

Making Our Lives Magical after a Brain Injury and Stroke

A Progression of Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

The Pike Syndrome and Overcoming a Learned Helplessness

“Don’t Give up because of the Pane of Pain”

“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.”

Pane of Glass called Disappointment and Discouragement

“Fable of the Tortoise and the Hare”

As Individuals living with brain injuries and many times invisible disabilities we can feel like the big fish in the big tank. The big fish that is trying to get to the little fish to find satisfaction and fulfillment. Satisfaction and fulfillment in the process of achieving our hopes and dreams as we continue to hit disappointment and discouragement.

Making Our Lives Magical by Not Focusing on the Pane of Glass

Making our lives magical one day at a time by realizing that we have more power than we realize. That living with a brain injury does not have to leave us feeling as though we are helpless. That we do not have to succumb to a learned helplessness. That we do not have to be limited or be dissuaded by the “pane” of a diagnosis or a prognosis.

Like the big fish in the big tank, we can learn to swim freely and go after what we need to improve that quality of our lives and well-beings. What

might appear as a pane of glass of our or other people's expectation no longer need to leave us feeling helpless.

“Everybody 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

Although I am Limited, I am not Limited

The pane of glass (disappointment and discouragement) is an indication, not an indicator. A switch on the railroad of life, not the end of the track.

Finding a Way to Live Our Purpose

Instead, we can search for a way that will work for us. A way that will empower and enhance our lives, relationships and well-beings. A way that will make our lives magical.

Through the grieving process and by confronting my denial, facing my anger, trying to change what I am powerless to change, processing my sadness over what I am powerless to change, I am able to experience acceptance. Acceptance that opens the door to doing something different. Doing something different to get different results.

“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

I Am Amazing – You are Amazing

“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

A Change in Attitude

In the process we are given the gift to look at our set of circumstances through a different lens. A lens of **Why not Me?** Instead of **Why Me?** Through the lens of **What Is?** instead of through the lens of **“What Is Not?”** In the process, we are able to stop focusing on the **“pane”** of glass of a diagnosis, prognosis, label, stereotype or stigmatization.

As a result of this changed attitude, I no longer have to see myself as limited. Limited limitations and deficits because of my disability

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

“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

Setting Goals and Creating Hope

Through using the principles of neuroplasticity and repetitive mirrored movements I am able to achieve what I never dreamed possible.

Working on one skill at a time (a bazillion times) I am able to combine those skills together into skill sets. Combining skill sets ([a bazillion times](#)) together I am able to improve the quality of my activities of daily living.

In the process, I am able to enhance my quality of life, my relationships and my well-being one day at a time and a little at a time.

“Inch by Inch, life’s a cinch. Yard by Yard it’s very hard.” John Bytheway

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

“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.” Jim Rohn

“Goals give you a mark to shoot for and keep you motivated when you face adversity.” Benjamin Watson

Advocating for Ourselves in Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul and Emotions

Through being committed to the process of developing what makes me, me (my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions) I enhance my life, well-being and relationships.

By developing my mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions in my ongoing brain injury recovery process, I am able to develop what I need to thrive. Thrive instead of continuing to buy into the notion that I am limited because of the “pane” of glass.

Through being committed to self-development, I tweak and cultivate skills that empower my ability to fulfill my potential and maximize my internal and external growth. In the process, I enhance my ability to be of maximum service to a loving God and my fellows.

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” Alice Walker

“There’s only one corner of the universe that you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self.” Aldous Huxley

“As long as a man stands in his own way, everything seems to be in his way.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

12 Ways to Enhance Our Lives, Well-Beings and Relationships after a Brain Injury and a Stroke

The Good News – We Do Not Have to Go “it” Alone

Through my process and on my journey, I have discovered different ways. Different ways that help me to create hope in my life, my well-being and in my relationships, through awareness, acceptance and action.

In the process of using these ways I have discovered my purpose, created my new normal, improved my brain/body connection and have learned how to be an advocate. An advocate for myself and for other people.

Becoming a “Wounded Healer” in the Process

What has helped me may help you too. Help you to grow in awareness, acceptance and action to be a wounded healer.

A Set of Ways that Helped me to Move Forward with my Life

In my experience and through my process I discovered a set of ways. A set of ways that have helped me in my ongoing brain injury recovery process, one day at a time. These set of ways may also help you in your ongoing brain injury recovery process, one day at a time.

Inch by inch, life’s a cinch. Yard by yard, it’s very hard.

These ways have helped me to be able to accept the things that I cannot change, change the things I can and let go of the rest to a loving God. To a loving God to help me to sort out, to fulfill my purpose and to be of service.

Benefits that I have Gained through Working the 12 Ways

Learn how to trust the process, a loving God and myself by:

Grieving what I Could not Change

Changing the Things, I Can

Creating my New Normal

Defining Success for myself

Finding and Living my Purpose

Owning my Power to be of Service

Developing My Brain / Body Connection

Advocating for Myself in my Mind, Body, Spirit, Soul and Emotion

Cultivating a Healthy Relationship with myself, a loving God, people

Grieving the Guilt and Shame of my brain injury / invisible disability

Understanding Why I feel Misunderstood / Shunned to Find Freedom.

Creating and Continuing to Develop my Own Unique Genius in Life

Discovering How to Make my Life Magical, One Day at a Time

So that I could Stop Fighting with and Against Myself

Opening the Door to Hope a Little at a Time

Creating Hope in my Life while Living Brain injury or a Stroke

When I reached a point in time when I could no longer defend of deny the impact of my brain injury and invisible disability I began to grieve.

1. Admitted that we are powerless over the impact and effects of our brain injury and invisible disability. That our lives have forever changed because of our brain injury. Although we are powerless over the impact of our brain injury and our invisible disability, we are not helpless. As a result, we no longer need to feel like a victim or that we are helpless to change because of our brain injury/invisible disability.

By realizing that all my efforts to try to change what could not be changed, I surrendered. By surrendering I became open and willing.

2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could help us to accept what we are powerless to change (the impact of our brain injury and our invisible disability). Consequently, we can rely on the power that many of us have found to be God. We can rely on a loving God to help us to stop sabotaging and undermining our lives, well-beings and relationships by trying not to be impacted by a brain injury. We can rely on a loving God to help us to accept ourselves and to create a good life for ourselves.

Through accepting my inability to change what I simply could not change; I made a decision to ask for help from a power greater.

3. With the awareness that we need this power in our lives, we can make a decision to ask Him to lead and guide our process and journey. We no longer have to figure things out on our own. Instead, we can ask Him to help us own our power. Own our power as an individual living with a brain injury and an invisible disability. Own our power through what we can do, not what we can't do. Own our power (what is in our power to control) in our mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions in ways that work for us, a little at a time/ one day at a time.

By asking for help, I began to examine patterns of what got in the way of my ability to create hope in my life, well-being and relationships.

4. With the help of a loving God, we can begin to examine areas of our lives that no longer work for us. That undermine and sabotage our lives, our well-beings and our relationships. With the help of a loving God, we can look for patterns. Patterns such as defense mechanisms

in which we strive to defend, answer and explain what we can't do. Patterns that keep you and I believing/feeling that we are victims of our brain injury, our invisible disability and our circumstances.

As I examined what got in the way of my life, my well-being and my relationships I realized that needed to learn how to trust.

5. We no longer have to remain isolated/alienated because of what we are no longer able to accomplish with because of our brain injuries. By admitting to ourselves, a loving God and another person what we are unable to accomplish, we can come out of the shadows of isolation and break free from feelings of alienation. Alienation from ourselves, a loving God and other people, because of what we can no longer accomplish. By letting go of these expectations we can learn how to trust, again -- a loving God, ourselves and other people.

By realizing that I needed to trust, I discovered that I needed to let go of what no longer worked for me to discover what works for me.

6. Through being sick and tired of being sick and tired of getting the same results, we become willing to try something different. Become willing to try something different to get different results in our lives and relationships. Through being willing, we can ask a loving God to help us to stop doing things that no longer work for us. Doing things that get in the way and sabotage of our ability to get on with creating a good life for ourselves. In the process, we become entirely ready. Entirely ready to let go of what no longer works for us living our lives.

To discover what would work for me, I needed to let go of my will to ask a loving God to lead and guide my discovery process.

7. Through being ready to let go of what no longer works for us, we can be actively involved. Actively involved in the process of discovering how to use our gifts, talents and abilities. Discovering how to use our gifts, talents and abilities through trial and error. In the process, we can find ways that will fit our gifts, talents and abilities. We can humbly ask a loving God to help us in/with this process of self-discovery. In the process of letting go and self-discovery we can find and have/experience peace in our lives and relationships.

By examining the patterns of what no longer works for me, as I live my life, I am able to make peace with what no longer works for me.

8. Through letting go of what no longer works we can pursue what works for us. In the process, we can stop being a prisoner to our deficits and imitations. Instead of trying to not be impacted by our deficits and limitations, we accept them. As a result, we are able to stop fighting with and against ourselves. Stop fighting with ourselves and other people by trying to prove that we do not have those deficits and limitations. As we stop fighting with our deficits and limitations, we gain the freedom to run our own race. In the process, we become the individual that we choose and decide to become in our lives.

I am able to make peace with what no longer works for me in my life, well-being and relationships by changing the way I use my energy.

9. We can let go of the life that we had planned to create the life that works for us. In the process, we can learn how to own the power in our mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions. Own our power through the use of our time and energy. In the process, we can create our new normal in ways that work for us. In ways that work for us, through being an advocate for our mind, body, soul, spirit and emotions.

As I seek to change the way that I interact in my life and relationships I continue to be aware of what no longer works for me each day.

10. And the good news is that we don't have to figure out how everything will fit together. Fit together as we seek to own the power in our mind, body, spirit, soul and emotions. Instead, we can take the process, one day at a time, one step at a time. In the process, we can ask a loving God to lead, guide and direct our steps, one day at a time. In the process, we can trust the process. Trust that the dots will connect forward as we learn how to use our gifts, talents and abilities.

Because I realize that brain injury recovery is an ongoing process, I ask a loving God to guide, lead and direct my process, each day.

11. We can ask a loving God to give us direction each day. We can do the footwork, while letting go of the outcomes by trusting the process, a loving God and ourselves. We can learn to trust through doing the footwork and letting go of the outcomes. We can let go of

the outcomes one day at a time. We can trust that more will be revealed with time. We can ask and trust that we are being guided in the direction of fulfilling our purpose, to be of service.

As I continue to ask a loving God to lead, guide and direct my process in ways that work for me, I encourage others to do the same.

12. As we grow in the understanding of ourselves (with the help of a loving God) we continue to use our gifts, talents and abilities. Use our gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for us. In the process, we learn from our circumstances, our experiences, our lessons and opportunities. In the process, we create hope in our lives, well-beings, relationships. In the process, we create our destinies one lesson, one opportunity and one day at a time. In the process, we share hope.

Resources on Second Chance to Live Available to Encourage and Empower our Ongoing Brain Injury Recovery

Second Chance to Live Resources – Empowering the Individual, not the Brain Injury

Biographical Information for Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

Biographical Information for Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live

More Detail about My Process and Journey during 56 Years

Second Chance to Live Author’s Autobiography in Bullet Points

