

Hope and the Progression of Living our Best Life After a Brain Injury Keynote Presentation

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA Second Chance to Live



“Our disappointments and discouragement do not have to limit our ability to create a good life for ourselves.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Process, Journey and Evolution

Traumatic brain injury, car accident, in 1967 when I was 10 years old. Open skull fracture, right frontal lobe damage, a severe brain bruise with brain stem involvement. Coma for 3 weeks. Fractured left femur (thigh bone), traction 7 weeks, Spica (full-body) cast for 5 months. 2 EEG's, battery of psychosocial testing. Was not supposed to succeed beyond high school academically. Learned how to walk, talk, read, write and speak in complete sentences. Tutored at home in 5th grade. Mainstreamed back into elementary school in the 6th grade. Graduated on time with my high school class in 1975. Went on to obtain my undergraduate degree in 10 years (2 universities, 1 community college). I then went on to obtain my master's degree (2 graduate schools) Rehabilitation Counseling. Credentials CRC.

20-year history of getting and losing jobs, client with 2 different State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (Florida and North Carolina). 2nd Vocational Rehabilitation evaluation determined that I was not employable.

Applied 3 times for SSDI, the 3rd application approved. For many years I felt like someone who was all dressed up with nowhere to go. I experienced a lot of disappointments and discouragement despite all my best efforts to succeed academically and vocationally. But I am glad that I did not give up on finding a way to use my gifts, talents and abilities in ways that worked.

In my search I created **Second Chance to Live**, on **February 6, 2007, 7 years** after my **2nd** Depart. of Voc. Rehab evaluation revealed I was employable and my **3rd** SSDI application was approved.

“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus

“Inch by inch, life's a cinch. Yard by yard, life's hard.” John Bytheway

I created this presentation to share what helped me to begin to create hope in my life despite my disappointments and discouragement.

May what I share inspire you to create hope despite your...

I Needed to Examine my Relationship with Hope

For many years I had a dysfunctional relationship with hope because hope did not play by my rules and fulfill my expectations.

Gaining a Healthy Relationship with Hope

My relationship with hope changed when I started to look at my life living with a brain injury through different lenses.

I Needed to I See my Experience in a Different Way

Through seeing my life after my brain injury through the lens of **“Why not me?”** and **“What is?”**, instead of **“Why me?”** and **“What isn’t?”**

Through the lens of **“I CAN”** instead of **“I CAN’T”**. Discovering how **“I CAN”** make what works for me, work for me and stop comparing.

“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 by not giving up. I am given the gift of knowing by trusting the process, a loving God and myself.” Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Through my process I gained a healthy relationship with hope. I began to see hope as a coach that empowered my ability to be a co-creator in my life and relationships. I began to see my circumstances as teachers.

Being a Co-Creator

A co-creator through being an actor, instead of a reactor in my life. An actor through being responsible to and for my reactions to my life and circumstances.

To Become Willing

“Nothing in the Universe can stop you from letting go and starting over.” Guy Finley

“We must be willing to give up the life we have planned so as to have the one that I waiting for us.” Joseph Campbell

To Be Able to Move forward in my Progression

In my experience, I was unable to let go and be willing until I grieved what I could not change. I had to get to a point in time when I could not longer deny or defend the impact of my brain injury and invisible disability.

I needed to confront the denial of what I could not change (and what other people could not accept). I needed to become angry at what I could not change. Then I needed to again try to change what could not be changed.

When I realized that all of my efforts to change, changed nothing I became depressed. I stayed depressed until I reached a point in time when I was tired of being depressed over what could not be changed.

At this time, I began to accept what could not be changed. My acceptance gave me hope, because I realized that I could choose something different. I could stop being stuck by what I could not change to change what I could.

Grieving what I could Not Change Gave Me Hope

“If you take responsibility for yourself, you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams.” Les Brown

"Our circumstances are not meant to keep us down, but they are meant to build us up. They are meant to build us up by teaching us lessons that provide experiences and offer opportunities." Craig J. Phillips

“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

What Helped me to Move Forward

Discovery

Finding Purpose after Brain Injury – this just takes time; lots of time, at least it did for me. In my experience, learning how to walk in my purpose was a process and a journey. And, I am glad I did not give up.

“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

“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 can not hope too much or dare too much.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Acceptance

To find and live my purpose I needed to accept what I could not change. To change what I could, then trust the process and let go of the outcomes.

“Nothing in the universe can stop you from letting go and starting over.” Guy Finley

“Accept what is, let go of what was, have faith in what will be.” Sonia Ricotti

Execution

Process of elimination -- Was all about determining what no longer worked to determine what worked. Creating and accepting my new normal.

“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

Development

In my experience, I needed to involve my brain / body connection in the process to be able to develop and excel. Excel through Neuroplasticity.

“It is not that I am so smart. It is just that I stay with problems longer.” Albert Einstein

By Learning and Practicing One Skill and One Skill Set at a time.

I have been training in different martial art disciplines for 27 years.

How I use Neuroplasticity to Develop and Excel

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

Neuroplasticity 2021 Using Modern Arnis, Kali, Western Boxing, Knife and Wing Chun



Brain-Body Connection Craig J Phillips MRC, BA, Second Chance to Live March 2024



Created my own style over time, which I call “Craig Fu”.

Advocacy

In my experience, I was the one who needed to become aware of what I needed in my mind, body, spirit, soul and body to advocate for myself.

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

The Path

In my experience, I needed to have help to move me through this process. In my experience, I found 12 ways that helped me in this ongoing process.

“It is not as important what happened or happens to us, but how we respond to what happened or happens to us.”

Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA

Commitment

In my experience, I realized that I needed to have a change of attitude. A change in attitude to be able stay committed to running my own race.

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

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

Ownership

In my experience, what became apparent was that I brought me into all my relationships. Therefore, I could not wait for anyone to change to feel safe.

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

Staying Focused

In my experience I needed to look at success in a different way. In a way that was defined by me and not by how other people defined success.

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

Run My Own Race

Through staying focused, I began to realize that I was walking on a road less traveled. On a path, that would leave a path for other people to walk.

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

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

To Live my Best Life, I needed to Combine these Attributes

Hard Work, Commitment, Drive, Determination, Discipline, Fortitude, Persistence, Tenacity, and Courage

The Attributes Discussed

Hard work or Work-ethic

Hard work for me means being diligent, to accomplish a task or a goal that is set before me; with focus.

Hard work involves sticking with a project or a goal to achieve the desired outcome.

For me, hard work does not mean running a sprint but involves running a marathon; which requires consistent and ongoing effort.

“Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds.” Gordon B. Hinckley

article link: [A Word of Encouragement – Keep Swinging at the Fences](#)

Commitment

“a willingness to give your time and energy to something that you believe in, or a promise or firm decision to do something” [Cambridge](#)

[Dictionaries online](#)

For me commitment involves loyalty, first to myself; to stick with a goal, regardless...

Commitment communicates to me to remain undeterred from what I set out to accomplish.

Although the way that I set out to accomplish something may change, my commitment teaches me that I can find a way that will work for me to be able to accomplish my goal.

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

Article link: [When Circumstances Change Our Plans](#)

Determination

“is a positive [emotion](#) that involves persevering towards a difficult [goal](#) in spite of obstacles.^{[1][2]} Determination occurs prior to goal attainment and serves to motivate behavior that will help achieve one’s goal.” [Wikipedia](#)

Determination helps me to focus on what I want to accomplish, in spite of obstacles and setbacks.

Obstacles become a sign on the road that helps me to realize that adjustments need to be made to accomplish my desired goal (s).

Determination teaches me to not give up in spite of apparent obstacles and setbacks because I know that more will be revealed in time.

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

Article link: [Experiencing Adversity, Failures, Setbacks and Not Giving Up!](#)

Drive

“There are three major components to motivation: activation, persistence, and intensity. *Activation* involves the decision to initiate a behavior... *Persistence* is the continued effort toward a goal even though obstacles may exist... Finally, *intensity* can be seen in the concentration and vigor that goes into pursuing a goal.” [About Education — What is Motivation](#)

Motivation can either be external or internal. Being externally driven will only last until the threat is removed. Being internally motivated or driven, on the other hand; is sustainable because of the individual’s internal desire to achieve the skill, skill set or goal.

The drive encourages me to stick with the process and keep learning from my circumstances, my experiences and my opportunities.

**“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**

Article link: [Don’t Give Up — Your Life Matters!](#)

Discipline

“training to act in accordance with rules; drill, activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill, the rigor or training effect of experience, adversity” [Dictionary.com](#)

For me, discipline means that I keep working on my craft, tweaking and taking away;
adding and making the decision to follow through to condition myself to achieving an end.

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

article link: [Neuroplasticity, Small Successes, and Learning / Relearning Skill Sets](#)

Fortitude

“**Fortitude** meaning [courage](#) or bravery is the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.” [Wikipedia](#)

For me, fortitude means that I commit to pursuing my dreams and my destiny, my vision, and mission in the face of being minimized, marginalized, dismissed and discounted.

Fortitude means that I remain true to myself, regardless of whether anyone else “gets it” or understand me. Fortitude means that I stay committed to my goals, whatever they may be at the time. To thine own self-be true.

“Fortitude is the marshal of thought, the armor of the will, and the fort of reason.” Francis Bacon

article link: [Having the Courage to be Me](#)

Persistence

“the quality that allows someone to continue doing something or trying to do something even though it is difficult or opposed by other people”
[Merriam-Webster](#)

For me, persistence is the decision to get up more times than I fall down.

Persistence for me means that I don't give up regardless...

Giving up simply is not an option. Persistence means believing in myself.

“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems.” Gever Tulley

article link: [Answering the Call that Never Came](#)

Tenacity

“an unwillingness to yield or give up, being dogged, stubbornly, persevering and steadfast” [Wiktionary](#)

Tenacity keeps me moving toward what I want to accomplish in my life. Tenacity means that I keep looking for ways to win in life. Tenacity means that I do give myself no for an answer.

Tenacity means that I trust the process, a loving God and myself. Tenacity means that I keep moving forward.

**“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”
Albert Einstein**

article link: [Detailed About Page](#)

Courage

“The state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear, or vicissitudes with self-possession, confidence, and resolution; bravery.”

[The Free Dictionary](#)

Courage to me means I stay committed to the process, the footwork, and the journey. Courage helps me to remember that I do not have to do things perfectly. Courage reminds me that I can pursue excellence, instead of perfection. Courage reminds me that will all learn, there is a learning curve. Courage reminds me to stay committed to my mission and vision.

Courage gives me hope.

“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 others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.” Steve Jobs

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure, it is our light, not our darkness that most frighten us. You’re playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone. And as we let our own light to shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same, as we are liberated from our own fear. Our presence automatically liberates others. Sir, I just want to say thank you. You saved my life.” From the movie, Coach Carter, quote attributed to Marianne Williamson

article link: [More than a Survivor](#)

The Good News

We Don’t have to Figure Out How to Live our Best Lives on Our Own

12 Ways to Create Our Best Live’s, Well-Being’s and Relationships after a Brain Injury

Below are the 12 Ways that I adapted used by 12 Step Programs

Adapted for people who are impacted by a brain injury

The Presentation of the 12 Ways to Create Hope

The Method and Explanation

First, I give my perspective of each of these 12 ways. Then I share a quote that encapsulates the individual way. I then share the adaptation that helped me to create hope in my life.

My Perspective

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

“Nothing in the universe can stop you from letting go and starting over.” Guy Finley

Application

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.

My Perspective

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

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

Application

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.

My Perspective

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

“Decision is the spark that ignites action. Until a decision, nothing happens.” Wilfred A. Peterson

Application

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.

My Perspective

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.

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

Application

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.

My Perspective

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.

“Accept what is, let go of what was, have faith in what will be.” Sonia Ricotti

Application

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 and invisible disabilities. 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.

My Perspective

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.

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

Application

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.

My Perspective

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

“Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it’s always your choice.” Wayne Dyer

Application

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.

My Perspective

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.

“If you take responsibility for yourself, you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams.” Les Brown

Application

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.

My Perspective

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.

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

Application

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, in our mind, body, soul, spirit and emotions.

My Perspective

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.

“Time stays long enough for anyone who will use it.” Leonardo da Vinci

Application

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. Learn to use our gifts, talents and abilities in ways that work for us.

My Perspective

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.

“If you feel like you don't fit into the world you inherited it is because you were born to help create a new one.” Ross Caligiuri

Application

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 to us with time. We can ask and trust that we are

being guided in the direction of fulfilling our purpose, to be of service.

My Perspective

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.

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

Application

- 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. Learn from them, instead of being threatened by our circumstances, experiences, 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 experience, one opportunity and one day at a time. In the process, we share hope.

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

For a List of Resources that have Helped me to Create my Best Life

Second Chance to Live Resources to Create Hope Lost after Brain Injury

Neuroplasticity, Small Successes and Learning/Relearning Skills and Skill Sets