

Hope and Purpose after a Brain Injury, a Stroke or a Spinal Cord Injury Keynote Presentation

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

I share the below with you to encourage you to not give up on hope. Give up on hope after a brain injury, a stroke or a spinal cord injury and to live your purpose in ways that will work for you. One skill at a time.

Building on one skill after another skill, into a series of skill sets. Skill sets that will empower our ability to take actions. Actions that will give you and me the ability to create hope to live our purpose in life.

To live our purpose after a brain injury, a stroke or a spinal cord injury.

An Opportunity

February 1, 2024, Thursday, I had an opportunity. An opportunity to share my presentation, "[Finding Purpose after Brain Injury and Stroke](#)" with a group of men. A group of men at the **NeuroRestorative Charlotte, NC Brain Injury, Behavioral Health** location (through zoom) to share what I discovered.

During the presentation I shared what I discovered in my process and journey on the way to finding my purpose. I then shared some principles that helped me and continue to help me. Help me as I live and fulfill my purpose, one day at a time. After I finished the presentation, I was asked a question.

As an Introduction to answering their Question

The individual asked when would be the right time to seek and begin working. I told them they alone would know when the time was right. During my presentation I shared with the men and staff that I was unable to stay employed in traditional employment. I shared that after being told that I was unemployable that I felt like I was on my own. The interest inventories, career assessments and their evaluations did not help.

No one, up to that point, could give me any answers or solutions on, "How to be of service?". Because they did not and could not provide answers, I was left to figure out how I could be of service beyond traditional employment. To be of service despite my brain injury and invisible disability.

Despite my deficits and limitations. I shared with them that no one had answers for me as to how I could be of service being “unemployable”.

“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

An Important Question

In my answer, I shared with them that they, too, may not be able to stay employed in traditional employment. I then went on to encourage them to develop their interests. The interests that they had before they sustained their injury. I encouraged them to learn how to develop those interests in ways that would now work for them. Work for them despite their injury, deficits and limitations to fulfill their purpose.

I then shared something that made a big difference in my ability to develop my interests. My interests through my gifts, talents and abilities. I encouraged them to find out how they best learn, their learning style. Whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. I shared that understanding the way they learn will reduce their frustration and the frustration of those who are teaching them in ways they do not learn.

My Experience with Being Taught

Understanding their learning styles then would help them learn how to develop their gifts, talents and abilities. Learning styles that may differ than before their injury. I then shared with them that a friend of mine tried to teach me in ways that I did not learn. The result left us both frustrated and feeling stuck. Feeling frustrated and stuck because I was not able to apply what he was struggling to teach me.

What I Discovered about My Learning Style

When I discovered how I best learn I was able to learn at my own rate and pace. My own rate and pace instead of being frustrated. Because of my awareness of my short-term memory and difficulty learning sequences of information I realized I needed more time. More time to learn sequences of information. I discovered that by watching YouTube video presentations; I was able to follow and apply patterns observed

By applying those patterns into what I was wanting to accomplish, I was able to learn how to do technical things. Technical things for my weblog.

And as I have continued, over time and through persistence, to learn new technical things I have been able to develop and live in my purpose.

My Journey and Process of Discovery to Encourage

I shared during the presentation that it took me **10 years** to get my undergraduate degree. **3 1/2 years** to obtain my master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. **20 years** of getting and losing jobs (both non-profession and professional). Became a client of **2 Dept.'s of Vocational Rehabilitation**. The **2nd** evaluation process resulted: unemployable. I applied **3 times** for SSDI **the 3rd** application. was approved.

I then spent **7 more years** in search of my purpose. In my search of learning how to use my gifts talents and abilities in ways that would work to live and fulfill my purpose. My process, journey of discovering my purpose took **40 years**, after my brain injury and I am glad that I did not give up. Your process may not take that long, but; however long it may take, don't give up. Don't give up on your process and journey.

Another 14 Years

And after I discovered my purpose, living my purpose has taken years to develop. It then took another **14 years** and zoom for me to begin to be able to share a message of creative hope. Creative hope through my now **27** presentations, **128** times (with upcoming presentations) throughout the United States.

Hope Did not Give up On Me

I shared that I had a dysfunctional relationship with hope, and God for that matter, for many years. Because hope and God did not do what I thought was right, over the years, I had a difficult time trusting. With this perspective, I felt as though hope had abandoned me and that I had to figure things out on my own. Little did I know, at the time, that I had always been just where I needed to be to learn, live and fulfill my purpose.

The imagery that helped me to make sense of hope and finding my purpose.

For many years I wondered whether hope had given up on me? I continued to wonder if hope had given up on me until I discovered. Discovered the value set forth in the imagery of the tapestry and the jigsaw puzzle.

On one side of the tapestry there are multicolored jumbled threads protruding, that seem to make no sense while on the other side of the tapestry there is a beautiful story being intricately woven.

A box of jigsaw puzzle pieces dumped on the table of life, that make little sense. Little sense until each puzzle piece appears and is put into place. Then a beautiful scene or picture emerges. Through this imagery I began to trust. I began to trust that the puzzle pieces and jumbled multicolored threads were being used to connect and weave. Connect and weaved an empowering story that would help me to live my purpose.

Living with a Brain Injury, Stroke or a Spinal Cord Injury

All your circumstances, even ones that do not make sense and leave you feeling distraught and discouraged are threads and puzzle pieces. Through staying committed to your ongoing recovery process you can trust. You can trust that those jumbled threads and puzzle pieces that seem out of place will be used to weave a beautiful story and the pieces will fall into place to reveal a brilliant scene. More will be revealed.

Learn from your circumstances, experiences, disappointment, discouragement and opportunities for they are all leading you to your purpose. What may not make sense to you now, as they did not make sense to me for many years, will become increasingly clear. Clear by staying committed to our process and journey. Chose to see your jumbled threads and puzzle pieces in a different way. A way to lead and guide.

In My Experience

Through seeing my jumbled threads and puzzle pieces as a way to lead and guide me I began to see hope as a coach. A coach that was teaching me what I needed to learn from my set of circumstances. A loving God who was (I didn't understand) and is leading me to live my purpose, in the here and now of today.

Quotes that Encourage you and me to Not Give Up!

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

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

More quotes that Encourage you and me to Not Give Up!

“Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.” Auguste Rodin

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

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

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

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

“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

“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