where I have written “You”. I have used you instead of we to emphasize that you are powerless over people, places and things. I have needed to keep the focus on myself as I have worked through the 12 action steps.

Second Chance to Live – Action Steps That Set Me Free Part 4

Nevertheless, by participating in a 12 Step recovery program, you never have to be alone again. As I have heard mentioned. 12 Step recovery programs are a We program. In my experience, I have found that when I choose to take the focus off of myself and place the focus on another person, place, event, institution or thing I miss the benefit. Miss the benefit that can be gained through working the ...

Working the 12 action steps with a sponsor or mentor. I have found that when I am drawn to take the focus off of myself and place the focus on something I need to work the 12 action steps. I need to examine my triggers and reactions. In my experience, I have come to realize that the 12 Action Steps are not meant to point out where I am not measuring up. Instead, the 12 Steps are meant to set me free from limiting...

Set me free from behaviors and limiting beliefs that sabotage and undermine my relationships. My relationship with the God of my understanding, other people and myself. The 12 Steps empower my ability to be of maximum service to a loving God and my fellows, one day at a time.

As a Matter of Faith

I have been thinking about something that I would like to share with you. I have been thinking about faith. I have heard a definition of faith, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11 verse 1. What I do with my faith is up to me. In my experience, I have...

I have come to accept that I don't have the big picture and don't know how the dots will connect.

I have been thinking about another application of faith, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8 verse 28. Thinking about this thought, I realize that I have several choices. I can either believe that ALL...

ALL things are being worked together for my good or **ALL** things are not being worked together for my good, regardless of how they may look to me now.

I have been thinking about the ‘dots’ What I think needs to occur, for me to realize what I am hoping for; may not be ready to take place. The timing may be wrong, or something else may first need to take place. Take place for me to “grasp” the things that I hope or hoped for in my life. Through accepting these...

Through accepting these premises:

That I do not have the big picture.

That I do not know how all things are fitting together.

That I do not know what needs to occur and how they need to connect.

Because I do not know, I am able to step back and ask myself several questions. Question that will help me. Help me to learn and benefit from what is occurring in my life.

By asking myself these questions, I renew my faith.

By asking these questions, I renew my hope.

1. What is the lesson?
2. How can I benefit from what is occurring?
3. How can I use what I am learning, from what is occurring; to be of service to others?

By asking these questions, I grow in faith. By asking these questions, I grow in hope. By asking these questions, I realize that more will be revealed to me in time. By asking these questions I am able let go when I do not understand. By asking these questions I can trust the process, a loving God and myself.

I Don't Have to Wait — I can Create my Destiny Now

I have been thinking about the matter of find one's destiny. Through considering the quest, I arrived at some definite conclusions. What I discovered is that I do not have to wait on my destiny. I can create my destiny in the now. My destiny can be created through each of my circumstance(s), lesson, discouragement, disappointment and opportunity. I just need to be willing to learn from everything.

“Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.” Babe Ruth

“I have not failed. I have just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” Thomas Edison

During many years of my life, I focused on the “when's” of life. When I get the degree, when I get the job or when I get a good paying job. When I get the relationship. Consequently, I spent huge amounts of time and energy in my attempt to secure the when's of life. You see, I bought into the notion that these when's were going to complete me, and in the process secure my destiny. In essence, I attached my...

My being to being able to achieve and accomplish certain outcomes to then secure my destiny. In my obsession to secure my destiny, I lost sight of my journey and my being. In the process, living essentially became a means to an end, rather than something to be cherished and valued. The when's of life consequently became more important than living life itself. Living became a chore as I sought to prove...

Sought to prove my worth and value through the obtaining of these “when's”. But something, that I was aware of, kept getting in my way. You see, for many years I was unaware of the impact of a brain injury that I sustained when I was 10 years old. The brain injury and subsequent invisible disability that hindered my ability to achieve these “when's” in my life. Consequently, I found myself frustrated over and over.

Distracted by the When's and If's

Over time I became aware of how the “when's”; that I had for my life, distracted me from the “now's” of my life. The “when's” of life were a distraction because they were like the proverbial golden carrot that remained just out of reach. In my awareness, the obvious became apparent. My “now's” are always present. Because my “now's” are always present I am given the opportunity to learn from my present.

I am given the opportunity to value the moment. As I learn from my “now's” I am provided with the knowledge to experience my destiny in the present moment. What I learned helped me to realize that I no longer have to be distracted by When' and If's. Consequently, I no longer need to pursue my destiny in the “when's” and “if's”. Instead, as I stay in my present, I am able to participate in my destiny “now”.

I choose to create in the now. Through creating in the present, I am able to take advantage of the circumstances that my now's offer to me. The circumstances in the “now” are meant to prepare me, not hinder me. Through staying in the now, I am freed from the belief that I need to find my destiny. Therefore, I am free to be in my destiny without needing to prove my worth or value in the when and ifs of life.

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

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

Stay Committed to Your Course — Run Your Own

During my morning meditation, I thought about an article that I wrote in June of 2010. In my life I have found the subject matter in this fable to be true for me. The fable encourages me to not compare myself with other people. Compare or be distracted by other people as I run my own race at my own pace.

Here is the article:

Living with a brain injury and the Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare

Posted by Second Chance to Live on June 11, 2010

Over the past several days I have been writing a **series Living with a brain injury and Having Options**. Last night I began thinking about the account of the Tortoise and the Hare. Although I have not finished the series, I feel led to speak to the fable of **The Tortoise and the Hare**.

In the fable, the tortoise challenges the hare to a race. The story goes on to share how the hare scoffs at the tortoise's challenge. The hare, because his "superior speed" thought he would surely beat the tortoise. In the hare's arrogance; by what he said and did, the hare minimized, marginalized and discounted the tortoise. The tortoise's ability and possibility that the tortoise could run and even win the race.

As the fable comes to a close, we find that the tortoise is actually waiting for the hare at the finish line. The line written at the base of the fable denotes the meaning of the story. Slow and steady wins the race. Although the hare was much quicker than the tortoise, because the tortoise stayed committed to running his race, the tortoise went on to finish and even win the race.

Today's Thought

In life, you may feel like the tortoise in the fable. Like the tortoise, you may have people in your life who behave like the hare. You, like the tortoise, may find that there are people in your life. People in your life who discount you and your ability to participate in any race. You may have people in your life, who by what they say and do dismiss your ability to run in, much less win your race. Like the tortoise, you may...

You may have hares in your life. who by what they say and do, seek to discourage you from running in your race. To that I would say. No worries. Be like the tortoise and determine to run your race. Be like the tortoise and be who you are my friend. Be like the tortoise and go about your business. Stay committed to your mission and vision. And as the tortoise found, you will finish and win your race.

Win your race because you did not pay attention to what the "hare" in your life says, or do. Say or do as you run your race. So, as you run your race, remember – Slow and Steady Wins the Race.

"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

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

"Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another 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

Living with a Disability and Accomplishing Greatness

I have been doing some research on celebrities living with brain injuries and other kinds of “disabilities. During the course of my research, I read about the lives of other famous people. Famous people who while living with various disabilities, achieved great success in their chosen field and passion.

“People of mediocre ability sometimes achieve outstanding success, because they don’t know when to quit. Most men (and women) succeed because they are determined to.” George Allen (and women) my addition.

Each of these individuals, who are considered famous, all had various hurdles. Had hurdles to overcome to reach the heights that made them famous. Each individual achieved what made them famous, in their chosen field, because they made the decision to get started. These individuals did not allow their disability to keep them from using their gifts, talents and abilities in ways that would work for them.

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret to getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.” Mark Twain

Each of these individuals did not allow their disabilities to define who they were or are as individuals. As I reflected upon what each of these individuals had achieved with their lives, while living with their disability, I found myself empowered by their example. As I read, I was reminded that I too could accomplish great things with my life, while living with my disability, by getting started.

“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

In life, we may be living with a disability, but our disability does not have to limit our ability in life. Instead, we can be inspired by the lives of people who have come before us. Individuals who have achieved great things while living with a disability. We can accomplish greatness, at our own rate and pace. We can give of who we are by using our gifts, talents and abilities in ways that will work for us.

“If you go to work on your goals, your goals will work on you. If you go to work on your plan, your plan will go to work on you. Whatever good things we build end up building us.” Jim Rohn

“I am a slow walker, but I never walk backwards.” “I will prepare and someday my chance will come.” Abraham Lincoln

“History had demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered, heartbreaking obstacles before they succeeded. They won, because they refused to be discouraged by their defeats.”

Evaluating Life and Thriving

In life I have found that I see things as they are interpreted by my experience. Consequently, I am challenged to examine my interpretation of my experiences. Below are several quotes that encourage me to consider my interpretation (s) of my experience (s). By doing so I am empowered by my experiences.

“We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.” Anais Nin

What this quote helps me to consider is that things may not be as they are, but how I perceive them to be, but how I interpret these things. Consequently, I can re-evaluate what is happening in my life.

“If you do not like something, change it. If you cannot change it, change the way you think about it.” Mary Engelbreit

With my understanding, I can change the way in which I think about those things. By doing so I can consider the possibilities that exist in my choice to look at things in a different way.

“It does not matter where you’ve been, it only matters where you’re going.” Brian Tracey

In life, I have found that it is not as important as what happened to me, as what I do with what happened to me. With my realization, I can seek to be empowered by what happens (end) to me.

“It’s never too late to be who you might have been.” George Eliot

I am thankful that I no longer need to see myself as a victim of my circumstances. I am thankful that I can instead view my circumstances as a way to build me up, not to keep me down.

“Imperfect action is better than perfect inaction.” Henry Truman

My experience has taught me to change the way that I see my efforts. By doing so, I have been able to stop fighting against myself. By doing so, I have been able to see that there is no such thing as failure.

Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams or Your Destinies — Quotes that Inspire

Today I would like to share a list of quotes that have encouraged and inspired me to pursue and not give up on my dreams or my destiny. As you read the below quotes, may you also be encouraged and inspired to pursue and not give up on your dreams or your destiny. To not give up on your process or journey.

Please let me know which quote or quotes inspire you, my friend.

“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

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

“Don’t judge your day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

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

“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

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

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

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” Zig Ziglar

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

“Decision is the spark that ignites action. Until a decision is made, nothing happens.” Wilfred A. Peterson

Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

“In my experience I have found that adversity is what has made me successful, because I refused to give up because of adversity.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Why Dark Clouds appear in Life

Circumstances may not always look as we would want them to in our lives. Consequently, we may find ourselves discouraged by the course of events that seem to have spun our lives out of our control. We may look up to find that storms are brewing on the horizon and watch as dark clouds drift into our lives. At those times we may find ourselves overwhelmed and intimidated because of what we cannot...

We cannot understand or value at the present time. We may also find ourselves struggling to make sense of our lives and our circumstances. In our discouragement we may want to retreat and isolate because of the unknown. Consequently, in our desperation we may want to give up on ourselves and our journeys. My friend, I want to share something you that I have learned through my experience that encourages me.

Dark clouds and gloomy skies were never meant to dictate the quality of our lives. My experiences have taught me that dark clouds only appear to remind me that silver linings exist. Consequently, I have found that my willingness to look for the silver linings among the dark clouds invariably determines how I experience my life. How I experience my life when I don't understand the "whys" and the "when's".

"I have found that dark clouds only appear to remind me that silver linings exist." Craig J. Phillips

Today's Thought

Consequently, I determine to look for the silver linings in my present circumstances. Look for regardless of how my circumstances may look or how I may feel – at the present time. Consequently, I will trust that I am being taught what I need to know. I will learn from the lesson, for lessons are leading me in the direction of my destiny. Therefore, I will not be discouraged by any dark clouds or gloomy skies.

Discouraged by dark cloud or gloomy skies, because I know that silver linings exist.

The Power to Change a Life – Perseverance

Recently, I have been thinking about the topic of perseverance. Let me share those thoughts with you. Perseverance is a decision that I make to stay committed to my vision and mission. Committed to the task at hand, regardless of what comes against me. Perseverance is not about being stubborn to prove a point or to stand my ground. Perseverance consequently teaches me to keep the focus on myself.

To keep my focus as I go about my business. As I go about working on my goals as I feel led.

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

“Sometimes adversity is what you need in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

Perseverance does not mean that I have to do anything perfectly. Perseverance reminds me that with all learning, there is a learning curve. And the learning curve is mine. At my own rate and pace. Perseverance reminds me that success lies in what I learn on the way to any destination. Perseverance defines success, as the willingness to get back up and keep moving. Keep moving as I work toward my goals, regardless...

Regardless of how many times I may stumble. Perseverance expands my capacity for creativity. Expands my creativity when I recognize what I have been doing is no longer working for me.

“I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work.” Thomas Edison

Perseverance empowers my ability to look for alternative solutions. Perseverance reflects my being, not my doing. Perseverance helps me to put off the old to take on the new. Perseverance encourages me to move beyond choices that are not good for me. Perseverance empowers my ability to see my circumstances in a different light. Perseverance grants me the determination to not give up on myself.

Perseverance reminds me to celebrate my small gains as I move in the direction of my goals.

Perseverance encourages me to not give up on myself, when giving up would be much easier.

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

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles, which he has overcome while trying to succeed.” Booker T. Washington

Perseverance does not judge my efforts, my worth or my value. Perseverance empowers my ability to see my obstacles as an opportunity to succeed through the lessons that I learn. Perseverance encourages me to move forward at my own pace. Perseverance allows me to stay in the moment, as I work toward my goals. Perseverance reminds me that I am a work in process. Perseverance gives me the ability to stop...

Stop fighting against myself. Perseverance encourages me to pursue excellence, instead of perfection. Progress, not perfection. Perseverance empowers our ability to relish in small gains. Perseverance allows you and I to stay in the moment, as we work toward our goals. Perseverance motivates you and I to pursue excellence, instead of perfection. Perseverance gives us permission to let go of the big picture.

Let go of the big picture through staying in the moment. Perseverance teaches you and I to trust the process, as more will be revealed to us. Perseverance encourages you and I to keep the focus on ourselves, instead of comparing our lot in life. Perseverance empowers your and my ability to change directions.

“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

“You cannot change your destination overnight, but you can change your direction overnight.” Jim Rohn

Creating a Destiny with Puzzle Pieces and Threads

In my keynote presentations and the workshops that I lead I speak to the principle, the visual of a puzzle. Living life can be likened to a puzzle. The puzzle is made up of individual pieces, that by themselves may make little sense. However, collectively they create a beautiful story. Each individual puzzle piece created by a different set of circumstances, lessons, opportunities and possibilities.

Living life can be likened to the creation of a tapestry. One side only showing jumbled threads, while on the other side something of great worth and value is being designed. Each thread woven together intricately. Each thread given to empower. Each thread birthing hope. Each thread providing grace. Each thread preparing a destiny. Each thread providing a legacy. Even the threads containing apparent...

Discouragement, disappointment and disillusionment; even the threads that contain confusion and make little or no sense. No sense maybe at the present time, yet essential to the creation of the story.

Below are several quotes that help me to see the value of each puzzle piece and every thread in place.

The first quote helps me to realize that I do not have to do many things to be effective. Instead, I can be effective and efficient on my journey through developing and becoming proficient in one skill at a time.

“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who had practiced one kick 10,000 times.” Bruce Lee

The second quote reminds me that life is made up of little things. By remembering this reality, I can celebrate small successes without trying to prove anything to anyone. I am on my own journey.

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

The next quote encourages me to not compare myself to anyone. Instead, I can learn how to use what I have been given. Given my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that will work for me. Work for me without judging my efforts. Without comparing my process and journey to anyone else’s process or journey.

“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

The next quote empowers me to pursue my passion, despite the expectation (s) that other people may have for me and my life. By letting go, I am able to honor the gift of my life and the One who gave me my passion.

“My mother said to me, ‘If you are a soldier, you will become a general. If you are a monk, you will become the Pope.’ Instead, I was a painter, and became Picasso.” Pablo Picasso

The next quote reminds me that I do not have to wait for specific outcomes to be able to enjoy my journey. Instead, I can find satisfaction in doing the footwork while trusting the process and the outcomes to a loving God.

“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

And the last quote motivates me to keep moving, because I know that more will be revealed in time. The pieces of the puzzle will come together in the right order at the right time. Each thread will be weaved by design.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Through committing myself to the process, before long I will be able to look back and see how far I have come, because I did not give up.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Accomplishing Goals and Baking Cakes

In my last several articles I have shared with you that we can achieve huge milestones with our lives, despite societal stigma and our apparent limitations. In today's article, I want to share some thing with you that I have learned through my process. The visual analogy has helped me with the experience of achieving milestones in my life. Approximately 23 years ago, when I started training at a martial art...

Training at the martial art school I had a conversation with my Sensei, instructor. What he shared with me during that 5-minute conversation has stuck with me over the years. He said, "Becoming a black belt is like baking a cake." He said, "What I do is give you the ingredients to bake that cake. Your job is to bake the cake." Although my Sensei was referring to the process of becoming a black belt, the principle of baking a cake can be used. Can be used whenever I set out to accomplish a goal or achieve a milestone.

Achieve a goal or milestone in my life. Consequently, I realize that whenever I want to accomplish a goal or achieve a milestone in my life, I need to have a plan. I need to gather the right ingredients. The right ingredients to work on specific objectives. Once I gather and have the ingredients, I need to devise a plan. A plan that will enable my ability to mix the ingredients together. I then need to apply time and energy...

Apply time and energy into the process of mixing the ingredients together. One ingredient with another ingredient at a time. One skill and one skill set at a time. One skill set with another skill set to accomplish what I set out to accomplish. The accomplishment of baking the cake of the goal or milestone that I am seeking to achieve. I need to allow myself to have all the time I need to combine those ingredients.

A Riddle of Illustration

I once heard a man share a riddle. He said, "How do you eat an elephant?"

At his question my mind was at first boggled. And then he gave the answer and the riddle became clear.

He said, "One bite at a time my friend".

With his answer, I realized that I no longer needed to be overwhelmed by the size of any elephant. By seeing the achieving a goal or a milestone one bite at a time I am encouraged. Encouraged to keep chewing. Keep chewing until I accomplish my goal or milestone.

Starting and Not Giving Up.

So, when I start a new goal, I can follow the advice that is found with in this riddle. I can approach my goal, not as an over-whelming elephant but as something that can be approached. Something that I can be accomplished one bite at a time. By applying time, effort and commitment to the process of accomplishing each goal I am able to consume each "elephant". Consume the "elephant" simply by...

Simply by making the decision to keep taking bites.

Today's Thought

In life, you may be staring at your own elephant. You may want to bake a cake, but do not know where to begin. My encouragement to you my friend is that you sit down with a pen and piece of paper. Write down what you would like to accomplish and how you could go about accomplishing that goal and milestone. Determine what ingredients you need to have and how you can best mix those ingredients.

Mix those ingredients together. And then start your process of mixing. Mixing one ingredient and one bite at a time. And in the event that I can help you, please let me know. I will do my best to be there for you, as you make your cake and eat your elephant. One skill and one skill set at

"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goals." Henry Ford

Acceptance — A Portal to Unseen Possibilities

Several days ago, I wrote an article **Finding Serenity in the Midst of Frustration and Fear** in which I spoke about coming to the place of acceptance. In May of 2007 I wrote an article to share some thoughts on acceptance. I would like to share that article with you below. In my experience, I have found that acceptance provides the portal to unseen possibilities. No longer stuck, I am able to see I have choices.

Acceptance

Posted by Second Chance to Live on May 1, 2007

On my journey, as I have walked down the various corridors that life has revealed I have found. I have found that life is best understood backwards. With this in mind, acceptance can appear to be a lofty goal. A lofty goal when the things that I am going through do not make sense to me. However, when I look at life through the lens of living life on life's terms, I become willing to look at what may not make...

No make sense to me at the time, my circumstances take on new meaning. Take on new meaning by remembering that I always have a choice. A choice to look at what is happening as an opportunity to learn. An opportunity to learn and grow from what is happening in my life. An opportunity to see what I may not understand at the present time as for my good. Good to prepare me for possibilities.

However, if...

Conversely, if I view my circumstance in a critical manner, I will see them as an obstacle course. An obstacle course set up to frustrate my life. Consequently, I may then feel victimized by those circumstances. In response, I may not consider the possibilities that the circumstance(s) will open for me. If I am not looking for possibilities, my attitude can easily default to negative thinking and pessimism.

Today's thought:

Each day I am given choices. I may not think or believe that I have choices at times, but I do. Acceptance does not mean that I give up. Acceptance does not mean I like "it". Acceptance means that I surrender to what is and learn to grow where I am planted. My circumstances no longer need to dictate to the quality my of life. As a result, just for today, I will determine to look at my circumstances as portals...

Portals to possibilities. I will look at my circumstances for my good, instead as my adversary. I will not allow my circumstances to dictate to me. Instead, I will choose to learn from what is. Through my learning, I will be encouraged and empowered. I will therefore be motivated to live life on life's terms because I am a winner. I will then accept the things that I cannot change to change the things I can.

Live your Dreams in the Now!

In my 3 part series, **Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury — Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams!** I shared with you a milestone that I accomplished. Accomplished on November 8, 2008 on my way to realizing a dream that I have had for myself for many years. But; on the way to realizing that dream, I experienced times of disappointment, discouragement and even despondency when I encountered setbacks.

Subsequently, over the years in my pursuit of the dream I have had many times when I wanted to give up. When I wanted to give up and abandon the dream. During those times I found myself asking why I was continuing to pursue the dream in the face of my discouragement, disappointment and setbacks. Why I was pursuing the dream when giving up and giving in would have been much easier.

In the midst of my struggle to understand I learned an extremely valuable lesson. I did not have to wait to experience my dream. I could live my dream in the now. Although I have not yet experienced the fulfillment of that dream, of obtaining my black belt in the mixed martial arts I have discovered a valuable lesson. I have discovered that I can savor the experience of my dream in the now. Rather than waiting...

Waiting until the end of the 2-day black belt test to be awarded the fruit of my labor my black belt, I can celebrate the fulfillment of that dream each step along my journey. Through my awareness, I discovered that I no longer need to wait to fulfill that dream before I can celebrate my dream.

Something to Consider

You may also have a dream that you have been working towards. A dream or one that you would like to accomplish. My encouragement to you, my friend would be that you make every part of your process a part of your dream. Rather than waiting for the outcome of that dream, celebrate what you have done.

By celebrating what you have done and accomplished on your way to your dream, you will stay encouraged. Encouraged to keep moving forward toward your dream. Move forward to toward achieving your dream, a little at a time. A little at a time, even when you face and experience, discouragement, disappointments and setbacks. By celebrating the progress, you are making you will be able to live...

Able to live your dreams in the now, although you have not achieved your dreams.

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“Inch by inch, life’s a cinch. Yard by yard, life’s hard.” John Bytheway

“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” Zig Ziglar

By celebrating our dreams in the now we are able to celebrate the progress we are making. The progress that we are making towards accomplishing those goals. By doing so we can live our dreams in the now.

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

I Don't Have to Wait to Live My Dreams Part 1

In **Part 3** of my article series, [Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury — Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams!](#) I shared with you a milestone that I accomplished on November 8, 2008.

Accomplished on my way to realizing a dream that I had for many years. But; on the way to that milestone, I experienced disappointment, discouragement and even despondency. Because I experienced disappointment, discouragement and despondency, I faced times when I questioned wanting to give up. Wanting to give up because things were not progressing as I thought they should be, given the time, effort.

Time, effort and dedication that I was putting accomplishing and realizing into that dream. At these times, I found myself questioning and asking “why?”. “Why?” in the face of my discouragement, disappointment and despondency. “Why?” in the process of pursuing the dream of achieving my black belt. Why when giving up would have been much easier. Much easier than continuing to struggle.

A “Silver Lining” Amidst my Disappointment, Discouragement and Despondency

In the midst of my struggle to understand, “WHY?” I learned an extremely valuable lesson. I no longer had to wait. I no longer had to had to wait to live my dream. The dream of achieving and obtaining my black belt in International Martial Arts and Boxing. Instead, I could live and experience my dream in my now. Celebrate the achieving of my black belt through each part and step in the process of my black belt.

Although I had not yet obtained my black belt, I realized that I no longer had to wait to celebrate the obtaining/achieving of my black belt. Instead, I could celebrate the dream of obtaining my black belt in the now. I could do so, instead of waiting until the end of the 2-day black belt test to find that I obtained my black belt. With my awareness, I realized that I could enjoy the process instead of stressing myself.

Celebrating each Part or Step in the Process of Achieving the Dream

Each step in my process and journey towards achieving and obtaining my black belt. By celebrating each step along the way, I realized the I no longer had to wait to live my dream. Any dream. Be it the dream of obtaining my black belt or any other dream that I may have for myself by celebrating the process.

We Don't Have to Wait to Live Our Dream (s)

You may also have a dream that you have been working towards. A dream or one that you would like to accomplish. A dream that you think, if I just obtain that dream, then I could celebrate. Celebrate the fulfillment of that dream. My encouragement to you would be to celebrate each part (step) of the dream.

Each part (step) in and of the process of obtaining your dream (s) as something to celebrate.
“Pot of Gold” at the end of the Rainbow of our Dream (s)

The good news is that we no longer have to wait to find the “pot of gold” at the end of the rainbow by fulfilling our dream (s). The good news is that the “pot of gold” can be found in the progress we are making toward our dream (s). We can celebrate each step in the process of working towards those dream (s). We can do the “footwork”, let go of the timing and celebrate the process of achieving our dreams.

I Don't Have to Wait to Live My Dreams Part 2

Celebrate and be Encouraged

By celebrating what we have done and accomplished on the way to our dream (s), we will stay encouraged. Encouraged to keep moving forward/toward, and in the pursuit of accomplishing our dream; a little at a time, even when we experience, discouragement, disappointments, despondency and face setbacks. By celebrating our progress, we are able to celebrate our dream (s) in the now.

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.” Babe Ruth

“Inch by inch, life's a cinch. Yard by yard, life's hard.” John Bytheway

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

“I have not failed. I have found 10,000 ways that won't work.” Thomas Edison

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

“All life is an experiment. The more experiments the better.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.” Zig Ziglar

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

“Decision is the spark that ignites action. Until a decision is made, nothing happens.” Wilfred A. Peterson

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” Zig Ziglar

“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

Achieving Goals in Small Bites

In April 2017, I had the opportunity and privilege of presenting during a work shop at a conference -- Embracing Life and Living Well after Traumatic Brain Injury Conference. During the workshop I demonstrated some of the hand eye coordination skills that I have been developing and honing as a martial artist. Developed and honed on both my dominant and non-dominant sides of my body.

Skills in western boxing, muay Thai, wing chun, jeet kune do, modern arnis and kali drills. The reason why I demonstrated these skills was to illustrate a point and share a principle. Recently I received a tally of the evaluations and the comments that were made by the individuals who attended my work shop at the conference. Among the comments that I received concerning my inclusion and demonstration of...

Demonstration of my western boxing, muay Thai, wing chun, jeet kune do, modern arnis and kali skills were: "I loved the martial arts stuff & quotes" and "The martial arts elements were very effectively illustrated in the use of life and the goals. An explanation of 'correlation' extremely valuable to the points touched upon." I am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to give a workshop at the conference.

Shortly after beginning my training at the martial school my Sensei shared with me his philosophy. He shared with me that his job – as my instructor – is to give me ingredients through my training. He told me that I will grow and develop as a martial artist as I learn how to combine those ingredients together. The process has been slow at times, but the journey has been very worthwhile. By staying committed...

Staying committed to the process of learning and combining various skills, I have been able to accomplish what I never dreamed possible. In life you may want to accomplish something that may seem too big to you. May seem to daunting to you. I have had those thoughts too, but then I remember the above answer to the riddle, "One bite at a time". Through staying committed to the process, working...

Working on and learning how to combine each ingredient, the elephant is consumed and the goal reached. So, when you face your elephant (s) remember the answer to the riddle, "One bite at a time". By staying committed to the process, working on each skill and learning how to combine each ingredient, the elephant will be consumed and the goal will be reached. In the process, you will be able to accomplish...

Be able to accomplish what you never dreamed possible.

One man presented a riddle to another man, "How do you eat an elephant?" The other man replied, "One bite at a time."

Not Judging my Insides with Other People's Outsides

Last week I shared that I had been struggling and frustrated. I also found myself angry as a result. I knew that the problem existed with me and not because of someone else. I was the one who was restless, irritable and discontent. I knew that I needed to examine the root. I wrote in a journal and spoke with a mentor of mine. Nevertheless, I still had a difficult time putting my finger on what was at the root.

On the root of my funk. Yesterday in my morning meditation I began to receive some clarity. I realized that I needed to get back to basics. You see I had fallen into the trap of comparing my lot in life with other people's lots in life. By doing so I had allowed the expectations surrounding other people's lots to be the expectations for my lot in life. In my awareness, I found that I had been judging my insides.

Judging my insides with other people's outsides. In my awareness, I found that I had been experiencing a sense of shame for not being enough on my lot. In my awareness, I found that I had judged my being. What began to be clear to me was that I needed to stop judging what I was doing with my lot. What began to be clear to me was that I needed to focus on what I am doing with my lot. What became clear to me...

Clear to me that was that I needed to celebrate what I am building on my lot. What became clear to me was that I needed to stop judging my efforts by the expectations of what I perceived other people were building on their lot. What became clear to me was that I needed to see the value of what I am building on my lot, apart from what I perceived other people were building on their lots. With this renewed...

Renewed awareness, I refocused my attention to my mission and vision. With this renewed awareness, I began to see the value of what I am creating on my lot. With this awareness, I saw the reality of my strengths. With this renewed awareness, I reminded myself of my being and my great value. With this renewed awareness, I was able to stop judging my insides, with the values. With the values that other...

The values that other people place on their lots in life. With this renewed awareness, I found the freedom to once again focus on what I am building on my lot. With this renewed awareness, I was able to root out the reason for and get out of my funk.

Today's thought

What other people build on their lot in life is none of our business. What we are building on our lot in life is none of their business. If I find myself judging my lot to another person's lot, I need to re-focus. I need to re-focus my commitment to my mission and vision. I need to stay committed to building on my lot. By keeping the focus on my lot, I am able to keep from falling into the trap that occurs when I judge my insides with / to other people's outsides. I am able to find peace in my life as I run my own race.

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

Traumatic Brain Injury – Living Beyond our Limitations

I have been thinking about something that Mother Teresa stated during her life time. What she said encourages me to realize that I do not have to be limited by my limitations. What she said reminds me that I can actively offer who I am as an individual to a living and loving God. The quote gives me hope, because I realize that I do not rely on my own efforts. Instead, I can open myself up to the care of a...

Loving God to guide and use my life, beyond the scope of my imagination to be of service. I can surrender my hopes and my dreams to a loving God, to live my life beyond my hopes and dreams. I can offer my will and my life, as a child offered his 2 small fishes and 5 loaves of bread to a loving God who fed the 5000. I can see Him multiply my perceived lack and limitations to offer hope to individuals that He...

That He brings into my life. I can be used, as an instrument in the hands of a loving God to live beyond my understanding. I can offer my life, as a vessel, to live my life beyond my life. I can seek to be, an instrument, of His peace. I can seek to instill faith, hope and love. I can seek to console. I can seek to understand, instead of seeking to be understood. I can seek to pardon and forgive. I can trust the process.

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” Mother Teresa

“I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.” Mother Teresa

I can seek to live my life, as part of the solution. By doing so, I will live beyond my years.

From Mother Teresa’s prayer – Do it Anyway

“People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”

A Word of Encouragement – Keep Swinging at the Fences

Several months ago, I started using a phrase when I am asked how I am doing. I say, “I am swinging at the fences.” Although I may not hit the ball out of the park with every swing, I know. I know that as I keep stepping up to the plate and keep swinging my chances of hitting the ball out of the park increases. As you may have heard, Babe Ruth held the home run record for many years. Although he held the...

He held the home run record; he also held the record for strike outs. He hit 714 home runs, but also struck out a total of 1330 times in his career. Many people focus on the # of home runs he hit during his career, while not realizing how many times he struck out in the process. When asked by a newspaper reporter on the number of times he struck out at the plate, Babe told the newspaper reporter the following.

“Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.” Babe Ruth

Thomas Edison was the inventor of the light bulb and many other inventions. Nevertheless, he failed many times in his experiments on the way to finding out how to make the light bulb work. He, like Babe Ruth found himself asked a question by a news reporter. Asked by a newspaper reporter about the failures in his attempts with the light bulb. Like Babe Ruth, instead of seeing the negative he saw the positive.

“I have Not Failed I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work” – Thomas Edison

Like Babe Ruth who did not focus on the # of times he struck out at the plate, Thomas did not focus on what did not work. Both Babe Ruth’s and Thomas Edison’s replies and attitudes reflect is a shift. A shift in the way that “failure” is looked at in life. In learning from Mr. Ruth and Mr. Edison I can frame my process as one of “keep stepping up to the plate” and not failure, but “finding out what does not work”.

Because Babe did not focus on the strike outs, he realized that every time he stepped up to the plate and swung at the ball was another opportunity. Because Thomas did not focus on the 10,000 ways that didn’t work, he did not give up on his search. As a result, and because of his persistence he found a way to make the light bulb work. On the web page [But They Did Not Give Up](#) there are many other examples of...

Of people who kept swinging at the fences and did not see failure as failure. Failure, despite what other people may have thought about their efforts. Babe Ruth’s and Thomas Edison’s attitude and seeing what they accomplished during their lifetimes – in addition to the other individuals listed on **“But They Did Not Give Up”** — encourage me to keep swinging at the fences and see what does not work, not failure.

“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

Encouraged by those Individuals who Triumphed

May you also be encouraged to keep swinging at the fences, despite what other people may be saying about your efforts. May you also be encouraged to keep searching for a way to make your “light bulb” work, despite what other people may want you to believe. Want you to believe about your efforts. May you also be encouraged to keep moving in the direction of your dreams, as you endeavor to live the life.

As you endeavor to live the life that you have imagined. May you also be encouraged to trust the process, a loving God and yourself, as you move. Move in the direction of your dreams, one day at a time.

“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

Life may not be the party we had hoped for, but...

In February 2008 I wrote the article, **Traumatic Brain Injury and Life**. The article would later be published in **Synapse — The Official Journal of the Brain Injury Associations of Australia — Winter 2008 Quarterly Edition ISSN 1448-9856**. Living with a traumatic/acquired brain injury or some other disability can leave us feeling powerless and can leave us questioning hope. The good news is...

Is that we can “dance” and live in hope while we are here, regardless of what happened or happens to us.

“Life may not be the party we had hoped for, but while we are here, we should dance.” Unknown

Below is what I shared in my article and what was published in the official journal of the Brain Injury Association of Australia. As you read my article may you gain a fresh perspective. A fresh perspective surrounding your set of circumstances that will encourage and inspire you to “dance”. Dance as you see your set of circumstances in a new and different way. A way that will empower your life and well-being.

A way that will instill in you a renewed sense of hope and a desire to keep dancing and not give up.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Life – the article published in the journal

Hi, and welcome back to Second Chance to Live. You are always welcome around my table. I have been thinking about the nature of life. We may not have chosen to be brought into this world. We may not like the way life looks today. We may be a traumatic or an acquired brain injury survivor. But what of that...

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

We may think that life is not fair. We may believe that our life no longer matters. We may want to give up on ourselves. We may want to blame our circumstances. We may feel stuck in the ashes of our disappointment. We may find ourselves arguing with God. We may be angry at the world, just because...

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts.” Winston Churchill

We may be convinced that our disability has derailed the life we had hoped to live. We may believe that life has passed us by. We may believe that we are limited by our limitations. We may believe that we have lost our credibility. We may believe that no one will want what we have to give. What of that my friend.

“Our courage to rise again prepares you and I to use what remains, because we are enough.” Craig J. Phillips

Let me inspire you to dream again. You will see your dreams rise from the ashes of your dismay. You will see your life take on new meaning. What once baffled you will be made clear. Your life will reveal a kaleidoscope of hope. You will fulfill your purpose and your destiny will become apparent.

“To reach a port we must sail- sail, not tie at anchor- sail, not drift. Franklin Roosevelt”

Our willingness to learn from the circumstance that life provides prepare you and I to take advantage of the lessons learned. Those lessons in turn empower our ability to benefit from the opportunities that become available to us. Those opportunities invariably point us in the direction of our destinies.

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so keep walking and before long you will be able to look back and see how far you have already come... because you decided to take that first step.” Craig J. Phillips

How to Not Take on Other People's Insecurities

In my experience, I have come to realize that perspective has a lot to do with how I experience my life. If I allow other people's perspectives of me to be my perspective of myself then I am putting myself in a box. Consequently, I need to be aware of how I may be allowing people's perspectives of me to influence my perspective of how I see myself. Therefore, I do not have to take on other people's insecurities.

Last night I was around some individuals who responded to me, I believe, out of their insecurities. Initially, I found myself internalizing their insecurities as there being something wrong with me. After reflecting upon this awareness, I regained my perspective. As I realized what had transpired, I began positive self-talk. I reminded myself of the realities of my strengths in the midst of the way I...

The way I experienced their insecurity "transfer". I reminded myself that what I tell myself about myself is more important. More important than what other people may communicate to me, overtly or covertly. Consequently, I need to be aware of what I am telling myself as I interact with people. With people who seek to consciously or unconsciously pass their insecurity onto me. In May 2007 I wrote an article to...

I wrote an article to share what I discovered concerning these transfers. The article: **Living with a Brain Injury, A Message to Parents and Hope**, in which I shared being aware of when the "transfer" is occurring. Through being aware I am able to take steps to take care of myself. I take care of myself by detaching myself from the individual and their "transfer". By detaching myself from the individual, I...

I am able to examine how the "transfer" is affecting me. By examining how the transfer is affecting me, I am able to detach myself from the "transfer" without placing a judgment on the individual or the insecurity. By detaching myself from the individual and the "transfer" I am able to practice the principle of live and let live. By practicing the principle of live and let live, I am able to decide upon the amount...

The amount of time I am willing to spend with that individual in the future. By taking care of myself in this way, I am able to re-focus my attention on my mission, vision and goals. My mission and goals without second guessing myself and feeling insecure because of what someone is unable to accept.

Here are several quotes from Thomas Edison that encourage me to keep at my goals regardless of what anyone may say or do:

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try one more time."

"The reason a lot of people do not recognize opportunity is because it usually goes around wearing overalls looking like work."

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were when they gave up."

"Just because something doesn't do what you planned it to do doesn't mean that it's useless."

"There is far more opportunity than there is ability."

Living with a Brain Injury, A Message to Parents and Hope Part 1

Living with a brain injury can be difficult. Difficult for the individual who sustained the brain injury and for the parents of these individuals. Difficulty navigating life after their brain injury and difficulty for parents in their attempts to understand these changes. Below I would like to share something, as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury. Living with the impact of a brain injury for 56 years.

What I share below may help both you as you navigate life living with the impact of a brain injury and your parents. The beauty of living is that we can make a decision to change our behavior at any time. The process of behavior modification usually begins with an awareness that is followed by acceptance. Acceptance opens the door to freedom. Freedom gives us the ability to take action. Awareness provides...

Provides the opportunity to address whatever is not in our best interest. What is not in the best interest of the people we love. Acceptance acts like a balm to soften the walls of our resistance and bring us to a place of action. The action that we then take provides the momentum that helps to resolve our guilt and shame. When parents do not deal with their shame and guilt, they make their children carry it for them.

In many instances, the shame transfer is a learned behavior that is passed from one generation to the next. Through my recovery process, I have learned many valuable lessons. One of the most valuable lessons I have learned is that I am not responsible for anyone's shame or guilt. I do not have to carry the burden of another person's unresolved guilt or shame. Each person is given an opportunity to learn and grow.

Learn and grow from their experiences. If they chose to avoid or deny the reasons for their irritability, restlessness, and discontentment, I no longer have to absorb their pain. What I have found is that debilitating guilt and debilitating shame can only be resolved through personal and rigorous honesty.

Being Aware of Patterns

In transactional analysis, there is an expression that sums up such a process. It goes something like this; we will work it in, work it out, or project it onto other people through blame, shame, or scapegoating. As I understand this concept, when a person chooses to work it in, they chose to deny that they have shame and guilt and act. They act as though it does not exist. When a person represses shame and guilt...

Addictive behavior is frequently used to avoid responsibility. Avoid responsibility for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment. When people chose to work it out, they become involved in a recovery process/program to identify and repair the reasons for their irritability, restlessness and discontentment. The last option involves passing the responsibility for his or her shame and guilt onto anyone who is...

Who is willing to be blamed, shamed and scapegoated. If the individual is not aware that they are being blamed for something that is out of their control, they will be made to carry. Carry the shame and insecurities of the other person. Transactional analysis sums up the last behavior as passing the "hot potato". This last option involves making someone else responsible/the reason why they experience...

The reason why they are experiencing shame and guilt evidenced by irritability, restlessness and discontentment. In my experience, my dad's inability or unwillingness to accept that I had a disability motivated his behavior. He blamed me for not being able to be more and do more. His criticism of my best efforts made me responsible for his disappointment. My Dad could not or would not accept that I...

Living with a Brain Injury, A Message to Parents and Hope Part 2

Accept that I was doing the best I could, given the fact that I was a traumatic brain injury survivor. I also believe that my dad transferred his guilt and shame onto me for his driving the night of the accident that caused the damage to my brain. Because my dad was unable to process his own guilt and shame, he transferred that guilt and shame onto me in the form of blame and criticism and made me carry his shame

Not Bitter or Angry

I am not angry or bitter at Dad. I am glad I worked through a lot of my hurt and pain and was able to stop carrying my dad's guilt and shame for not being more. I believe that I am more than enough, disability and all. I am not my traumatic brain injury, but my brain injury changed the course of my life forever. I wish my dad could have accepted that I was doing my very best, rather than wanting me to be someone...

Someone who was not living with an invisible disability, but who knew. Once my external wounds healed, I looked normal and because my disability was invisible the expectation. The expectation was that I should be able to get over it. "It" being the impact of the injury to my brain and that not being able to get over "it" was my fault. I am sad for both my dad and myself because we could have had a much better...

Much better relationship for many years before he died. His lack of acceptance created an environment of insecurity with no apparent solution. My dad did begin to accept that I was doing the best I could the last 3-4 years of my dad's life. During those 3-4 years my dad would tell me that he was proud of me.

Message to Parents

In conclusion, I would encourage the parents that are reading this post to encourage your children. Your child may have an invisible disability that has gone undetected for many years. If you want your child to excel avoid blaming, shaming and criticizing them for not being more. They may not be able to reach your expectations, however, they may be doing the best that they can. By acknowledging this reality...

You will be able to cultivate an empowering relationship with your children. With your children that will last a lifetime. Parents by nature want their children to grow up to be professional adults. Having such a hope is not wrong, however, your child may never be able to become a doctor or a Lawyer or some other dream you have for them. My suggestion would be that you encourage your children, teenagers, and...

And young adults to follow their dreams, not yours. Nurture their strengths and passions (what they love to do) and you will both get what you desire, an empowered individual who is following their bliss.

Suggested Reading

A book that has helped me tremendously is, **Shame and Guilt, Masters of Disguise** by Jane Middleton-Moz. In the event that you find yourself affected by debilitating guilt and debilitating shame, I would highly recommend this book. The contents of the book opened my eyes to the impact of shame and guilt. The impact of debilitating shame and debilitating guilt, as helped me stop taking on other people's stuff.

Inch by Inch

Recently I have been asked how I overcame specific challenges after the car accident, when I was 10 years old. Please read my article if interested: [Second Chance to Live Author's Autobiography in Bullet Points](#). In many cases I applied persistence to the task at hand. Perseverance coupled with persistence helped me to overcome many obstacles. Dogged determination has helped me to keep going.

Keep going despite disappointments and setbacks throughout my life. For many years, my will to endure was driven by perfectionism and shame. I functioned to survive emotionally and spiritually. Perfectionism and shame motivated me, however they never let me celebrate my success. The bar of achievement seemed to be raised on a regular basis. I was driven to defend my being through achieving.

As I have shared in another post, I became what Terry Kellogg first posited, a “human doing”. A human doing because I did not know how to be a “human being” and just “be”. Be and created out of a security that I was and am enough just by being, instead of striving to be. Struggling to just be continues to be a challenge for me, but I am now aware. I realize that I do not have to be “perfect” to be enough to “be”.

What I need to remember and encourage you to adopt

Make excellence and progress your goal, instead of striving to prove your worth and value. Allow yourself to be as you create with your being, instead of being driven to “do” to prove anything. In my experience, my healing and recovery process in learning how to relax. Learning how to relax and stop trying to convince other people that I am enough. Although my brain injury happened 56 years ago...

I have to overcome a faulty belief. A faulty belief that leads me to think that I need to convince people. Convince people who do not accept that I am living with the impact of an invisible disability. People who expect me to prove to them that I “should” not be affected by an invisible disability. People who expect me to not be affected by what they can't see and leaves me believing that I need to defend my worth...

My worth and value to them, despite having something that I am powerless to change. It is as though I have to defend myself because I have an invisible disability. I am frustrated by of those individuals who choose not to understand. They seem to want to blame me for their lack of tolerance. I am sure you can identify with me on some level, even if you do not have a disability. For those in the disabled...

For individuals living with the impact of an invisible disability -- who are reading this article -- I hear you shouting, “Amen Brother!” “I experience similar frustration (s) interacting with individuals who choose not to understand or accept me”. But there is good news. We do not have to buy into their unwillingness to understand that we are living with an invisible disability. We are not the problem.

What I learned about myself

In my personal life, I learn best through repeated repetition. Physically speaking, as I train in the martial arts, muscle memory is essential for me to learn and retain new information. As I train, I drill, and then drill again and then drill some more. Repetition is the mother of all that I learn. I believe that tenacity played a big role in my learning how to walk, talk and speak in complete sentences after waking up...

Waking up from the 3-week long coma, being in traction to set my left femur and being in a full body (or Spica cast). And because I have a difficulty learning sequences of information, I need extra time. The way people may try to teach me may not be the way I learn. I needed to accept that reality to be able to stop being frustrated when I was not learning what some people were trying to teach me. I continue to...

Continue to learn through repetition in all areas of my life (body, soul, spirit, mind and emotions). The difference these days is that I am motivated to succeed by my desire to pursue excellence. I learn best inch by inch, instead of yard by yard. I give myself permission to fall and get back up again. Progress instead of perfection has become more realistic for me. Inch by inch, instead of yard by yard.

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 1

In life we may have come up against obstacles. Obstacles that have led us to become discouraged and disappointed. Obstacles that have led us to believe that all our efforts, thus far, simply do not matter. That we will never be successful. That no matter how hard we try to succeed in our lives, fail, and may be tempted to give up on our dreams. But there is good news. We will triumph if we do not give up and...

And we keep moving forward! And we do not give up! And we remember that more will be revealed!

“Forget about the consequences of failure. Failure is only a temporary change in direction to set you straight for your next success.” Denis Waitley

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heart breaking obstacles before they succeeded. They won because they refuse to be discouraged by their defeats.” B.C. Forbes

Several days ago, I wrote the article, [I Don't Have to Wait to Live My Dreams](#). In this article I shared what I discovered that helped me to realize that I could live my dreams in the now. That I could experience success in the learning process, instead of waiting until I reached the “finish line” to celebrate my success. Today, I want to share a list of famous people who failed many times on their way to becoming successful.

They succeeded, despite “failing” in their effort (s), because they did not give up.

“Every Strike brings me closer to the next home run.” Baba Ruth

“I have not failed. I just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” Thomas Edison

“So often we become so focused on the finish line, that we fail to enjoy the journey.” Dieter F. Uchtdorf

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

A list of famous people who triumphed because they did not give up.

Below I would like to share something that encourages me to not give up. Give up despite having obstacles, disappointments, discouragement and defeats because my efforts do not turn out as I would like them. These individuals and their journeys inspire me not to give up on my hopes and dreams. Give up on my hopes and dreams despite obstacles, disappointments, discouragement and setbacks that I...

That I may face in my life. Individuals who triumphed in their lives, hopes and dreams because they refused. Refused to be discouraged by their obstacles, disappointments, discouragement, defeats and setbacks.

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

“Sometimes adversity is what you need in order to be successful.” Zig Ziglar

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 2

“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 was shrug and say “We’ll just have to see”.” Dick Fosbury winner of the gold medal 1968 Mexico City Olympics

“Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” Winston S. Churchill

“Don’t judge your day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.” Robert Louis Stevenson

Fifty Famous People Who Did Not Give Up!

Because the **Author is Unknown**, I am sharing the list of famous people who were repeatedly rejected. Rejected in their efforts to be successful in their lives as they faced obstacles, disappointments and setbacks. Faced in their attempts to and overcame to be succeed in their chosen fields. I am sharing this list to encourage individuals, like myself who have encountered obstacles. Obstacles, disappointment...

Obstacles, disappointment, discouragement and setbacks in their attempts to succeed. To read about the obstacles, disappointments, discouragement and setback I faced, click on this link: [Process and Journey](#).

The List — Author Unknown

The below list is copied from **Peter Shepherd’s** website [Tran4Mind Personal Growth Resources](#). I give him full credit for sharing this **list of individuals** who did not give up: [But They Did Not Give Up](#) 50 famous people who were repeatedly rejected early in their careers but went on to become household names. As you read through this list, may you, too, be encouraged to not give up, as I am encouraged.

Albert Einstein

Did not speak until he was 4-years-old and did not read until he was 7. His parents thought he was “sub-normal,” and one of his teachers described him as “mentally slow, unsociable, and adrift forever in foolish dreams.” He was expelled from school and was refused admittance to the Zurich Polytechnic School. He did eventually learn to speak and read. Even to do a little math.

Beethoven

Handled the violin awkwardly and preferred playing his own compositions instead of improving his technique. His teacher called him “hopeless as a composer.” And, of course, you know that he wrote five of his greatest symphonies while completely deaf.

Leo Tolstoy

Flunked out of college. He was described as both “unable and unwilling to learn.” No doubt a slow developer.

Walt Disney

Was fired by a newspaper editor because “he lacked imagination and had no good ideas.” He went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland. In fact, the proposed park was rejected by the city of Anaheim on the grounds that it would only attract riffraff.

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 3

Winston Churchill

Failed sixth grade. He was subsequently defeated in every election for public office until he became Prime Minister at the age of 62. He later wrote, “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never, Never, Never, Never give up.” (his capitals, mind you).

Thomas Edison

His teachers said he was “too stupid to learn anything.” He was fired from his first two jobs for being “non-productive.” As an inventor, Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, “How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?” Edison replied, “I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.”

Abraham Lincoln

As a young man went to war a captain and returned a private. Afterwards, he was a failure as a businessman. As a lawyer in Springfield, he was too impractical and temperamental to be a success. He turned to politics and was defeated in his first try for the legislature, again defeated in his first attempt to be nominated for congress, defeated in his application to be commissioner of the General Land Office, defeated in the senatorial election of 1854, defeated in his efforts for the vice-presidency in 1856, and defeated in the senatorial election of 1858. At about that time, he wrote in a letter to a friend, “I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth.”

Sigmund Freud

Was booed from the podium when he first presented his ideas to the scientific community of Europe. He returned to his office and kept on writing.

Charles Darwin

Gave up a medical career and was told by his father, “You care for nothing but shooting, dogs and rat catching.” In his autobiography, Darwin wrote, “I was considered by all my masters and my father, a very ordinary boy, rather below the common standard of intellect.” Clearly, he evolved.

Vince Lombardi

An expert said of him: “He possesses minimal football knowledge and lacks motivation.” Lombardi would later write, “It’s not whether you get knocked down; it’s whether you get back up.”

Babe Ruth

Is famous for his past home run record, but for decades he also held the record for strikeouts. He hit 714 home runs and struck out 1,330 times in his career (about which he said, “Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.”). And didn’t Mark McGwire break that strikeout record? (John Wooden once explained that winners make the most errors.)

Michael Jordan & Bob Cousy

Were each cut from their high school basketball teams. Jordan once observed, “I’ve failed over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed.”

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 4

Stan Smith

was rejected as a ball boy for a Davis Cup tennis match because he was “too awkward and clumsy.” He went on to clumsily win Wimbledon and the U. S. Open. And eight Davis Cups.

Charles Schultz

Had every cartoon he submitted rejected by his high school yearbook staff. Oh, and Walt Disney wouldn't hire him.

Fred Astaire

After his first screen test the memo from the testing director of MGM, dated 1933, read, “Can't act. Can't sing. Slightly bald. Can dance a little.” He kept that memo over the fireplace in his Beverly Hills home. Astaire once observed that “when you're experimenting, you have to try so many things before you choose what you want, that you may go days getting nothing but exhaustion.” And here is the reward for perseverance: “The higher up you go, the more mistakes you are allowed. Right at the top, if you make enough of them, it's considered to be your style.”

Sidney Poitier

After his first audition was told by the casting director, “Why don't you stop wasting people's time and go out and become a dishwasher or something?” It was at that moment, recalls Poitier, that he decided to devote his life to acting.

Lucille Ball

When she began studying to be actress in 1927, she was told by the head instructor of the John Murray Anderson Drama School, “Try any other profession.”

Jerry Seinfeld

The first time he walked on-stage at a comedy club as a professional comic, he looked out at the audience, froze, and forgot the English language. He stumbled through “a minute-and a half” of material and was jeered offstage. He returned the following night and closed his set to wild applause.

Marilyn Monroe

In 1944, Emmeline Snively, director of the Blue Book Modeling Agency, told modeling hopeful Norma Jean Baker, “You'd better learn secretarial work or else get married.” I'm sure you know that Norma Jean was Marilyn Monroe. Now . . . who was Emmeline Snively?

Jeanne Moreau

At the age of 21 was told by a casting director that her head was too crooked, she wasn't beautiful enough, and she wasn't photogenic enough to make it in films. She took a deep breath and said to herself, “Alright, then, I guess I will have to make it my own way.” After making nearly 100 films her own way, in 1997 she received the European Film Academy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Harrison Ford

After his first performance as a hotel bellhop in the film *Dead Heat on a Merry-Go-Round*, the studio vice-president called him in to his office. “Sit down kid,” the studio head said, “I want to tell you a story. The first time Tony Curtis was ever in a movie he delivered a bag of groceries. We took one look at him and knew he was a movie star.” Ford replied, “I thought you were supposed to think that he was

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 5

a grocery delivery boy.” The vice president dismissed Ford with “You ain’t got it kid, you ain’t got it ... now get out of here.”

Michael Caine

His headmaster told him, “You will be a laborer all your life.”

Charlie Chaplin

Was initially rejected by Hollywood studio chiefs because his pantomime was considered “nonsense.”

Enrico Caruso

His music teacher said he had no voice at all and could not sing. His parents wanted him to become an engineer.

The Beatles

Were turned down by Decca Records who said “We don’t like their sound. Groups of guitars are on their way out.” After Decca rejected the Beatles, Columbia records followed suit.

Elvis Presley

Was fired in 1945 by Jimmy Denny, manager of the Grand Ole Opry, after one performance. He told Presley, “You ain’t goin’ nowhere, son. You ought to go back to drivin’ a truck.”

The Impressionists

Had to arrange their own art exhibitions because their works were routinely rejected by the Paris Salon. How many of you have heard of the Paris Salon?

Picasso

A Paris art dealer refused him shelter when he asked if he could bring in his paintings from out of the rain. One hopes that there is justice in this world and that the art dealer eventually went broke.

Van Gogh

Sold only one painting during his life. And this to the sister of one of his friends for 400 francs (approximately \$50). This didn’t stop him from completing over 800 paintings.

John Constable

His luminous painting Water meadows at Salisbury was dismissed in 1830 by a judge at the Royal Academy as “a nasty green thing.”

Auguste Rodin

His father once said, “I have an idiot for a son.” Described as the worst pupil in the school, he was rejected three times admittance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. His uncle called him ineducable. Perhaps this gave him food for thought.

Igor Stravinsky

Was run out of town by an enraged audience and critics after the first performance of the Rite of Spring.

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 6

Louisa May Alcott

The author of ‘Little Women’ was encouraged to find work as a servant by her family.

E.E Cummings

15 publishers rejected his manuscript. When he finally got it published by his mother, the dedication, printed in uppercase letters, read WITH NO THANKS TO . . . followed by the list of publishers who had rejected his prized offering. Nice going Eddie. Thanks for illustrating that nobody loses all the time.

Emily Dickinson

Only had seven poems published in her lifetime.

Richard Hooker

21 publishers rejected his humorous war novel, M*A*S*H. He had worked on it for seven years.

James Joyce

22 publishers rejected ‘The Dubliners’.

Dr. Seuss

27 publishers rejected his first book ‘To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street’.

Jack London

Received six hundred rejection slips before he sold his first story.

John Creasey

The English crime novelist got 753 rejection slips before he published 564 books.

William Saroyan

Accumulated more than a thousand rejections before he had his first literary piece published.

John Milton

Wrote Paradise Lost 16 years after losing his eyesight.

Gertrude Stein

Submitted poems to editors for nearly 20 years before one was finally accepted.

Louis Pasteur

Was only a mediocre pupil in undergraduate studies and ranked 15th out of 22 students in chemistry.

Henry Ford

Failed and went broke five times before he succeeded.

F. W. Woolworth

was not allowed to wait on customers when he worked in a dry goods store because, his boss said, “he didn’t have enough sense.”

Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their “World” Part 7

R. H. Macy

Failed seven times before his store in New York City caught on.

Bell Telephone

When struggling to get started, its owners offered all their rights to Western Union for \$100,000. The offer was disdainfully rejected with the pronouncement, “What use could this company make of an electrical toy.”

Robert Goddard

Found his ideas bitterly rejected by his scientific peers on the grounds that rocket propulsion would not work in the rarefied atmosphere of outer space.

Living with a Disability through Commitment

Life is an amazing process. Many twists and turns along the road. My experience has taught me to stay committed to my process. I have found that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Having a goal helps to keep me focused when I encounter steep slopes and switch-backs on my journey. Commitment then becomes the essential component when to turn back would be much easier.

I have heard a definition of insanity that you may have also heard. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. As an individual living with a brain injury as well as the recipient of an invisible disability, I spent too many years of my life. To many years of my life attempting to be someone without a brain injury. Someone who did not have an invisible disability. I bought into the...

I bought into the assumption that because I had no physical signs of a disability, I should not have an invisible disability. You may also find yourself motivated to deny that you have an invisible disability. When I made the decision to embrace my “reality” I gave myself permission to have my limitations and deficits without becoming a prisoner to those limitations and deficits. My commitment to my process...

My commitment grew stronger when I was able to accept that I am living with the impact of a brain injury. That I am living with the impact of an invisible disability. Rather than attempting to be something I am not, I began to embrace my invisible disability. As I have grown in my awareness, I have learned to empower my process through my limitations and deficits. I am not my limitations or my deficits...

I am not a victim of my circumstances. I am not my traumatic brain injury or my invisible disabilities. I am an individual living with brain injury is learning how to thrive with in my set of circumstances.

An awareness

Earlier this evening I was able to spend some time with a friend of mine who is a 7th degree black belt. As we spoke the topic of commitment was discussed. He shared that people succeed in the martial arts because they determine to commit themselves to the goal. The goal is to learn to adapt to any given situation. I believe my commitment and progress in my martial arts training mirrors my commitment...

My commitment to living my life with a brain injury and an invisible disability. As I accept my invisible disability and stay committed to my process I am learning to adapt to any given situation and succeed. I am learning to use my set of circumstances to create and achieve goals that enhance my life. My life, well-being and relationships. That enhance my ability to be of service as I live each day of my life.

You may have circumstances or situations in your world that may seem overwhelming. You may be living with a brain injury and an invisible disability that you have a hard time accepting. You may have been misdiagnosed by “professional” staff that have in turn minimized your set of circumstances. You may also have people in your world that have a need to deny your reality. My encouragement would be...

Would be to accept your reality. There is no shame in having a brain injury and invisible disability. Please read my article: **Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequence of Denying Reality**. Next article.

Denying your circumstances will not change them. As you embrace your reality as an individual living with a brain injury and invisible disability, you will find courage. You will courage to commit yourself to adapting and then thriving because of your acquired deficits and limitations — one day at a time.

Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequence of Denying Reality — Part 1

I have been thinking about a reality. Today is the first day or the rest of our lives. We get to choose how to spend and use our time. I am reminded that I am powerless over people, places, and things, however, I am not powerless over my attitude. My attitude and the perspective I choose to maintain determine how I experience my life.

I have found that when I believe that I am a victim of my circumstances I feel helpless.

As I have shared in my 4 part series, [My Struggle living with an Invisible Disability](#), not everyone is going to accept the limitations of my disability. My responsibility — if I chose to accept that some people do not have eyes to see and ears to hear — is to honor myself. Although some people may be angry with me because I cannot be more or do more, I do not have to take on their anger. When I allow people the...

When I give other people dignity to own their attitudes or perspectives, I free myself. I free myself from the need to rescue or fix those individuals. I do not need to “fix” them or make them OK with me so that they will not be angry with me. Through my experience, I have learned that when I attempt to “fix” anyone, so that they will not be angry with me I set myself up. Set myself up to live in a state of panic...

A state of panic and dread, as I attempt to make them OK, so that we can be OK, so that I can be OK. Through my recovery process, I found a title for this dynamic: toxic shame-based codependency. Toxic shame-based codependency creates lose-lose outcomes. Many times, when toxic shame-based codependency is being practiced, double-messages are given. Manipulation occurs as these double...

As these double messages create inconsistency and emotional hostage taking. Behaviors, which convey messages such as “come close go away”, incite the fear of physical and emotional abandonment. For many years, the threat of physical and emotional abandonment led me to disown the parts of myself. Parts of myself that were not pleasing to the people of significance in my life. I discarded parts of...

Parts of myself in my attempts to reduce the threat of emotional abandonment. In the process, I developed a false self. Unconsciously I was conditioned to disown whatever did not please the love object (s) in my life. Consequently, I had no idea who I was, what I liked or what I wanted from life. But I reached a point of time in my life that I reached an emotional bottom. An emotional bottom in which I realized I could...

Could no longer deny what I had been doing to myself. That I had no idea who I was in life apart from my ability approval seek and people please. I realized that I needed to stop trying to “fix” other people so that they would not be angry with me. I realized that I needed to stop discarding and disowning parts of myself to keep people from emotionally abandoning me. I needed to get off the merry-go-round...

The merry-go-round of denial, in order to live an empowered life. I had to get off of the merry-go-round of denial by attempting to people please and approval seeks. People please and approval seek so that people would not be angry with me. I had to let people be responsible for their anger when I did not measure up to their expectations for me. I had to learn to accept myself as an individual living with...

Living with a brain injury and an invisible disability, regardless of whether people of significance in my life could or would accept that reality. I needed to own parts of myself that I had discarded and disowned.

Having an Invisible Disability – The Consequence of Denying Reality — Part 2

Yesterday I introduced the concept of consequences for denying my reality. Today I am going to share what I have learned. For many years I was encouraged to buy into a belief system that would not or could not consider the possibility that the injury to my brain contributed to the difficulties. Difficulties that I encountered when interacting with some people and social situations. Consequently, I was frequently...

I was frequently criticized and berated for my inability to “get along” with people, without factoring in the damage to my brain. The sad reality created by a lack of acceptance, concerning my invisible disability resulted in my being blamed and shamed. Blamed and shamed and in many instances made to be the scapegoat for matters that were out of my control. Because, for many years, I bought into the...

Bought into the notion that I created that I created my sad reality for many years, I lived in a state of guilt and shame. With ongoing conditioning, I did not believe that I merely made mistakes, but that I was a mistake. In my attempt to compensate for what I did not understand, I acquired an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. In my response to feeling ongoing guilt and shame, I spent much of my time saying...

I spent much of my time saying, “I am sorry”. I did so in my attempts to appease those who criticized and berated me. Because I said I was sorry constantly, my 9th grade English teacher gave me an assignment as homework. The assignment was to write out on a piece of paper 500 times, “I am sorry.” He thought that writing that I was sorry 500 times would result in my stop saying, “I am sorry”.

I completed the assignment but the exercise did nothing to rid or alleviate my sense of shame and guilt. Consequently, I continued to say I was sorry for everything and everyone under the sun. I assumed the role of a scapegoat, because I was led to believe that I was responsible. Responsible for anyone’s restlessness, irritability and discontent in my world. For much of my life I continued to believe and told...

Believe and told it was “my fault”. I continued to buy into this notion until I reached an emotional bottom when the relationship with my fiancée ended in 1991. In response to the break up I started to look for solutions and answers. As I looked for solutions, precious answers were revealed to me. I found that when I became sick and tired of being sick and tired, I was willing to be honest with myself.

I had no idea that my intense pain of the break up would result in my being able to break patterns

As I was honest with myself my ability to change the way I related to myself changed forever. My ability to love and respect myself began when I was able to come out of hiding. Please read my article, “**Who am I?**”. See below this article. Although shame and guilt left me accusing or defending myself for many years, I was able to begin accepting myself. In the process, I was able to being I began to accept the child.

The child that God loved unconditionally. In the process, I was able to begin to find and integrate parts of myself that I previously discarded that people shamed me for having that made them feel. I was able to begin to integrate parts of myself that I had discarded in an attempt to stop feeling shame. In the process of feeling shame and in an attempt to keep people from going away and abandoning me.

I discarded parts of myself for many years because I believed that I was not enough. I was not enough if I did not discard shamed qualities and if people in my life did not approve of me.

Over time I have grown in my ability to accept myself. I have been able to integrate and celebrate previously discarded parts of myself. I have come to realize that I am powerless over what people think of me and if people go away, for whatever reason. I have also come to realize that what I think about me is more important than what other people may think. I am learning to love and celebrate who I am.

Celebrate who I am living with deficits and limitations, but not limited to or by them because of what anyone may choose to accept, believe or want me to accept or believe.

Who Am I?

Boundaries

For many years of my life, my concept of boundaries was limited to what separated one state or country from another. When it came to having, respecting or even understanding how boundaries factored into relationships, I was clue-less. The notion of my needing to set or maintain boundaries seemed ludicrous. Because I did not respect my own need to have boundaries, I developed a series of limiting behaviors.

These limiting behaviors reinforced my distorted perceptions and led me to believe that boundaries were merely obstacles to be overcome. I also maintained the belief that control and manipulation preceded the need to have or respect anyone's boundaries. My distorted perceptions also kept me guessing at what was normal. For much of my life, I felt like a blind man, who kept bumping into different walls. As a...

As a result, any adjustment came with pain. As my emotional and spiritual pain increased so did my willingness to look for solutions. My recovery process, brought me to a place of awareness. My awareness revealed that I needed to both have, value and respect boundaries. My awareness revealed that boundaries, when not respected give way to a host of other limiting behaviors. Such behaviors...

Such limiting behaviors in affect undermine the individual's ability to experience their destiny.

These limiting behaviors manifest when personal responsibility is discarded as trivial while seeking to hold other people accountable. Hold other people accountable for choice, happiness, and discontentment. When personal responsibility and accountability is dismissed as trivial, trust is repeatedly thrashed upon the rocks. The rocks of disillusionment and disappointment. Hope is squashed under disdain and denial.

Resentments become the anesthetic that justifies and defends irrational behavior. Drama and crisis become the focus, while a virtual stranglehold is placed. Is placed upon personal empowerment and creative expression. In the process, the individual slowly drowns beneath the undertow of contempt and bitterness. Consequently, disregard becomes the standard operating procedure in the attempt to force...

To force solutions through control and manipulation. Expectations dictate the quality of the relationship. Self-serving and self-absorption become the drivers. Power struggles ensue and become the vehicle to assert one's will. Enmeshment then deprives the individual of their creative uniqueness and expression. Deprives the individual through the message of needing go along to be able to get along in relationships.

What I discovered

Through my recovery process. I became aware and began to understand I am a separate and unique individual. Although this statement may seem naïve, when I do not own and respect my need to have and maintain boundaries, I lose me. Boundaries are meant to keep me in, not to keep people out. When I do not know or honor where I end and other people begin, I slowly acquiesce to being controlled and...

Controlled and manipulated by strong-willed individuals. Through owning and respecting my boundaries, I have come to value where I end and where other people begin. When I maintain healthy boundaries, I am able to keep the focus on what is my business and what is not my business. When I mind my own business, the stress associated with trying to change others and/or be manipulated by them is reduced.

Boundaries help me to define what is my responsibility and what is not my responsibility when I interact with other people. Being accountable to others, but not for them and their choices. Boundaries help me to know where I end and other people begin and where other people begin and where I end in relationships.

Learning to Trust the Process that More will Be Revealed in Time Part 1

Several days ago, I wrote the article, [I Don't Have to Wait to Live My Dreams](#). Yesterday, I wrote the article, [Famous People who Failed Many Times before they Succeeded and Changed their "World"](#).

In the **first article**, I spoke about experiencing our dreams in the now, instead of waiting for their fulfillment.

In the **second article**, I showcased 50 different people who succeeded in their lives despite failing many times.

In **today's article** I would like to encourage you; and myself, to be among the next 50 people to succeed despite failing many times.

Succeed despite how many times we may fail in our attempts to be successful through our diligent efforts.

"Every Strike brings me closer to the next home run." Babe Ruth

"I have not failed. I just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Theodore Roosevelt

What I Learned about Learning to Trust the Process that More will Be Revealed

I have been meditating on a topic that I believe is at the foundation of being able to trust that more will be revealed. My relationship and my anger towards God. In my experience, I needed to resolve why I was angry at God. As I examined why I was angry at God I realized that I had unfairly been angry at Him.

Unfairly Angry

Unfairly angry at God because I did not get what I wanted in life at the time. Wanted in life because of all my hard work and dedication. Hard work and dedication that I had given to all my endeavors. Little did I know at the time; that although I was angry at God, all my circumstances were essential. Very essential to the process of what I needed to learn to be able to fulfill my purpose, although there were...

Although there were many disappointments. Disappointments that I would later learn were not meant to harm or hinder me.

Past Expectations

I discovered that I needed let go of my past disappointments. I needed to grieve my past expectations of how I thought life "should have been" to move forward. I needed to let go of the anger that I unfairly had toward God, so that I could learn to trust. Trust God, the process and that more would be revealed to me with time.

**"We must be willing to let go of the life we planned, so as to have the one that is waiting for us."
Joseph Campbell**

Learning to Trust the Process that More will Be Revealed in Time Part 2

Grieving and Learning to Trust

Several years ago I wrote an article [Comprehensive History of Second Chance to Live — Answering the Call that never Came](#).

For many years I waited for someone, a group, an organization, a church, an employer or a relationship to recognize my worth and value.

Could no Longer Afford to Wait

You see, I bought into the notion that I had to obtain some type of stamp or validation of approval before my gifts, talents and abilities could be deemed to be valuable/worthwhile. Sure, I used my gifts, talents and abilities, but I did not feel as though my gifts, talents and abilities were that significant. As a result, I spent many years waiting for the call.

But the Call never Came

But the CALL never came so I needed to figure out how to succeed, follow my dreams and fulfill purpose, a little at a time.

“Don’t wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your soul.”
Mario Quintana

In Short

Took **10 years** to obtain my undergraduate degree in Theology — English Bible, Biblical Literature with a Minor in Physical Education/Recreation. **3 1/2 years** to obtain my graduate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. **20 years** of getting and losing both non-professional and professional jobs, Client of **2 State Vocational Rehabilitation Offices**, the **2nd Vocational Evaluation** found me to be unemployable. **3 Applications** for SSDI with the Social Security Administration, my **3rd application** approved. Took **7 more years**; after being found to be unemployable, to find a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for me. Created **Second Chance to Live** nearly **17 years** ago to succeed, follow my dreams and fulfill my purpose.

And I am STILL learning to trust the process that more will be revealed to me.

Accomplished since being told I was unemployable

Created Second Chance to Live nearly 17 years ago. Written [2130 articles](#), created [451 video and slide show presentations](#), [24 keynote/zoom presentations](#), written [12 eBooks](#), [led by example](#) creating new neural pathways and brain reorganization and given [128 keynote and zoom presentations](#) throughout the United States and have positively impacted lives [domestically and internationally](#).

Learning to Trust the Process that More will Be Revealed in Time Part 3

Some of the Countries where lives have been impacted by Second Chance to Live

United States, Brazil, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Russia, China, Hong Kong, India, France, Spain, Ukraine, Finland, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Indonesia, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, Greece, Fiji, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Serbia, Slovenia, Portugal, Morocco, Egypt, Columbia, El Salvador, Singapore, Malta, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Switzerland, Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Netherlands, Ghana and South Africa.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Vines – Part 1

Over the last week, I received several comments from a visitor that spawned an interest to revisit previous articles from **Second Chance to Live**. The goal to revisit these articles is to identify and provide practical solutions to living life on life's terms. I believe the topics spoken about in this 2-part series can be especially helpful during this time of the year. The holiday season, Thanksgiving until after New Years.

The holiday season invariably creates a unique set of stress. In addition to the hustle and bustle that comes with the season, so comes anticipated and expected family re-unions. The combination of stress and the mingling of family members can produce anxiety and apprehension. When families re-engage during the holiday season, so do the family dynamics. The family dynamics intensifies as family members interact.

As family members interact, once assigned or assumed roles within the family system re-emerge. Roles in which family members related to one another. Found within these roles often lies a history of unresolved family conflict. Family interactions subsequently become laced with arguments, as the roles trigger past resentments fueled by unmet expectations. Resentments bubble up as interactions occur.

The hope that "this" year will be different may be met with a "familiar" unrest. Walking on "eggshells" to avoid conflict becomes the standard operating procedure as family members interact. Nevertheless, unresolved hurt, pain and resentment slowly boil to the surface. The once anticipated happy re-union become a gauntlet of restlessness, irritability and discontent. Angry words are shared and the mountain...

The mountain called "Resentment" grows still higher. When all is done and said the family members disengage and another holiday season finds itself cast upon the heap. The heap of denial, disillusionment and disappointment because of unmet expectations. Unmet expectations that are once again dashed by unmet hopes and dreams for happy holiday get together's and family reunions.

The use of a metaphor

I will use a metaphor to explain my understanding. A tree bears fruit because of its root, its trunk and its branches. The root draws from the substance that the tree thrives upon in order to bear fruit. By nature, the tree wants to grow and thrive to bear much fruit. Vines have their own agendas. Some vines grow on the trunks of the tree with immense density. These vines are composed of 80% water. The presence of...

The presence of this particular type of vine causes the trunk of the tree to rot. Unbeknownst to any observer, the vine's growth and presence undermines the stability of the tree. Other vines choke the tree by slowly circling the trunk of the tree. Another vine's mission is to grow toward the canopy. In the process of seeking to reach the canopy, the vine weighs down the tree. Subsequently, the sheer weight...

The sheer weight of these vines can cause the tree's branches to break. Broken branches leave the tree susceptible to pathogens and insects. So, we see the impact of various vines upon the tree.

Unlike a tree, which cannot move to avoid the vine, we as humans can make choices. Our choice will radically impact the effectiveness of any vine (unresolved expectations, resentments and pain). For many years I was oblivious to the impact vines had upon my life. When I reached an emotional bottom several years ago, I woke up to the reality of the vines. In my process, I became aware of how different vines...

How different vines had attached themselves to the trunk of my being. Although I had been in my own denial for many years, my eyes began to open and I became aware of how the vines had harmed some of my branches. As my eyes began to open, I found myself becoming angry. As my denial was lifted, I began the healing process. In my experience, I had to grieve the impact of the vines, as they had attached...

As they had unknowingly or willingly attached themselves to my being. Essentially, to be free from the vines (unresolved expectations, resentments and pain), I needed to grieve the impact of the vines.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Vines – Part 2

Through my recovery process, I have found freedom, gradually, as I faced and addressed my expectations, resentments and pain. What I discovered through my recovery process was that I could not afford. Could not afford to blame anyone. As I have been able to face and address my unresolved expectations, resentments and pain, the vines have slowly lost their hold upon my life. Please read my article...

Please read my article, **Displaced Sadness**, which is also found within this eBook. Something else that I discovered helped me. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book, **On Death and Dying** talks about the five stages of grief. Grieving is not limited to the death of a loved one. Grieving can be experienced with any loss. I speak about the five stages in my article, **Hello World**. In my article, **Don't Talk, Don't Trust...**

I discuss the 3 family rules that are used to maintain and contain unresolved conflicts, pain or secrets. In my article, **The Three Rules Revisited – Consequences** I speak to the nature of these three rules. I speak to the consequences of maintaining or breaking these three rules. In my article, **Whose Shame are you Carrying**, I speak to the nature of shame and the shame transfer that occurs when people do not know...

Know how to or do not want to deal with their unresolved conflict, loss and pain. In one modality of understanding, the behavior of a shame transfer is called, passing the "hot potato". Projection or transference occurs as the individual seeks to make someone; other than themselves, responsible for their discomfort, irritability, restlessness or discontent. As blame is directed outside, nothing gets resolved.

When I reached an emotional bottom, I became willing to look for answers. Please read my post, **How fast are you running?** Through my journey I have learned to own and take responsibility for my feelings needs and wants, however I do not have to be alone in my process. Please read my post, **The Power of Identification**, The disease of "ism", whatever the "ism" may be is a disease of isolation. Through being involved with a support group we can come out of hiding and begin to heal little by little. In my experience, I had to stop shaming the child within before I could begin to accept myself.

Through attending various support group meetings, I have been able to break free from the **Don't talk, Don't Trust and Don't Feel** rules. My experience has been enhanced through working with my sponsor and by working through the 12 Steps. Over the years my sponsor has been a very valuable resource. In my experience, I began to thaw emotionally and spiritually once I started attending support group meetings and when I began working through the 12 Steps.

Through my process, I have learned that my unrealistic expectations of God, other people and myself set me up to be frustrated with God, other people and myself...especially when they did not do what I expected. I have heard that expectations are premeditated resentments. Because of my experiences, I have learned an extremely valuable lesson. I am responsible to other people, but not for them or their choices. As I keep the focus on myself, I am able to let go of unrealistic expectations. Please read my post, **Small Successes**.

My Journey thus Far has taught me that I do not have to be restricted because of the vines. Life is a magical experience that can be relished when we choose to look for the YES in our circumstances. We can learn to thrive because of our circumstances. Our experiences come through our circumstances and those circumstances prepare you and I to take advantage of our opportunities. Our opportunities point us in the direction of our destinies a little at a time. One day and one step at a time by not giving up.

The Power of Identification = Freedom from Isolation and Feelings of Alienation Part 1

Living with a brain injury, invisible disabilities, other disabilities, or adversity, in general, can leave you and I feeling alone and isolated. But the good news is that we no longer have to remain alone or isolated. Instead, we can reach out to one another. And as we reach out to one another something magical happens. As we share and identify with one another we realize that we are not alone. In the process...

We find courage. We find the courage to come out of hiding.

What I Discovered about the Power of Identification

Identifying with others gives me the ability to listen to and hear the message, instead of judging the messenger. Identifying with other people gives me the freedom to stop judging myself. Identifying with other people gives me the ability to benefit from their experience, strength, and hope. Identifying with other people teaches me that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself. Identifying with other...

Other people give me the ability to experience a freedom that I never knew existed. The freedom to accept. Accept myself as I learn to live life on life's terms, one day at a time.

The Power of Identification

In April 2007 I wrote an article (see below) to share what I discovered about the power of identification.

Welcome back and I am so glad you decided to stop by and rest. You are a gift to me. I am fired up about a particular topic today. I have been fired up about this topic for most of my life. As a person with a disability, I never quite felt like I was enough or that I measured up. I never quite understood why I did not measure up until I began to understand the insidious nature of comparison. For too long, I measured...

Measured my worth by the status quo. I allowed the measuring stick of other people to dictate how and what I thought about myself. When I started treating myself with dignity and respect, I began having spiritual awakenings. One of these awakenings revealed that having a disability challenged the status quo. Although I sought to measure up to expectations, I found myself consistently falling short in my...

Short in my efforts to measure up to societal expectations. Living with my brain injury and my invisible disability added to my sense of inadequacy. My invisible disability left me clueless in my attempts to compensate for my real, yet unknown, deficits and limitations. In the process of my attempting to overcompensate I lost sight of who I was as a person. In the process, I became a human doing rather...

A human doing in life instead of learning how to be a human being as I lived my life. Doing, instead of being, became more important as I sought to prove my standing amongst the status quo. Even as I attempted to overcompensate through overachieving, I had no idea. No idea how my brain injury and my invisible disability impacted my world as I lived my life. What made matters worse was that I sought...

Sought to defend the notion that my brain injury, invisible disability, deficits, and limitations had nothing to do. Nothing to do with my inability to meet family and societal expectations. In the course of defending my denial, I found that I was denying who I was as an individual. As an individual who was impacted by things that I was powerless to change. As I defended my denial and the denial of family, I grew weary.

The Power of Identification = Freedom from Isolation and Feelings of Alienation Part 2

I grew weary in the course of maintaining and defending both my denial and the denial of family and friends. I grew weary in my attempts to prove that I was not an individual living invisible disability (with deficits and limitations). In my weariness, I reached a point in my life when I could no longer deny my reality. When I reached this place of despair, in which I could no longer deny my reality I discovered.

I discovered a series of causes, effects, and contrasts. Below, I will share some of what I learned through examining those cause, effects, and contrasts. Understanding these cause and effects helped me to stop fighting against myself. Fighting against myself helped me. Helped me to discover and explore what would work the best for me given my brain injury, my invisible disability, deficits and limitations.

Contrasts

Identification and Comparison

Identification empowers, whereas comparison minimizes contribution. Comparison asserts stipulation to inclusion. Comparison mandates that certain criteria be met. Comparison predicates acceptance. Comparison demands compliance. Comparison postulates performance. Comparison shuns that which is different. Identification encourages progress while comparison specifies and expects outcomes.

Identification celebrates small successes, whereas comparison, by its nature seeks to invalidate. Identification encourages individuality and motivates self-expression. Identification cultivates creativity. Individuality is not considered a threat. Status quo is dismissed. Identification empowers and motivates. Identification musters enthusiasm in the face of any discouragement. Identification breaks down the walls.

Down the walls of isolation. Alienation is dismissed. Eccentricity is held in esteem. Self-respect, self-esteem, and self-worth no longer need to be qualified. Value and ability are accepted at face value. Identification seeks to reconcile. Identification promotes humility. As I seek to identify with others, I practice love and tolerance. Identification frees my humanity to explore apart from comparison's dictates.

Identification encourages individual expression. Identification encourages hope, whereas comparison predicates performance. Identification encourages the process. Identification promotes self-confidence. Progress is accepted as a function of seeking to accept both others and oneself. As I love and accept myself, I am free to create, with my being. My being and worth are not tied to a specific "toy" or outcome.

I no longer need to keep up with the Jones. I no longer need to chase after external validation. Identifying with others dispels my need to judge. Identification gives me permission to take risks and to scrape my knees in the process. Identification promotes excellence, not perfection. Identification frees me to stay in the moment and to live life on life's terms. Identification promotes unity. Identification gives me freedom.

The freedom to explore and be myself in the face of family, friends and societal expectations.

How fast are you running?

Three rules are often used to mask reality. These rules are **Do Not Talk, Do Not Trust** and **Do Not Feel**. These rules give way to a state of helplessness. When helplessness becomes a learned behavior, individuals may unconsciously believe they are trapped by their circumstances. Instead of seeking to learn and grow from their circumstances, being a victim becomes an alternative to living.

Living for them is reduced to a series of events to be endured and hopefully survived. **Drama replaces vitality**. Rather than seeking to be empowered, these individuals consent to the notion that success is measured by survival. Surviving each crisis becomes the unconscious battle cry. Not only does this mindset undermine the creative capacity of that individual, but it also perpetuates a fear of failure.

Perpetuates a fear of failure and a cynical outlook upon life. Circumstances and opportunities are equally revered as a nemesis to be reckoned with on a daily basis. Life itself is reduced to merely clocking in and out each day (as a disgruntled employee) hoping that the minutes and hours pass with increasing speed. I spent a large part of my life running as fast as I could to avoid the above discontent. I viewed life as...

Life as a dress rehearsal, to be lived later. But later never seemed to come for me. Through maintaining the belief, that I could do nothing more than survive what was doled out to me. As a result, I became a resident reactor. I reactor to what happened in my life and relationships, instead of as an actor. I found myself jumping like a cat on a hot tin roof. Sure, I trusted God with my life, but I saw the actual living...

The actual living part as a battlefield and as a soldier. A soldier who found himself in a foxhole, attempting to protect himself from every direction. This way of life drained and depleted me spiritually, emotionally, and physically, in my attempt to protect myself. Thank God that I reached an emotional bottom, when a relationship ended. The disappointment from that break up changed my life.

The emotional pain proved to be the catalyst that motivated me to seek solutions. I began to break the three rules, **Don't talk, Don't Trust** and **Don't Feel**. I started attending support group meetings, where I listened to other people's experience, strength and hope. With time, I began to trust people. I shared my pain with them and they listened. I also found myself thawing emotionally as I began to trust myself.

In the process, I began to see myself as an empowered individual, who no longer needed to be jostled about by events or circumstances. I discovered that I could learn from what happened in my life. As a result, I became more of an actor in my life, instead of as a reactor to what happened. What happened in my life. Happened and what I could learn from the experience as an opportunity, instead of being afraid.

Events and circumstances are now my friend, because I chose to learn from my experiences. I am not empowered by what occurs in my life, instead of being intimidated by what occurs in my life.

I am being empowered to live life on life's terms through the lessons I am learning.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Goals

Today I want to share something that will infuse confidence and empower your process. Life can be a daunting experience when we look at the mountains that seem to be in the way of reaching our goals. As we look at the mountain, we may begin to experience some anxiety that is followed by depression. We may feel overwhelmed by the mountain. We may allow the seeming enormity of the mountain.

The enormity of the mountain (goal) to discourage and dissuade our focus. We may find ourselves stuck in a place of fear. We may say to ourselves, “The mountain is just too big, so what is the point of ever trying to reach the goal?” Well, I have good news for you. You don’t have to move or deal with the mountain all at once. Say you have a goal to clean your whole house or apartment. Breathe! You don’t.

You don’t have to clean the whole house in one day. By managing the goal of cleaning your house you can decide to clean one of the rooms today. Once you have cleaned that room, you can celebrate the progress you have made toward the goal of cleaning the entire house. Tomorrow you can clean another room of your house or apartment. Through making the achievement of our goals manageable.

We can experience a sense of satisfaction for the gains that we made today. We don’t have to reach your end goal today. You may have something very personal that you would like to achieve. My encouragement to you would be to manage the achievement of that goal. Set down with a piece of paper and pencil and write out what you would like to achieve. Through writing the goal down, you will...

You will be able to own what you want to accomplish. When you make the goal personal you can relax because you no longer have to live up to anyone’s expectation. Anyone’s expectations of who we are.

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

“If you advance confidently in the direction of your dreams and endeavor to live the life that you have imagined...you will meet with success unexpected in common hours.” Henry David Thoreau

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

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Learning Curve

I have been thinking about the topic of progress. Sometimes the ominous nature of change can overwhelm. The fear of failure can debilitate and discourage us from venturing into the unknown. Although we may want to or realize that we need to do something different the fear of making those changes keeps up frozen in the familiar. We may believe that we are terminally unique and that our situation is hopeless.

We may have been led to believe that we cannot do anything right or that we do things “in a half-assed way”. We may believe that the struggle to make empowering choices is just not worth the risk. We may be confined by an all or none belief system. Our black and white thinking may block our willingness to grow beyond that, which has become familiar to us. My friend, I have good news for you. Be encouraged

You are wonderfully you. You and I are a work in progress. We don't have to apologize for our inherent greatness. Our inherent greatness is waiting to be expressed beyond the shores of our imagination. We no longer need to be stymied by the expectations of the past. Instead, we are free to push off from the shore of our apprehension and sail in the direction of our dreams. Our hope hoisted to sail on the sea.

On the sea of possibilities. We don't have to do “things” perfectly. We no longer have to be held hostage by an “all or none”. A “black and white” way of relating to life. We no longer need to be confined by a daunting sense of self-doubt. We can instead choose to live life in a different way. We can take courage in our process. We can celebrate the progress to be experienced and made because with everything...

With everything there is a learning curve. We can choose to grow beyond what no longer works for us.

“Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” Steve Jobs

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened in shrinking back so that others will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not in some of us, but in everyone. As we let our light to shine, we unconsciously give others the permission to do the same. As we are limited from our fears our presence automatically liberates others.” Marianne Williamson

Following our Destiny through Footwork

I have re-learned a valuable lesson this week. In the process of learning I found a renewed sense of serenity. The lesson encouraged me to re-focus my attention on my footwork and to check my motives. As I heeded what I was being taught, I was able to let go and trust the process, once again. Once again because I had allowed myself to become emotionally invested in specific outcomes. Specific outcomes.

When specific outcome did not occur, I experienced some sadness and then discouragement. Through owning my discouragement, I was able to identify why I was sad. My awareness encouraged me to take some action. I made the decision to let go of specific outcomes. By letting go I found some peace.

What I discovered

In essence, my discouragement proved to be a gift because my discomfort motivated me to find a solution. After I realized why I was discouraged I allowed myself to be sad. Through accepting and owning my feelings I embraced my humanity. As I embraced my humanity, I was able to let go of the notion that I know what is best for me. Consequently, I was able to let go of the timing and the harvest of my footwork.

My awareness

When I accept my finite human limitations, I am able to rest. As I rest in the process, I am able to trust that I will get what I need. I do not have to know the big picture. I do not need to force solutions. I do not have to get the “cart before the horse”. I do not have to figure “it” all out. Instead, I can enjoy the journey. I can revel in the footwork while trusting the God of my understanding. I can relish in the lessons.

The lesson that I am learning, without judgment of my efforts, and I can trust the process.

You, too, may have been discouraged because specific outcomes did not come to pass. You may have lost trust in the process, in a loving God and in yourself. You are not alone in your struggle my friend. My encouragement to you, as I encourage myself, trust the process. Do your footwork and then let go of specific outcomes. You and I do not have to figure “it” out. You and I can let go of our need to control.

We can let go of our illusion that we can somehow control the process. You and I can let the pieces of our footwork. We can trust and let the pieces of our destiny (like that of a jigsaw puzzle) fall into place at the right time. We don't have to know the big picture to have piece in our lives. We can slow down and trust the process, a loving God and ourselves. We can let go and to get what we need at the right time.

Traumatic Brain Injury — Following your bliss...regardless

In life, events, circumstances and disappointments may redirect our experience. In an instant, like a switch on a railroad, life events can set us in the opposite direction of our hopes and dreams. In the process our hopes, dreams, and aspirations may be dashed. We may have lost the use of our limbs or suffered permanent brain damage. Our damaged brain or body may subsequently limit our abilities.

As a result, we may be sad, angry or even bitter with life. But that does not have to be the end of the story. Through my process I have learned a valuable lesson. I am not my traumatic brain injury, my deficits or my limitations. I have discovered that who I am on the inside matters more than who I am on the outside. My body may be broken and battered by my injuries. I may not be as smart as I used to be.

Who I used to be before my disability. And I may be discouraged at times, but that does not change my passion. I am not my disability, my limitations or my deficits. My passion resides within the core of my being. My passion provides the mechanism that empowers my gifts, talents and abilities. Because my passions lie at the core of my being, I can learn how to channel my creative energy. Channel the energy...

Energy even though I may have a disability, deficits or limitations. As I follow, develop and learn to channel my passions, the fruit of my purpose becomes apparent. My passions are channeled through which my gifts, talents and abilities are expressed. My gifts, talents and abilities echo my passion. My passions subsequently point me in the direction of my destiny. In the process I fulfill God's will...

God's will for my life, one day at a time. Although I have limitations, because I am a traumatic brain injury survivor, I am not limited. Although you may have limitations because of your disability, you are not limited. Regardless, of how you or I came to be disabled we do not have to give up on our passions. We can learn how to channel those passions in ways that work for us. We can learn to experience life.

Experience life more abundantly because our circumstances no longer have to define or dictate. Define and dictate who we are in this life. We can learn to use those circumstances to enhance both our lives and the lives of those people in our world. Be encouraged my friend. Your disability is not meant for your harm. You and I have been given a gift. What we thought was meant for our harm is used for our good.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that my traumatic brain injury was a switch on the railroad of my life. Although I could not see how my traumatic brain injury was to be used for my good some 56 years ago. I now know that my traumatic brain injury was preparing me to fulfill my destiny. Through my awareness I have come to trust the process, a loving God and myself, because I know that more will be revealed

Be encouraged my friend. Follow your passions. Follow your bliss. Give yourself the time to learn to use your passions in ways that work for you. And please do not give up on yourself or on your process. More will be revealed to you as more is being revealed to me. We will find our way and we will be empowered to fulfill our purpose to live out destiny in the now. Only believe. And if you have a hard time believing...

Believe what I believe and see what happens. You will learn to use your passions and you will fulfill your purpose. You will live your destiny, as I am, one day at a time.

**“We must be willing to give up the life we have planned so as to have the one that is waiting for us.”
Joseph Campbell.**

Second Chance to Live and Letting Go of Unrealistic Expectations

Over the past several weeks I have been speaking to topics that have been crucial to my recovery. My recovery in my healing process. Through my process, I found that I needed to address my denial, anger and resentment to move beyond. Beyond that which was blocking my relationships with the God of my understanding, with other people and with myself. In the process, I discovered something that hindered.

Through my process I discovered that one of my biggest hindrances, in life, involved my critical nature. I discovered that my need to be perfect was driven by my attempt to avoid. Avoid criticism, ridicule, rejection and self-loathing. Because I was unable to meet the demands of perfection, I internalized ongoing frustration and anger. My frustration perpetuated my need to overcompensate and over achieve.

Overachieve in order to maintain my perceived relationship with God, with other people and with myself.

Before I addressed and confronted my denial, anger and resentments through my grieving process I treated other people with the same contempt that I showed myself. My contempt was manifested through the unrealistic expectations that I placed on God, other people and myself. Through my experience and by addressing and confronting my denial, anger and resentments I slowly grew in my awareness.

In my awareness, I realized that NONE of the relationships that I sought to sustain were healthy. I discovered that I either took hostages or was made to be a hostage in my relationships. I found that my feelings of inferiority alienated me from the very relationships that I sought to cultivate. I also discovered that I unconsciously projected my shame into my relationships through my unrealistic expectations.

My shame subsequently sought to control my relationships because I believed that I needed to dance. To do a dance to maintain those relationships. My denial, anger and resentments, through my shame led me to believe that my relationships could only be sustained through a specific set of dance steps. Essentially, I believed that I needed to make the person OK with me, so that we could be OK, so that I could be OK.

Through my process, I discovered that my unrealistic expectations served to perpetuate the dance.

Through my process I have grown in my awareness. In my awareness I have come to recognize that I no longer need to participate in any dance to be OK with me. Consequently, I have been able to let go of my need to be perfect. I have traded the notion of perfection for the pursuit of excellence. My drive to fulfill unrealistic expectations is slowly fading away as I am learning how to trust the process and my journey.

Fading away as I am learning to trust the process, a loving God and myself. In the process, I am learning to have a relationship with myself, a loving God and other people – one day at a time.

A Very Powerful Principle — Keeping my Acceptance High and my Expectations Low Part 1

Today, I would like to share a principle that has been of tremendous benefit to me. As I have shared in my 3-part series, **Second Chance to Live — My Presence has been my Absence** I spent 16 days in the hospital. Spent 16 days in the hospital in August 2008 due to a sinus infection that developed into a pre-orbital cellulitis that became an orbital cellulitis. One of the principles that I sought to practice during the time that I spent in the hospital was keeping my acceptance high and my expectations low.

Through practicing the principle of keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high, I was able to let go of my need to control. Control that which I was powerless over during my stay in the hospital. Consequently, I was able to accept the myriad of changes and the influx of people coming into my hospital room throughout the day and night. Doing so helped me to maintain my serenity, amidst the constant invasion of my privacy. By keeping my expectation low and my acceptance high I was able to...

I was able to be grateful for what I received, rather than being disappointed by what I did not receive. By keeping my acceptance high and my expectations low I was able to be grateful for the people who visited and called me while I was in the hospital. Grateful instead of developing resentments toward the people who did not call or visit. Through keeping my acceptance high and my expectations low I was able to...

Able to contact the necessary people, through the use of my phone in my hospital room, while letting go of the outcomes. As a result, I was able to trust the process rather than being on an emotional roller coaster amidst the 2 different times that I was told that I would undergo surgery. Undergo surgery and then having those operations postponed and then ultimately canceled. By keeping my acceptance high...

Acceptance high and my expectations low I was able to stay in the day.

Through my experience in the hospital, I found that as I kept my expectations low and my acceptance high, I was able to multitask. Multitask as multiple people came into my room amidst my phone ringing, at the same time, and those people wanting different things of me. Through keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high, without becoming /being irritable, restless and discontent I was able to multitask in ways that I previously did not know I was capable of accomplishing. Through practicing the...

The principle of keeping my acceptance high and my expectations low I was able to ask for what I needed without being demanding. By keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high, I was able to ask for what I needed when I did not get what I needed from the dietary staff. By keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high I was able to say what I needed to say to the dietary management, without being mean when I asked for what I needed. Through keeping my acceptance high, I was able to...

Able to develop a rapport with the dietary management to the end that I received tasty and nutritious meals during the last several days that I was in the hospital. Through keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high, upon my second discharge I received a compliment from the Charge nurse. She told me that I was one of the most pleasant patients they have served. By maintain the principle of keeping my acceptance high and my expectations low I was able to share, with credibility, the message that...

The message that I share throughout **Second Chance to Live** with the Doctors, Nurses, Nursing Assistants and the other staff members that provided me with care during my hospital stay during those 16 days

A Very Powerful Principle — Keeping my Acceptance High and my Expectations Low Part 2

Through keeping my expectations low and my acceptance low I was able to adjust my attitude. Adjust my attitude when I found myself becoming critical of people when things did not occur according to my expectations. By adjusting my attitude and accepting what I could not change I had more peace. I found that by keeping my expectations low and my acceptance high I was able to live life on life's terms. Consequently, I was able to take the process and my hospital stay a day at a time and trust the process.

What I have come to “Know”

I know that my experience of being in the hospital during those 16 days is part of the master plan for my life. I know that I do not have to know the big picture. Consequently, I am convinced that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I am capable of learning because of my experiences. I know that my circumstances are teaching me the lessons that I will need. Need to know to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that become available to me. Available to me as doors open for me.

I know that the compilation of my circumstances and my opportunities are leading me in the direction of my destiny. I know that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I am capable of learning. Learning through the circumstances that my experiences provide, even when I do not understand why. I know that I can trust the process, a loving God and myself because I know that my circumstances are not meant to keep me down. Meant to keep me down in life, but are meant to build me up as I live my life.

!

Traumatic Brain Injury and the Elephant

While training at the martial arts school earlier today, my Sensei (Instructor) had the brown and black belts drill round kicks, followed by tornado kicks. We drilled these kicks with a partner and a focus pad. Which each series of kicks I was encouraged by my ability to execute the tornado kick with accuracy and height. A tornado kick is likened to a spinning crescent kick, which requires coordination, agility and timing. I was particularly encouraged by the progress I made because I have not always been able to...

Been able to execute a round kick followed by a tornado kick.

I use the above illustration, not to draw attention to my ability, but to convey a principle. The principle may seem obvious to some and being able to execute a tornado kick may not be a big deal to other people. When I first began training at the martial arts school, I had limited coordination which limited my ability to perform any kicks, much less a tornado kick. When I watched more advanced students demonstrate tornado kicks, I was amazed by their grace and agility. When I attempted to mimic the ability of the...

The ability of advanced students I looked and felt extremely clumsy. What became apparent was that my leg strength did not support my ability to perform tornado kicks. I had not yet developed the necessary muscle memory to perform tornado kicks. But rather than becoming discouraged and despondent I made a decision to develop my leg strength and muscle memory. Through my decision I decided to drill and drill again and then drill some more. Because of my limitations and deficits, I knew I needed to spend...

Needed to spend additional time and attention to drilling these tornado kicks. In my process, as a martial artist I had to spend more time at the Y developing my leg strength to improve and enhance my balance. The combination of drilling my kicks and increasing my leg strength significantly improved my ability to execute tornado kicks. I am not suggesting that my tornado kicks are stellar in appearance or delivery. What I am drawing attention to is my commitment to face the elephant of improving tornado kicks.

Riddle: How do you eat an elephant? **Answer:** On bite at a time.

I may never be able to execute a tornado kick flawlessly. Nevertheless, I know that my tornado kicks are looking and feeling better with each new day. Each new day as I determine to keep biting and chewing.

Your Elephant

You may have a desire to improve in your physical rehabilitation or in some other area of your recovery process. As I have heard said, the journey of a thousand mile begins with the first step. Unless we decide to take the first step and then keep moving, we may never see our desires and dreams fulfilled. The immensity of our elephant can appear to be overwhelming. But rather than being discouraged we can take one bite at a time and keep chewing. Slowly the impossible becomes attainable by not giving up.

When I view my elephant, such as improving a tornado kick through manageable bites, I find encouragement to keep chewing. You may have seen your "elephant" as overwhelming and daunting. You may have asked yourself the question, "What is the point?" The elephant is just too big. My encouragement to you my friend is to work with your therapist and do the drills to improve your skill. Do the drills with your therapist and then practice those drills at home, again and again and once more.

As you stay committed to your process the immensity of your elephant will be reduced to bones. In the process you will grow stronger and more capable with each bite. Before long you will be able to look back in your recovery and rehabilitation process and see how far you have come. See how far you have come in your skills and abilities, because you stayed committed to the process. In the process, the size of the elephant will look smaller. Little by little, you will make possible what was once thought impossible.

Working Toward a Goal – Staying Focused Part 1

Note: Originally Written in early 2009 -- For the past 7 1/2 years I have been training and growing as a martial artist under a Sensei, instructor, in mixed martial arts. My Sensei's instructor, Sifu's original instructor was Bruce Lee. I have been training as a brown belt for over 2 years.

In August 2008, I wrote an article, **Second Chance to Live — My Presence has been My Absence**. In the article I explained why I had been in the hospital from August 17 – September 1 and was unable to answer email. Unable to answer email and contribute to Second Chance to Live during that time period. My hospitalization had been a result of a sinus infection that developed into an orbital cellulitis. When I got out of the hospital, I was too weak to work out at the YMCA, much less train at the martial arts school.

As I gained strength, I decided to visit the martial arts school to see my Sensei and my fellow students. On that trip to the martial arts school, I found out that there was going to be the once a progress check for the brown belt students on November 8. The progress check occurs to determine which of the brown belt students are ready to enter a 10 month long black belt preparation period to potentially qualify. For those brown belts to qualify for a two-day black belt exam the following October. The two-day test...

The 2-day test would then determine whether the student would be awarded their probationary black belt.

When I found out that the qualifying progress check was going to be on November 8, I was both sad and a bit frustrated. I was sad because I did not think there would be any way that I could or would be ready physically to meet the demands of the test. The demands of the 6 ½ hour test, being that my body had been depleted by the infection and hospital stay. I was frustrated because I knew how much hard work, I had put into the possibility of being able to test for my black belt, prior to being admitted to the hospital.

After being released from the hospital September 1st I was too weak to work out for the next 4 weeks. I slowly started back training at the YMCA in the first week of October. In the 3rd week of October, I thought I was ready to resume my training at the martial arts school. In the next several weeks I upped the number of days that I trained at the YMCA, and at the martial arts school. Several days before the November 8 progress check test I approached my Sensei to ask him if he would let me make up me...

Let me make up the 6 ½ hour progress check test, being that I had been in the hospital in August with a serious infection for the 16 days. My Sensei told me that there would be no way for me to make up the test and that I would have to wait another year. His response disappointed me as I thought he would be more empathetic given the circumstances. After leaving the martial arts school on Wednesday evening I struggled with my conundrum. If I did not do the test on November 8 and have to wait for another year...

Wait another year or participate in the test and run the possibility of getting sick again. I struggled with the two options that evening and into the next day on November 6. After calling and speaking with my brother and a trusted friend, I made the decision to participate in the exam. I made the decision and joined the other brown belt candidates on Saturday November 8 from 9 am to 5 pm. I am so glad that I did not give up and not participate in the progress check. With the encouragement of fellow testers and staff...

Staff at the martial art school I completed the 6 ½ hour test. During the progress check I learned a tremendous amount about myself. I discovered that I was able to do more physically, emotionally and spiritually than I thought was possible. I am glad so glad that my Sensei did not cut me any slack when I asked to be able to make up the test. At the end of the test, I thanked my Sensei for the opportunity and that he did not cut me any slack. When I mentioned that to my Sensei, he told me that I did great.

What I thought had been in vain; all my rigorous training prior to going into the hospital, prepared me spiritually, physically and emotionally to be able to meet the demands of the test. Prepared me to meet the demands of the test that lasted from 9 am – 5 pm despite being hospitalized for 16 days.

Working Toward a Goal – Staying Focused Part 2

I share the above with you to encourage you to not give up on your dreams. Give up on your dreams although life may seem to be getting in your way. The way to accomplishing those dreams.

And Remember

Our journey together is not about comparison, but about identification. Our dreams may be different, but our determination to succeed in the face of disappointment and discouragement can be the same. Our hard work, determination and tenacity is not in vain. What might appear to be getting in your way, may in reality prove to show you. Show you something about yourself that you would not otherwise realize. You may also find, as I did, that you have more in you than you thought you had or did so be encouraged.

“When you reach for the stars, you may not quite get one, but you won’t come up with a handful of mud either.” Leo Burnett

In Reflection

I hope my Sensei decides that I am ready to begin the black belt cycle in January to be able to test for my black belt in October 2009. Regardless of whether I complete the 10-month long cycle test, a 2-day black belt test and am awarded my probationary black belt, I know. I know that I have accomplished something that I previously did not know was possible at 51 years of age.

Per your information I will include below what we had to accomplish the day of the progress check on November 8 from 9 am – 5 pm.

Black Belt Cycle Qualifying Progress Check — November 8, 2008 Saturday

The test began at Freedom Park at 9 am. This is how the test evolved. We had to first run three laps around the park — lake — 2 miles. The next phase of the test was to do 500 jumping jacks and then run 3 more laps around the park — 2 more miles — followed by another 500 jumping jacks all within 30 minutes. The next phase involved 4 different stations — to rotate through— 5 minutes at each station. One station was to do 100 pushups in five minutes, the next station was to do wind sprints — 75 feet — over and over again every 30 seconds for 5 minutes, the next station was to do 500 crunches in 5 minutes, the final station involved doing 10 froggie jumps followed by 5 pushups over and over again for 5 minutes. The 1st phase of the project test lasted 1 hr. and 40 minutes.

When we completed this part of the test we drove back to the martial arts school. When we got there, we got dressed in our gees — martial arts gear — and then the 2nd phase of the progress check began. The 2nd phase lasted for 2 hours. During the 2nd phase we did a tremendous amount of jump roping, demonstrating various types of punches, kicks combinations, Kata’s and grappling skills — chokes, arm bars and other skills. We then did focus mit drills — with a team mate — jabs and crosses for 10 minutes each — with a team mate at various speeds and degrees of power in our punches. Following the jab and cross drills on the focus mits we switched to doing alternating hook punches on the focus pads — with a team mate — at various speeds and degrees of power in our punches. We then had to do 250 hard round kicks on a heavy bag. Once we were done with this gauntlet of physical activity Sensei dismissed us for our lunch break which lasted from 1-2:30. After speaking with a marathoner at a local running shoe company on Friday concerning what would be good to have for lunch the day of the test I brought a few protein bars — a MOJO bar and a Cliff Bar Friday afternoon at Wal-Mart. I had these 2 bars along with 2 containers of Propel a vitamin drink.

Working Toward a Goal – Staying Focused Part 3

Test requirements continued

At 2:30 we began the 3rd phase of the project test. The 3rd phase consisted of 80 minutes of grappling — 3-minute rounds — with about 15 or so different students and instructors. Right after grappling ended Sensei had us pad up to begin the next activity — free sparring. Free sparring lasted for 60 minutes — 3-minute rounds — with about 15 different students and instructors. At the end of sparring Sensei gave us our last assignment — to be done with a 3-man team. The assignment consisted of 2 rounds. Each round consisted of each member doing 100 gut busters with the second team member pushing the legs of the first team member to the ground and counting to 100. The 3rd team member held a left leg side kick out above the ground until the person doing gut busters completed their 100 gut busters. Once each person had done their 1st 100 gut busters, we repeated the process with the 3rd member of the team holding their right leg side kick above the ground. The team rotated through once and then repeated the cycle as the one team member held their right leg side kick out until the 1st team member completed their second set of 100 gut busters. When our team completed the 2nd rotation of gut busters our test was over. We ended a little after 5 pm.

One Step Closer to My Black Belt in the Mixed Martial Arts

In this post I want to share a joy with you. November 12, 2008, I wrote a 3-part series, **Traumatic/ Acquired Brain Injury — Do Not Give Up on Your Dreams**. In that series I spoke about the dream that I have to earn my black belt in the mixed martial arts. I also explained how I participated in an 8-hour progress check / test with the other brown belts from our martial arts academy. The progress check was set up by our Sensei to determine who was ready to enter the 10-month black belt cycle in January.

In the 3rd part of that series — **Traumatic / Acquired Brain Injury — Don't Give Up on Your Dreams! Part 3 of 3** – I share in detail what we had to accomplish during the progress check on November 8.

I realized that fulfilling the demands of the progress check would not necessarily guarantee my entry into the upcoming black belt cycle. Completing the 8-hour long progress check would simply qualify me to be considered by Sensei to enter the black belt cycle in January 2009. Per your information, the black belt cycle will last for 10 months (from January 2009 to October 2009) and then culminate in a 2-day black belt exam in the middle of October 2009. Last evening during class, 3 weeks after the progress...

After the progress check Sensei met with some of the students who completed the progress check. He met with the students to reveal his decision. Who would be entering the black belt cycle. Towards the end of class Sensei asked to speak with me. After following Sensei into his office, he had me sit in a chair on the opposite side of his desk where he sat. After a pause, Sensei revealed that all the instructors that were a part of the progress check, on November 8, thought that I was ready to enter cycle. Sensei told...

Sensei told me that he agreed with the other instructors and revealed that I would be entering cycle in January. As you might imagine I was thrilled to hear of his decision and to know that I would have the opportunity to enter the black belt cycle in January to prepare me for a 2-day black belt exam in October 2009. Sensei told me that I would be receiving a formal letter in the next several days inviting me to enter the black belt cycle In January 2009 with other selected students. For me, entering black belt cycle has...

Has been a goal that I have been working toward for the past 8 years. Through my training process and on my journey to this juncture in my development, in the martial arts, there have been many times. Many times, when I considered giving up. I am so glad that I did not give up on the process or on myself. I am so glad that I stayed committed to my journey one drill, one class at a time. My hope is that I will be able to complete the rigors of the black belt cycle to test for my black belt next October. Your prayers...

Your prayers would be appreciated. Thank you. I will keep you posted in the months to come concerning my experience and what I am learning through my process in the black belt cycle.

Update

In January 2009 while running laps on the mats at the martial art school, my right knee started to lock up. Lock up to the point that I had a difficult time even walking, much less continuing to run. I decided to leave class and go home. After an MRI it was determined that I had several meniscus tears. After getting 2 orthopedic opinions and talking with a man at the Y with similar tears, I made a decision. I decided that I did not want to develop further knee injuries and withdrew from the 10-month cycle test.

I saw a physical therapist and after working with him, continued to rehab my right knee for 9 months. After 9 months I was able to continue training (on my own) in different martial art disciplines. I decided to not continue training at the martial art school to avoid reinjuring my right knee while grappling (jujitsu).

After resuming my training on my own I have continued to develop my skills in different martial art disciplines. My goal has been to continue training in these disciplines to develop new neural pathways and brain reorganization. Training using principles of muay Thai, western boxing, arnis, jeet kune do and wing chun through repetitive mirrored movement (s) to develop my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions.

When Circumstances Change our Plans

During the past 8 years I have been training towards my black belt in the mixed martial arts. In November I completed and passed an 8-hour long progress check to qualify to enter a 10-month long process called the black belt cycle. After meeting with my Sensei on December 1st, 2008 he told me that I had passed the progress check and that I was invited to enter the black belt cycle. The cycle process began January 1, 2009 and I was fired up to begin the 10-month long process to test for my black belt in October 2009.

And then on February 3, 2009 I hurt my right knee. To make a long story short I saw an orthopedist, had an MRI and discovered that I had a tear in my meniscus. During the past 2 – 3 weeks I have been back training at the martial arts school, while avoiding activities that could further damage my knee. Today March 24, 2008, I met with my sports medicine Doctor. After discussing my MRI and the meniscus tears with my Doctor, I asked him a series of questions. When all was done and said my doctor told me...

Told me that if I continued in the black belt cycle, given the intensity of training required, I was asking for trouble. With the news I experienced some sadness over not being able to train toward obtaining my black belt in October, but happy to hear that I could continue training in the martial arts. Continuing training after rehabbing my knee, but not at the martial art school. As I processed the reality of my knee being injured and not being able to test for my black belt in October 2009, I experienced some mixed...

Some mixed emotions. In the process of sorting through my emotions my goal changed. Changed as a martial artist, from obtaining my black belt to growing on a continuum as a martial artist.

My goal (s) for training in the martial arts has evolved over time. My priorities have changed. At one point obtaining the next belt was the goal and then the journey became more important than any belt. As I approached the possibility of a new door opening, I focused on obtaining my black belt. With my knee injury and not being able to continue in the black belt cycle, my focus has changed back. Changed back to enjoying the process, growing as a martial artist and developing my own style of martial arts expression.

My Sensei's (instructor), Instructor (Sigung Richard Bustillo) original Instructor was Bruce Lee. I learned a principle from my Sensei, who learned from his Sigung who learned from Bruce Lee. I have used this principle of the past 26 years as a martial artist and also in my ongoing brain injury recovery process.

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

With my change of focus I became encouraged by the possibilities. In the next several months I will continue to train in various martial arts that do not necessitate pivoting and torching. And, who knows what my future holds for me in the martial arts. Hmm!!!

Today's Thought

I have good news for you. Although one door of happiness may have closed on you, be encouraged my friend. Possibilities exist. By letting go of our plans, when they do not go as we would like we can open our hands and our heart and know that they will be filled. Although one door of happiness may have closed be encouraged, another will open for you. We can trust the process, because we don't have to have the big picture. We can let go and know that we will get what we need. We will be led towards the light. We will know what we need to know. We can trust the process, a loving God and ourselves.

“We must be willing to give up the life that we have planned so as to have the one that is waiting for us.” Joseph Campbell

“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

Continuing to Train in Martial Arts with Rotator Cuff Tears — Don't Give Up on Your Goals Part 1

Written in May 2017

Background

Over the course of the past 18 years, I have engaged in a program of repetitive mirrored movement to create new neural pathways and brain reorganization. I have done so through different martial art disciplines. My interest has been to enhance my ongoing recovery process as an individual living with the impact of a brain injury.

“Never quit believing that you can develop in life. Never give up. Don't deny the inward spirit that provides the drive to accomplish great things in life.” Jon Huntsman, Sr.

In today's article, I would like to share some events that I began to notice 8-9 months ago. I noticed that I occasionally had some shooting pain. Like a small lightning bolt that radiated from the upper middle part of my back toward my left scapula. In my concern, I made an appointment with my primary care physician. After meeting with my Dr., he gave me several exercises to do as part of my workouts.

Follow-up

Over time I started to notice that I was having some pain in my left shoulder when moving my shoulder through certain “range of motions”. Although I experienced this discomfort, I thought that the pain would go away with time. A little over a month ago I set up an appointment to see my primary care physician to speak with him about the shoulder discomfort with a certain range of motion activities.

During my appointment with him, he examined my shoulder and declared that I would probably have to undergo rotator cuff surgery. He ordered x-rays and an MRI. The x-rays showed no dysfunction in my shoulder. The MRI was scheduled and about 10 days ago I underwent the MRI. The results from the MRI showed that I had a small tear and a partial tear in my left rotator cuff.

Meniscus Tears

In 2009, during a 10-month black belt cycle to test for my black belt I sustained 2 meniscus tears in my right knee. After meeting with my Dr. at the time, I began physical therapy. Although several surgeons wanted to operate on my knee, I decided to rehab my knee. I walked the pool, forwards and backward, stretched, light weights and rode the stationary bike with no resistance over an 8–9-month period.

After the 8–9-month period rehabbing my knee, I was able to start back using repetitive mirrored movements through full Muay Thai knees and full Muay Thai kicks.

Options

After my Dr.'s initial examination of my left shoulder, I began to research rotator cuff tears, my options and asked many people to pray for me. Thank you for all of your prayers. Those prayers have helped me tremendously. In speaking with one friend, he suggested that I make an appointment with a physical therapist. Coincidentally, this physical therapist had helped me with my knee in 2009.

Continuing to Train in Martial Arts with Rotator Cuff Tears — Don't Give Up on Your Goals Part 2

Appointment

After setting up an appointment with the physical therapist, I met with him. After doing an evaluation of my left shoulder he determined that surgery was not warranted. I have been in the process of doing the exercises that he gave me and I will begin physical therapy as appointments are scheduled.

Modifications

In the past 3 -4 months I have modified my workouts to limit engaging my shoulders so as to allow my shoulder to heal. Although I am not engaging my shoulders in my workouts, I have not stopped using the principle of neuroplasticity. Instead of engaging my hands, elbows, and shoulders in my workouts, I have focused on using my core, hips, knees, and legs.

Repetitive Mirrored Movements

During the past 4-5 months, I have worked on my movement and agility through engaging both my right and my left knees and legs. I have done so through Muay Thai knees, Muay Thai kicks, front kicks, sidekicks, oblique kicks. I have done so to increase my ability to transition kicks from my right leg to my left leg and from my left leg to my right leg once I plant each foot.

Last Several Weeks

Several weeks ago, I began noticing squiggly movements in my right knee, reminiscent of the meniscus tears in 2009. In response, I have re-engaged in rehabbing my right knee. I have done so through hamstring stretches, leg extensions (lightweight, high repetitions) and riding the stationary bike with minimal resistance when paddling.

My Continued Journey

Earlier this month I had my 60th birthday. I am having a blast with my training and believe I am in the best shape of my life.

I plan on working diligently to rehab both my shoulder and my knee. With time, I will continue to empower my ongoing recovery process by using the principles of neuroplasticity and repetitive mirrored movements.

PowerPoint Presentation

Last month, April 2017, I created a Power point presentation. To view the Power point presentation, you may click on the below link.

[Neuroplasticity and Opening the Door to Hope PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Continuing to Train in Martial Arts with Rotator Cuff Tears — Don't Give Up on Your Goals Part 3

Update

Since writing this article in May 2017 I have had a full recovery of my shoulder. I did not have surgery on my shoulder. Over the past year and a half, I have followed the instruction and guidance of my physical therapist. Doing so has strengthened the muscles around the rotator cuffs – my supraspinatus, subscapularis, and the infraspinatus — which had partial tears.

I have regained a full range of motion in my left shoulder and am able to execute drills using principles of Kali, Wing Chun, Western Boxing and Muay Thai elbows and strikes with an equal range of motion using both my right and left shoulders/arms.

Update: January 21, 2019

Today is January 21, 2019 and I have come a long way in my process of strengthening my rotator cuff. Infraspinatus, Supraspinatus and Subscapularis. In the process, my range of motion has increased as well as the strengthening of my left shoulder.

How I Use the Principle of Neuroplasticity to Create new Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization

Below are links to short video presentations showing the progression of how the concept of neuroplasticity through repetitive mirrored movements has benefited my mind and body.

I began my process of using repetitive mirrored movements through different martial art disciplines in October of 1998.

In August 2013 a friend of mine made a video presentation of the progress that I made using the principle of neuroplasticity. Other friends have helped me to make video presentations of my progress in each year since 2013. Below are links to YouTube presentations of the progress made using repetitive mirrored movements. To watch the progress made using the principle of neuroplasticity over the past 9 years, click on **Start >** for each of the demonstrations.

Developing both Gross and fine Motor Skills and Skill Sets

To own the power of my brain (right and left hemispheres) and the functional ability of the right and left sides of my body (to improve balance, coordination, eye and hand/foot coordination, body awareness, focus, agility, spatial orientation, and precision).

Demonstrations on How I Create

To see demonstrations of how I use different martial art disciplines to create new neural pathways and brain reorganization. Click on this link:

[**How I Use Neuroplasticity to Create New Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization**](#)

Traumatic Brain Injury and Questions

During the past week I have been searching for specific answers to some questions. In my quest to find answers to these questions I experienced some frustration. Because I sincerely believe that I am an empowered being with infinite resources at my disposal, I began looking for the resources. Resources that could help answer my questions. Although initially anxious about the situation that led to my questions, I was able to make contact with the appropriate resources and get answers to those questions.

When I find solutions to my frustrations, I find a new source of courage and I am empowered.

Questions provide wonderful opportunities to explore and learn. Questions provide the motivation to find answers that empower my process. Questions become the portal to a new world of understanding. With that understanding, I gain wisdom, which in turn equips me to find solutions. Solutions empower and equip me to live the life that I have imagined. Imagined in spite of circumstances that I may not understand at the present time. When I am empowered, I find the determination to succeed beyond...

Succeed beyond my questions. Consequently, I find that circumstances no longer need to leave me anxious and frustrated. By realizing that I have more power than I may realize, I am able to learn. Learn how to take full advantage of living life on life's terms. I just need to be willing to find the right questions.

My encouragement to you

Although, you may be anxious and frustrated there is hope. You may believe that you have been forsaken by life itself. You may believe; at the present time, that no answer could possibly exist. You may believe that you are stuck because of a roadside bomb or a drunk driver. You may have convinced yourself that nothing good could come from your injuries. You may have considered giving up on yourself and on your process. Based on my own experience, I have good news for you, my friend. Clarity will come.

What helps me to look for solutions, amidst questions. I sit down with a piece of paper and a pen and I write. As I write more clarity comes as I listen to my heart and my head as I write.

Rise Again! You best days are yet to come.

Believe in your process, in a loving God and in yourself. More will be revealed with each new day. The answers to your questions will become apparent. You will find solutions to empower and equip your process. Take courage my friend. You are not alone in your struggle. Therefore, commit yourself to asking questions and passionately pursuing the answers to those questions. Reach out to those individuals who may or can provide the resources to help answer your questions and thus provide you with solutions.

The answers to your questions will empower you to live the life. You will live the life you have imagined. With time, you will realize that you are not limited because of your limitations, deficits or disability.

Dream Again!

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." Henry David Thoreau

"Don't give up. 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

Living with a brain injury, Failures and Setbacks

Last night I stopped by the martial arts school to see my Sensei, instructor, and to see and say hello to some of the brown and black belts with whom I trained with for 8 years. I then made the decision to stay for part of the brown and black belt class.

At the beginning of class, Sensei shared something with the students that I want to share with you, my friend. May you be encouraged as you read through this article to not give up on your goals, your process, your dreams or your destiny. May the lesson – below – inspire you to keep getting back up no matter how many failures or setbacks that you may experience during your life time.

As Sensei began class, he shared a list of setbacks and failures that an individual in history experienced during his life time.

- 1832 Lost Job and defeated in the state legislature
- 1833 Failed in business
- 1835 Fiancé / sweetheart died
- 1836 Had a nervous breakdown
- 1836 Defeated in run for Illinois House Speaker
- 1843 Defeated in run for nomination for U.S. Congress
- 1848 Lost re-nomination for Congress
- 1849 Rejected for land officer position
- 1854 Defeated for U.S. Senate
- 1856 Defeated for nomination for Vice President
- 1858 Again defeated in run for U.S. Senate
- 1860 Elected President (Success)

The above list of setbacks and seeming failures are attributed to one of our greatest Presidents in American history. His name is Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln profoundly impacted his generation and generations to come because he made the decision (s) to not allow failures or setbacks to keep him from pursuing his dreams or his destiny. Because of his decision (s) to keep moving forward, freedom has occurred in the lives of many individuals for many generations. Sensei went on to encourage the...

To encourage students in the class to not give up on their goals, be it advancing to their next belt rank or in another area in their life. To not give up even though they may encounter failures or setbacks in the pursuit of those goals. Abraham Lincoln's example and Sensei's lesson inspires both you and I to stay committed to our goals, vision, mission, dreams and destinies. To stay committed regardless of any...

Regardless of any failure (s) or set back (s) that we may experience on the way. On the way to accomplishing and realizing our goals, vision, mission, dreams and destinies. And as Abraham Lincoln brought a freedom to the lives of many individuals, so too will we bring about a freedom. We will bring freedom simply by staying committed to our dreams and our destinies. Freedom by our example, regardless of any failure(s) or setback(s) to the lives of many individuals in our and future generations.

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” Thomas Edison

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.” Ambrose Redmoon

Biographical Information for Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA



My name is Craig J. Phillips. I sustained an open skull fracture and a traumatic brain injury in an automobile accident when I was 10 years old in 1967. I remained in a coma for 3 weeks with right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. Waking from the coma, I felt like I had a bad dream, but the reality became apparent. I also fractured my left femur and remained in traction for 6-7 weeks to set the femur. I was then placed in a full body cast (Spica) for 5-6 months. After being taken out of the Spica cast, I learned how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. I also underwent 2 EEG's and a battery of cognitive and psycho social testing.

The results were shared with my parents, but not with me. Once my external wounds healed, the impact of my traumatic brain injury went invisible and was never factored into my struggle. I was mainstreamed into the 6th grade. I graduated on time with my high school class and then went on to college, although the testing done in 1968 showed that I would probably not succeed beyond high school academically. It took me 10 years to obtain my undergraduate degree (2 universities and one college) and 3 ½ years to obtain my graduate degree (2 graduate schools). I had a long history of getting and losing jobs.

I applied for SSDI 3 times and was a client of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida and North Carolina. After my 2nd DVR evaluation my vocational rehab counselor told me that I was unemployable. Shortly after being told that I was unemployable by DVR I was approved to begin receiving SSDI at the end of 1998. My undergraduate degree is in Theology. My graduate degree is in Rehabilitation Counseling Although I had diligently applied myself both academically and vocationally, I felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to go. Nevertheless, I did not give on the process.

I had a desire to use what I had been seeking to do all my life. On February 6, 2007 I created Second Chance to Live. Since that time, I have written **2131 articles**, **12 eBooks**, **450 video presentations**, **20 slide show presentations** and **41 inspirational posters**, all focusing on a holistic recovery process. Since June 2020 and to date I have given **125 presentations** through Zoom. To see these presentations and locations, click on this link. [Public Speaking; Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live](#). To access my resource page, please click on this link: [Resources for Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery](#).

Among Places Presented

Among the places where I have spoken: Cleveland Clinic, Medstar National Rehabilitation Hospital, Penn Presbyterian Hospital, Overland Park Rehabilitation Hospital, Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital, Magee Rehabilitation Hospital, Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital, Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital, Carolinas Rehab, Colorado Department of Education, University of North Dakota, University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill, Harvard University, University of California at Berkley, Columbia University, Synapse National, Associations and Conferences.

During the nearly 17 years Second Chance to Live has touched lives in these countries:

United States, Brazil, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Russia, China, Hong Kong, India, France, Spain, Ukraine, Finland, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Indonesia, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, Greece, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Serbia, Slovenia, Portugal, Morocco, Egypt, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Switzerland, Thailand, Israel, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Netherlands, Ghana and South Africa.

[National and International Organizations Using Second Chance to Live as a Resource](#)

Below is a list of discussion topics and full presentations designed to Inspire Hope

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

[Yes, I am Disabled, but Don't Count Me Out because...! Discussion Topic](#)

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

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

[Don't Let Anyone tell You, You Aren't Enough Because... You are Smart, Intuitive and Courageous Discussion Topic](#)

[Living and Thriving Beyond Brain Injury Awareness to Create a Good Life for Ourselves Discussion Topic](#)

[Creating Practical Hope in Our Lives through the Power of Identification Discussion Topic](#)

[Nine Habits to Benefit from Using the Principle of Neuroplasticity Discussion Topic](#)

Full Zoom Presentations Designed to Inspire Purpose and Hope

[Finding Purpose and not Giving Up after Brain Injury](#)

[Hope and the Progression of Living our Best Life after Brain Injury](#)

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

[Facing Adversity and Having Options When Life Does Not Make Sense](#)

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

[Brain Injury and The Power of "I CAN" in an Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery Process](#)

[Living and Thriving Beyond Brain Injury Awareness to Create a Good Life for Ourselves](#)

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

[Some Things to Consider so We Don't Stay Stuck Living with a Brain Injury Zoom Presentation](#)

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

[Don't Let Anyone tell You, You Aren't Enough Because... You are Smart, Intuitive and Courageous](#)

[Celebrating Goals and Dreams in the Now, Overcoming Obstacles, Odds and Impacting Generations Presentation](#)

[Finding Freedom from Feeling Alone, Isolated, Alienated, Intimidated and Diminished Living with a Brain injury and an Invisible Disability](#)

Zoom Presentations Sharing my Personal Journey and Process

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

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

Zoom Presentations Empowering Groups and Organizations

[Living with Long Covid-19 Invisible Disability — Hope, Encouragement and Support Zoom](#)

[Empowering Current and Future Professionals in Brain Injury Recovery and Rehabilitation Summary](#)