

# **Finding Purpose after Brain Injury and Not Giving Up**

## **Keynote Presentation**

**Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA -- Second Chance to Live**

### **My Process and Journey in Finding My Purpose after my Brain Injury**

**Car accident at age 10 in 1967** – right frontal lobe damage, severe brain bruise, brain stem involvement, coma for 3 weeks. Fractured left femur.

**Traction for 6-7 weeks** to set the fractured femur, placed in a full body or Spica cast for 5-6 months. Transferred to another hospital, brain and skull surgery. Transferred back to the other hospital in Newton, New Jersey.

**Released from the hospital** a week or so later to home. Tutored at home in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Taken out of the Spica cast. Physical therapy and then on my own to learn how to walk again.

### **Had several EEG's and Cognitive and Psychosocial Testing.**

Results shared with my mom, and Dad, but not with me.

Once my external wounds healed the impact of my traumatic brain injury went invisible.

**Mainstreamed** into elementary school 6th grade.

**Graduated** on time with my high school class 1975.

**University of Arizona:** Geology then Physical Ed.

**Transferred to Pima Community College** to take pre-requisites. Applied to the Licensed Practical Nursing program. Obtained my Nursing Assistant Certification. Eight weeks before graduating with my LPN was asked to leave the LPN program.

**Transferred to Oral Robert's University** – parents asked to meet with undergraduate program chair due to unknown difficulties on campus?

**Graduate School** – Asbury Theological Seminary. On probation. Difficulties as a student chaplain during a J-term. Asked to meet with Department chair at the Seminary. Not admitted for my 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

**Graduate School** – University of Kentucky. Difficulties with 1<sup>st</sup> practicum, met with Department Chair Graduate program. Was given 1 more practicum, Internship difficulties. 1 hour before graduation was told.

**Passed the exam** and obtained my credentials as a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC). Worked in Worker's Comp out of Graduate School.

### **Florida**

**Employment** – fired from 4 professional jobs.

Applied 2 times for SSDI in Florida and then 1 time in North Carolina.

**Client of the Department** of Vocational Rehabilitation in Florida, while I was still working as counselor on probation and then terminated as a counselor. Later terminated as a client due to an unsuccessful job placement.

### **North Carolina**

Recruited Insurance Company as a CRC – Fired 4 months later. Could not find other employment.

Applied for SSDI for the **3<sup>rd</sup> time**. Applied to the North Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as a client. After the evaluation process, my Vocational Rehab Counselor determined that I was unemployable.

**Felt like someone all dressed up with nowhere to Go although I diligently applied myself both academically and vocationally.**

Shortly after being told, I was unemployable, my **3<sup>rd</sup> application** for SSDI was approved. Still, I had a desire to use my gifts, talents and abilities to be of service.

Got a computer with some back pay. Wrote poems, an autobiography, a book and then started a blog, **Second Chance to Live**, on Feb 6, 2007.

### **What Helped Me Tremendously**

When I reach a point in my life that I could no longer deny the impact of my open skull fracture and traumatic brain injury I began to grieve.

I realized that I needed to stop defending the denial that kept me trapped. Trapped defending, answering and explaining what I could not change.

The grieving process involved confronting my denial, being angry, trying to bargain my way out and being depressed about what I could not change.

Grieving the impact of my brain injury and my invisible disability gave me the ability to accept what I could not change and make different choices.

### **What I Discovered about Purpose**

**“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 shortcuts, “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**

### **What is VERY IMPORTANT to Remember**

**Because there are voices that want you and I to agree with their assessment of who we are as individuals living with brain Injuries we need to remember:**

**You and I** are not our brain injuries.

**You and I** are not a diagnosis or a prognosis

**You and I** are not defined by labels, stereotypes or a societal stigmatization.

**Our brain injuries** were only an event that occurred in our lives.

**Our brain injuries** do not have to define who we are as individuals.

**We are not** our deficits or limitations

### **What We Can Do to Empower our Lives**

Grieve the impact of our brain injuries. Grieve the impact of what we are powerless to change.

“Confront our Denial”, “Face our Anger”, “Work through our Bargaining”, “Embrace our Depression”, “Accept our Reality”

### **Awareness, Acceptance, and Action**

**Rail Roads** — Brain injury was a switch on the railroad of life, pointing me in a different direction. A direction in which I get to learn how to use my gifts, talent, and abilities in ways that work for me.

**“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**

### **Concepts that Empower the Process of Finding and Living our Destiny**

**Learning Styles / Strategies** — How we learn may have changed after we sustained our brain injuries. Get tested to find out how you learn –Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic or a combination of these learning styles.

**Jigsaw Puzzle** — Learning from one circumstance (puzzle piece) to be able to step on another puzzle piece. Puzzle pieces will connect as I learn each lesson.

**Baking Cakes** — learning to combine ingredients — Sensei gives me ingredients to put together to become a black belt

**Tapestries** — Each thread (combined threads) look like jumbled threads on one side of the tapestry, on the other side combined create a beautiful story.

**Elephant Riddle** — Question — How do you eat an elephant? Answer — One bite at a Time

**Light Bulbs** — Thomas Edison

**Strike Outs** — Babe Ruth

**Circumstances** — lessons, opportunities, more lessons and opportunities

The **Fable** of the “Tortoise and the Hare

The **Story of the Crack Pot**

**“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**

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

**“Big things have small beginnings.” Prometheus**

**“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they do not have any.” Alice Walker**

Through my 56 years of ongoing brain injury recovery, I needed to involve my mind, body, spirit, soul and body.

Second Chance to Live through my articles, video presentations, slide show presentations and eBooks

**Empowers the whole person, not the brain injury**

**Using the Principles of Neuroplasticity to create new Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization**

Over the past **27 years** I have trained in different martial art disciplines to develop new neural pathways and brain reorganization. Below are several demonstrations.

**Stick, Knife, muay Thai, Western Boxing, Kali and Wing Chun Drills**

**Created September 2, 2021**

<https://youtu.be/YLOeOUq4170>

**Hand Eye Coordination and Precision Drills using Fine Motor Skills**

**Created September 12, 2021**

<https://youtu.be/seeH9xbkKD>

**Coordination of Upper and Lower Body Drills to Improve Balance, Focus and Agility Skills**

**Created February 14, 2022**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBSQx0y3aP0>

**Brain-Body Connection -- Craig J. Phillips MRC, BA, Second Chance to Live**

**Created March 16, 2024**

<https://youtu.be/9fWG-wPssY8>

Click on the below link to Watch the Progression over 11 years

## How I Use Neuroplasticity to Create New Neural Pathways and Brain Reorganization

### **Resources to Empower Purpose**

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

To Read more about my Process and Journey

#### Second Chance to Live Author's Autobiography in Bullet Points

Through my 56 years of ongoing brain injury recovery, I discovered that I needed to involve my body, soul, spirit, mind, and emotions in my process.

I have sought to share what has helped me through my [2234 articles](#), [462 video presentations](#), [20 slide show presentations](#), [30 Keynote Presentations](#), [19 eBooks](#), [27 Posters](#) and extensive information on the principle and benefits of [Neuroplasticity](#).

I have spoken a total of **144 times** via Zoom since June 2020 with more scheduled surrounding **30** core topics. These presentations have been given throughout the United States. For more information, click [Here](#).

**Among the places spoken and will be speaking at publicly**

**Cleveland Clinic, Medstar National Rehabilitation Hospital, Penn Presbyterian Hospital, Overland Park Rehabilitation Hospital, Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital, Inova Loudon Outpatient Specialty 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 Synapse, University of California at Berkley Synapse, Columbia University Synapse, Synapse National Conference, NeuroRestorative-Charlotte, Brown University Synapse, Temple University Synapse, University of Michigan Synapse, University of California — Irvine Synapse, University of Pittsburgh Synapse, University of California —**

## Davis Synapse and Johns Hopkins University Synapse and various State Brain Injury Associations

