

MARCH 2016

TBIHOPE

AND INSPIRATION

Let's Celebrate!

Our One Year
Anniversary Issue

EMBRACE THE DAY

Why Must I Be So
MISUNDERSTOOD?



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TBI HOPE MAGAZINE

*Serving All Impacted by
Traumatic Brain Injury*

March 2016

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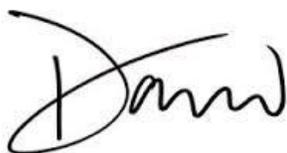
Welcome

Welcome to the March 2016 issue of TBI HOPE Magazine. We are very excited to present our one year anniversary issue – and what a year it's been!

Over the last year, our publication has grown to be the largest of its kind worldwide, bringing the voices of survivors and those who support them to a world that is now just beginning to understand the prevalence of Traumatic Brain Injury.

Like you've found in past issues, this month features survivor stories told by those who live daily with the challenges of TBI.

We "hope" you like our bold new look and publication layout. We are always evolving, growing and changing, mindful of our core focus: to offer realistic hope that a meaningful life can indeed be built after a brain injury.



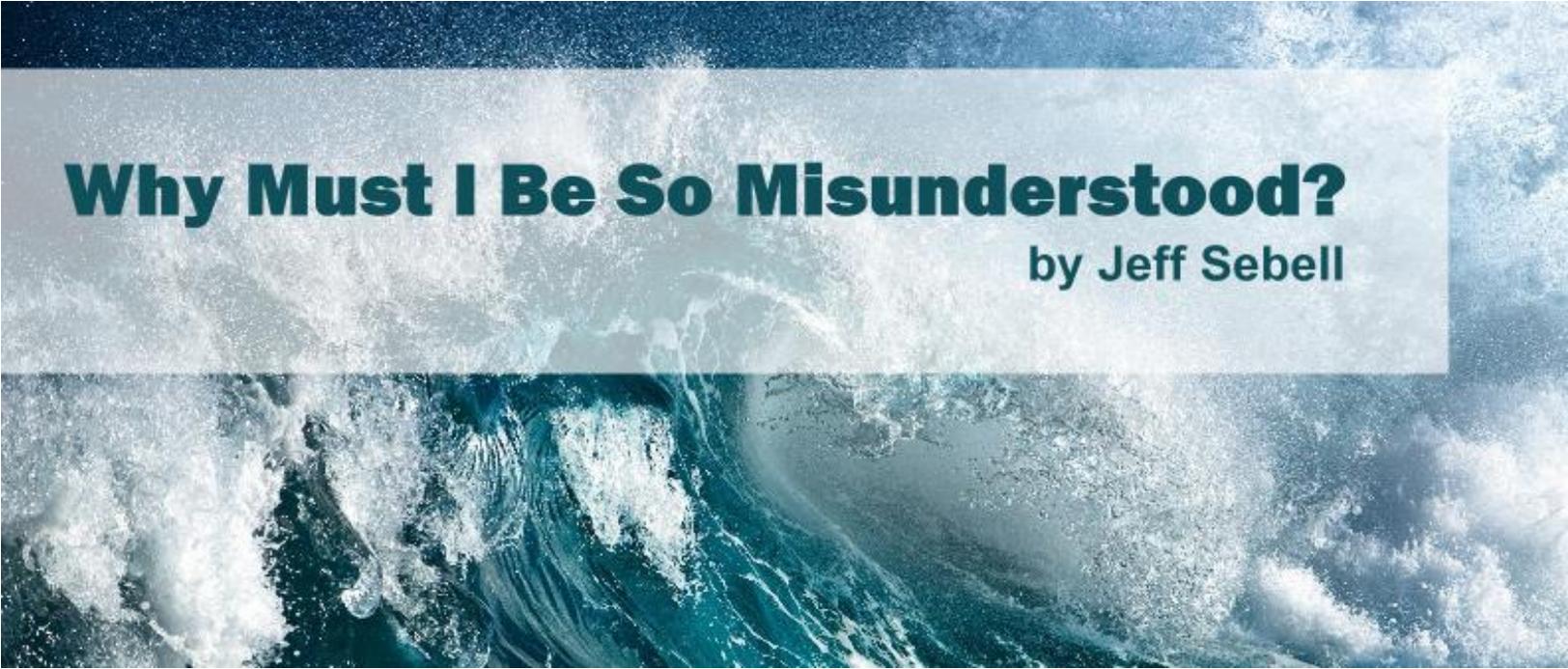
David A. Grant
Publisher

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Why Must I Be So Misunderstood?

by Jeff Sebell

Being misunderstood angers us, frustrates us, and makes us feel worthless.

It is unimaginable to us that the struggles we are going through, both internal and external, are something that are beyond everyone else's comprehension. These struggles are so huge for us, why can't anyone else see?

Being misunderstood, or not being understood is, unfortunately, a huge part of the TBI experience; occupying hours and hours of our precious brain time as we drive ourselves crazy worrying about being accepted by others.

When we feel misunderstood our first reaction is often to get exasperated or mad, and then try even harder to **make** others understand. This just makes things worse. We end up fighting an uphill battle trying to force understanding on other people, who are either unable or unwilling to see. We do this the only way we know how, by using words and trying to find a way to accurately explain our circumstances.

When none of this works, we feel even more separate from everyone else and feel desperately hopeless.

"Getting us"

At its worst, being misunderstood devalues us and our experiences. It tells us that others don't trust us and, because they may not comprehend, they don't believe what we are saying.

Very few people, if any, "get" us, and that fact is something we cling to, dwell on, and use as ammunition against the world. It becomes a rallying cry, and wanting people to "get" us seems to become an important goal. Just the thought that people don't "get" us becomes a belief we can't get out of our heads and has a negative impact on us, influencing how we treat ourselves and how we relate to the rest of the world.

Example:

I am in a crowd, but standing alone, off to the side, looking uncomfortable and a little confused. I am not mixing with the others. I want to, but there is a feeling of separateness I can't get over that keeps me by myself.

The strange thing is that at the same time I want to be part of the crowd, deep down I feel I shouldn't want that for myself.

*After a while, I make up reasons to **not** want to mix with others, like: I really didn't want to be part of the crowd anyway; they will never understand what I have been through.*

Thinking that way is almost a natural reaction and becomes a habit, and it makes me feel better for a few minutes, but in the end, it doesn't help.



How many of us TBI survivors feel this way?

Far too many. We have gone into the situation already convinced that no one will understand, so we stay separate.

Humans tend to be social creatures, and we get a sense of well-being from human relationships. Very simply, "belonging" does a great deal for our self-worth. We all want to be loved and accepted for who we are. But, is it possible we are putting too much emphasis on people needing to "understand"?

By putting so much emphasis on this, we may, in fact, be setting ourselves up for failure.

Be Objective

There are those times when being misunderstood is blatant, and we feel attacked and get emotional, but we should try to temper the way we react when we feel misunderstood. Remember, if the other person doesn't understand us, he/she will certainly not understand when we react out of emotion.

How can we do that? Try to be objective.

Think of being objective as having yourself not be the focus and cause of whatever happens; in other words, everything doesn't happen because of you. Try to remove yourself, as though you are looking down on the situation from up above.

When we feel misunderstood it is because of two things:

- 1 The way we feel about ourselves.
- 2 The way we *think* others feel about us.

Both are very complicated and are the product of lots of little things. However, it is important to note that the only thing we can control is the way we feel about ourselves. Although we *think* we can control the way others feel about us, we can't, and all our explaining only makes things worse, especially when we get emotional and try too hard.

Identify the battle

Feeling misunderstood, as well as the value we place on *feeling understood*, are judgements we make on what is going on around us. In the real world they are sometimes valid, sometimes they aren't. However, to us, they always feel valid.

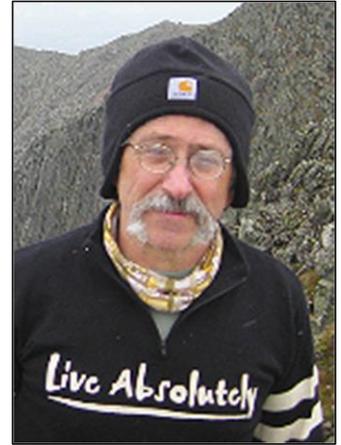
The trick is to be able to recognize when they actually are valid, and then figure out a way to react so that education of others is possible.

Look at each of us as teachers. We, TBI survivors, are carrying the TBI banner, and are the last and most important battalion as we march forward, not only teaching the world about TBI, but also learning about ourselves so as we go we march forward as better, more effective teachers.

Meet Jeff Sebell

Jeff Sebell is a nationally published author, speaker and blogger - writing about Traumatic Brain Injury and the impacts of his own TBI which he suffered in 1975 while attending Bowdoin College.

He has been active in the community since the inception of the NHIF, and was on the founding board of directors of the MA chapter. His book "Learning to Live with Yourself after Brain Injury", was released in August of 2014 by Lash Publishing.



FOURTH STRIKE



A TBI DOCUMENTARY

COMING IN 2016

DOCUMENTARY UPDATE

Fourth Strike is an upcoming documentary about life with a brain injury. A first-of-its-kind project, this is a survivor- produced movie due out in late 2016.

Production of the Fourth Strike Documentary will begin next month. Watch for a trailer to be released later this Spring.

GET EMAIL UPDATES

You can sign up for email updates at www.FourthStrike.org



Finding Gems in the Mud

by Nathalie Kelly

It is so very hard to lose one's independence at any age. We hear stories of others, but no one ever thinks it will happen to them.

Not being able to walk far, drive, or take a bus, I am pretty stuck. I honestly have no idea how to do this. I take it one breath at a time. Free falling through space on my own, I have been searching for a way to manage this long-term. The system won't let me in Adult Day Care, I am too young. The swamis won't let me in an Ashram, I am too disabled. Searching for solutions, I actually did ask both.

My next idea is to search for a safe little town with good weather, one that has all I need within walking distance. I have just flown to a small town in Central California to see if I can function on my own here. The solo adventure itself is daunting. I pack barrels of courage in my suitcase.

Day One:

As expected, three plane rides have shaken me up so badly that I can barely move or see. My vision has shrunk into a nauseating peep hole, and I can't tolerate moving my eyes at all. The slightest movement of my eyes disorients me and makes me even more seasick than usual. Information is not traveling from my eyes to my brain. It takes 3 hours to find my way around my tiny studio apartment. Expanding my world to the patio takes another few hours.

I have no idea how I will get groceries. Even at home, getting food is always the hardest thing for me. The over-stimulation of supermarkets causes my brain to shut down. Somehow, food always finds me when I really need it; like the Indian saint, Amma, who lived blissfully in the woods, animals and eagles dropping food in her lap when she was hungry.

Today's "eagle" takes the form of a friend of a friend who calls to welcome me to town. "The farmer's market is today, would you like to go?" She is an occupational therapist, she gets me. I hold on to her arm for dear life in the visual chaos of the crowd, and unexpectedly, I have produce!

It is magical the way my needs get met. I never have any idea how they will, but I am no longer living a rational life. I am grateful for the gem of kindness.

Day Two:

The farmer's market put me over my stimulation threshold, and I can't wake up. I get up once to take a shower which exhausts me so much that I fall asleep again; once to get dressed, which exhausts me so much that I fall asleep again; once to make coffee, which exhausts me so much that I fall asleep again... so much for caffeine. Finally at 2:30PM, I am awake.



Today, I will venture beyond my studio with the goal to find lunch. There is a café four blocks from here. Expanding my world beyond my apartment will be a big feat, beyond what anyone without a TBI can imagine.

Concentrating to get through the mental fog, I talk myself through it out loud. "Pull up walking directions on your phone. Study hard to make sure you have a sense of where you are going. Put on the green tinted glasses that relax your brain.

Check directions again. Put on the goofy Vibram toe shoes so you can feel the floor. I forgot the directions. Check directions again. Put on the hip belt full of rocks."

The hip belt reminds me of the confusion and alarm on the airport TSA agents' face two days before.

“What is this?!”

“It is just rocks.”

“Why are you bringing a fanny pack full of rocks on the plane?” she accused.

“They remind me where my body is. I am lost in space and my brain can't tell.”

She had no idea what to do with that. I only brought one trekking pole on this trip. I need two. I look around the apartment. I find a broom stick. I am going out with a trekking pole



and a broomstick. My life is ridiculous. I am thankful it doesn't still have the broom on it. That would be an odd picture. But I would do it with dignity!

I write up a little note, the way I learned in rehab. “Hi, I have a brain injury and I am lost. Can you please help me get to XYZ address?”

If you touch my arm firmly, it help me to get oriented to where my body is. Thank you!” I make sure my little notebook is open to

the right page so I can pull it out (hopefully) when I can't move, read, or think.

Next, I get dressed up nice. This too, is a compensatory strategy. If I am relying upon strangers to help me, I don't want to look like a crazy person. I figure it is better to have them confused by me, than scared. “Always look your best, when you go out with a rock belt, toe shoes, green glasses, a trekking pole, and a broomstick!” That is my new motto.

Finally, I walk out the door for the giant four block excursion. I am so curious to see this town, but I have to be really careful not to look around and waste my little visual processing power. I pick a spot straight ahead and focus intently on it. Every half block, I rest, and hug a tree. Trees keep me grounded, they help me make my way through town.

I have hugged so many trees in the last four years, they have become some of my best friends.

At the café, I find it is crowded and noisy, and I am about to topple over. I can't stay in this environment! A sweet blonde waitress cuts through the crowd toward me. "Hey sweetie, do you need some help with the menu?" She puts a firm hand on my arm. I smile, it's just what I needed - not only a nice person, but one who knew to touch my arm and remind me where my body is... as if she read my note. I thank her for her kindness and tuck it into my basket of things I'm grateful for today.

I collect gems like this as I go along. At the end of the day, I look back and admire my basket of sparkling gorgeous jewels that add beauty to my life. It is the kindness of people that fills my basket on a regular basis. It is what keeps me going.

Leaving the café, hungry, lost and completely disoriented, I get catcalled by a truck full of men. My life could not get any more ridiculous. Maybe my "look good when you carry a broomstick" motto has worked too well. Or maybe



sleeping endlessly is the best beauty product ever. Apparently, my outer appearance does not at all reflect my fragmented inner state. This is both a blessing and a curse. I decide to appreciate the compliment, and tuck another colorful gem in my basket.

I find a bakery and buy some bread. Three blocks later, someone tells me that my purse is open and upside down. I had no idea. By now, my vision is incredibly restricted, and I have lost all sense of having a body.

I wonder how much money I have lost.

Grateful for this person, and for having bread, I put two more gems in my basket. My favorite sparkling multi-colored gem today, is the sudden realization that I have come so far with accepting a life without control that I can now laugh at the mistakes that previously had me crying for three years straight.

I have learned to trust, to stay in the moment, and to look for the good. I live by the mantra, “where attention goes, energy flows.” When it rains, look for rainbows. I place my attention on the gems in my basket at the end of the day.

Happiness depends upon gratitude for even the smallest beauties of life. So what if I was walking down the street dropping all my money, I got bread today!

Day 3:

I had intended to visit the Unitarian church service to meet some people here. I can't wake



up again. Frustrated and embarrassed, I arrive just in time for free coffee and food. I decide to forgive myself (it's a constant practice.) I go in anyway and hope the man I was talking to over pasta salad didn't notice that I picked up my fork by the wrong end - twice. My hand was gooey with dressing.

I have become one of those people: the people who wander into a church for free coffee and food. Yep, that is

me today. This is my new life. At least I've eaten.

And I love myself anyway.

TBI living has taught me the biggest life lesson of all - to forgive myself unconditionally. I get so frustrated with myself, but I know that does not help me heal or thrive. I express it, let it go, and choose love and forgiveness constantly. I try to send my brain more love with every screw up. Sometimes it works.

Having a scrambled brain that can't get anything right, you have to laugh at your imperfections and find amusement in the absurdity of life. You have no choice. It's either that or jump off a bridge. I choose to laugh.

Like most of us, I have been driven my whole life by an intense need for perfection and belonging. Now, I have become so imperfect that I realize that it is futile to keep striving for perfection. I wish I had known that it was futile all along.

I wish I had known it was ok to relax and just be me, warts and all. Not only am I imperfect, but I now write about it publicly, because I hope it gives life perspective and sets others free too. Limitation has never been so liberating. I am at peace.

Meet Nathalie Kelly

Nathalie Kelly was a Board-Certified Hypnotherapist before her TBI. Nathalie now publishes a blog at nathaliesnoggin.blogspot.com, and she speaks publicly about brain injury.

She has educated others about brain injury on the radio, news, and the Oprah Winfrey Network. This month, she is launching her new YouTube Channel and Website, www.TheTBICoach.com as a gift to brain injury survivors. Please come and check it out!



Living With Hope

By Patrick Brigham





Is Your Balance Off Due to a Brain Injury?

Brain Health Matters

**You May Qualify for a Clinical Trial of an Investigational Device if
You Have Balance Problems Due to Brain Injury**

- Are you 18-65 years of age?
- Have experienced a mild to moderate brain injury, over 1 year ago?
- Have difficulty with balance?
- Did not lose consciousness for more than 24 hours when you were injured?

Compensation is available for qualified participants.

To learn more about this trial:

visit: **BrainInjuryTrial.com**

call: **1-877-844-5234**

Embrace the Day

by Terri Mongait

*Embrace the day ~ for tomorrow you may
land on your head
Begin Again . . . with Horses!*

Awareness is something we all take for granted, but on this particular day it was very important to me. I became aware that I was lying in bed. Scanning the room, I noticed I was in a single bed and behind a glass partition. There was a lot of activity beyond the partition but it did not yet register.

I turned to the other side of the room and saw my brother, Chris. Chris lives in Massachusetts, clear across the country from me. Now I was very confused. It did not make any sense. “What are YOU doing here? And WHERE ARE WE?”

Then I realized that I had a tube in my nose and wires in my arm and elsewhere. What the heck was going on?

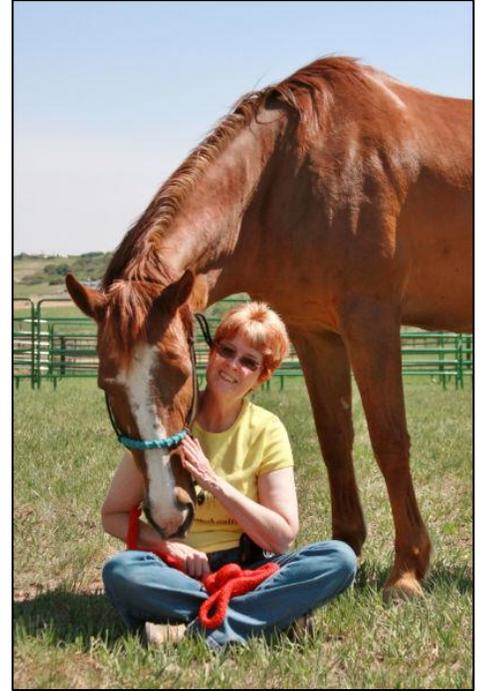
Finally seeing my wonderful husband, Peter, I knew I was safe, but that still did not explain things. I was told (not for the first time apparently) there had been a horse-back riding accident, I was in ICU and had been there for THREE WEEKS.

After more days of recovering my awareness, this is what I learned:

On a beautiful autumn day, the scent of dry brush and a subtle sage wafted on the breeze. Bodhi, my horse, and I were trotting up the trail. And then it happened. As my friend Lori has told me, one minute I had Bodhi in an emergency stop, the next I was in the air on my way to a very hard landing – on my head. Not good. Paramedics were called and after they determined I had sustained a possible brain injury I was air lifted to USC Medical Center Intensive Care Unit.

After 2 months of ICU, hospital and rehab, it was another few weeks before I could go to the barn and see my horses. It was because of my relationship with them that I forced myself up to the barn every morning to care for them and, most importantly, to learn about how my new brain wiring would work, explore my deeper understanding of their communications, and to receive their healing energy. Not only were they helping me heal physically, they were helping me heal emotionally and energetically.

Instead of looking at my accident as “poor me, why did this happen?” I chose to look at it as a necessary experience and an opportunity to re-wire the neuro pathways in my brain so I can accept that I *do* vibrate at a higher frequency than others. My head injury was a necessary step in my life’s journey of helping horses heal humans. Now that I am aware that I process things differently than I used to, when I’m working with my horses and they react to something I stop and wonder, “Hmmm, that’s different. What is this about?” I check myself to determine if they are telling me something about me that I might not be aware of, or if something else is going on that I need to focus on.



Horses live life in the present moment, an important life lesson that I have come to embrace. This is also tremendously helpful when we are working with clients. The gift of my brain injury is the new ability to be curious and see the joy in every day occurrences. Because I am able to work with horses daily I find that I smile a whole lot more, I have confidence in myself and I believe that my Equine coaching business is where my passion and joy lie. I get to assist horses in their healing of humans. Everyone benefits.

It has been a continuous journey. I had to re-establish my trust and relationship with both of my horses in different ways. It took almost a full year before Bodhi and I learned to trust each other again. We both know, acknowledge, and honor the realization that he has played an integral part in my life’s journey. If not for coming off him and landing on my head, I would not have had the opportunity to re-wire the neuro pathways in my brain, spend three weeks in and out of consciousness as I explored my spirituality, and opened up the realization that the horses and I can help other trauma survivors navigate their way back onto their life’s journey. It was because of my accident that I was introduced to the

people I want to help the most - trauma survivors, and not just those suffering from TBI; all trauma survivors.

My mantra whenever I hit a speed bump in my path is:

Pause, close your eyes, take a deep breath, smile and ...Begin Again!

You never know when Spirit is going to offer up an opportunity. You just need to be open and receptive to issues and situations that at first glance seem random. For me it was the opportunity to be blessed with the friendship of horses. I believe that certain special things, people or animals come into your life when you need them the most. I had to gather the appropriate knowledge and life lessons before I would be ready and open to the healing gifts of Horses.

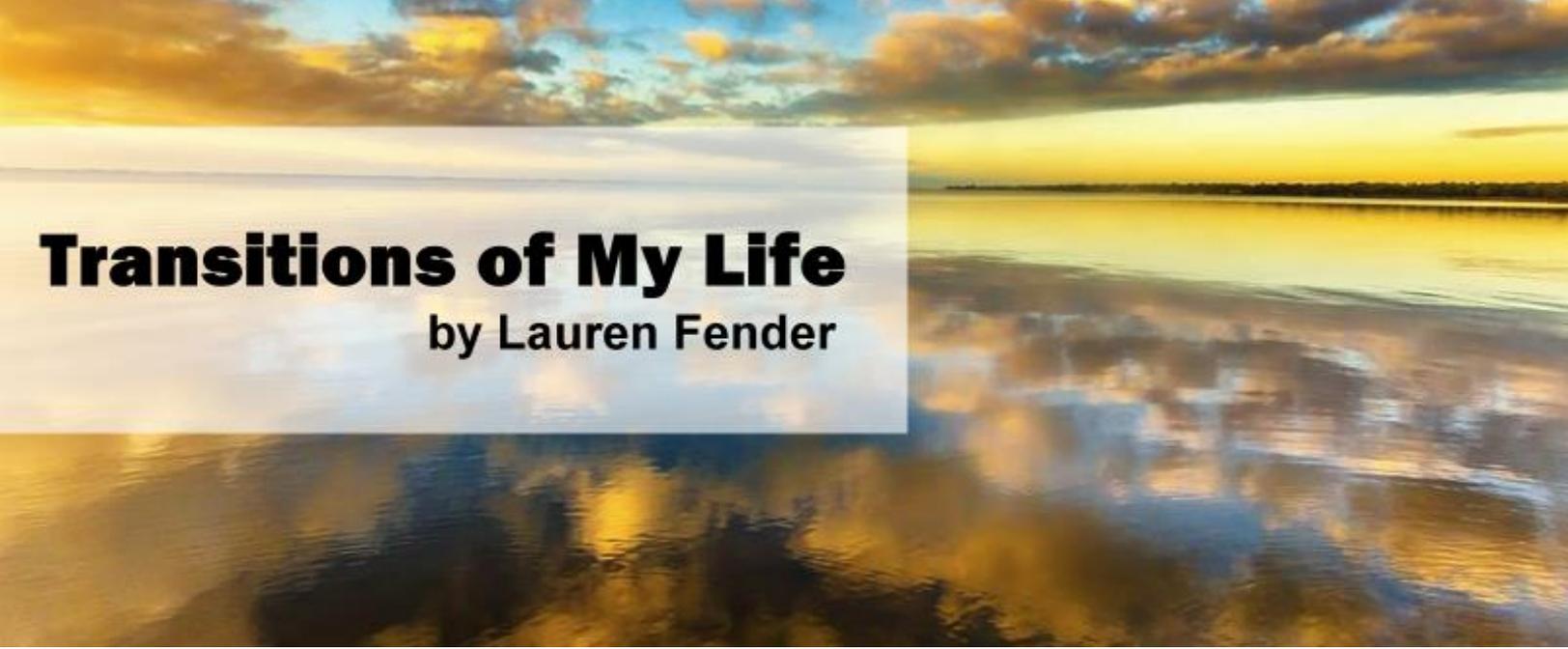
A very important lesson that I have learned from this journey is that everything I do with and for my companions, be they 2-or 4-legged, is a partnership based on love, trust and support. I trust my horses will be there for me, and they trust that I will lead them and keep them safe. I trust that all my clients have the ability to heal and grow, and they trust that I will support them and help them navigate through their process – no matter how long it may take or how difficult it may be. We are on the journey together as trusting, sharing, and caring partners.

My work gives me the opportunity to help horses heal humans. My husband, along with horses, mini burro and dogs have our own facility (“Begin Again Ranch” Sedalia, Colorado) where we partner with my herd of wisdom horses. Together we coach people through life issues, trauma survival, self-esteem, relationships, empowerment, and grief and loss obstacles on their road to recovery. My business tag line “From Surviving to Thriving” sums it up completely. For me, TBI stands for To Be Inspiring.

Meet Terri Mongait

Terri Mongait is a Trauma & Transitions Recovery Specialist. She is also a traumatic brain injury survivor and has personal knowledge of the journey to recovery. Terri has over 20 years of experience in the corporate world at The Walt Disney Company and now uses her skills to help others. To learn more about Terri’s work with horses, visit www.BeginAgainRanch.com.





Transitions of My Life

by Lauren Fender

I remember waking up from my coma and having this funny feeling of freedom, like I was weightless. Then when I tried to turn my head I noticed I had a neck brace on. Then I noticed a tube in my throat. When I came out of my coma, I found that I couldn't breathe, walk, talk, or eat on my own. That feeling of "weightlessness" made sense because I had dropped 20 lbs. during my two month stay at the hospital.

Sitting in the hospital bed I asked myself, "What am I doing here?" Fortunately, my friends from high school and college came to visit me almost every day.

"You were in a car accident," My best friend said.

"What month is it?" I replied.

"July," she said.

They had to cut off my hair to get to my head and reduce my blood pressure, plus I had three blood clots in my arm. I couldn't speak full sentences for a while and still to this day, I forget some words. I struggle with these things even though the accident happened three and a half years ago, in June of 2012.

That summer, I was recovering from ACL surgery after tearing it playing college soccer, in my junior year. I was a forward for the women's Trailblazers team from MCLA. That

summer, I was getting my knee back in shape and had just gotten a job lifeguarding at Plymouth Beach.

I was working at DEB, the women's clothing store, the night of my accident. I came home after work and kissed my dad before going out that night, which was weird, because normally I would just go straight to my friend's house. That night, we were celebrating my friend's 21st birthday, and then I woke up in the hospital.

I was the passenger in an acquaintance's car when we hit a telephone pole. The driver: fine. Me: 17 fractures in my skull. I'm glad that I can't remember that night.



When I was discharged, the doctor told us that I wouldn't be able to play soccer for at least a year or drink alcohol for the same time frame because I could have a seizure. So then without the life I had lived, I had to ask myself, "Who is Lauren Fender?" I had played soccer and partied for a long time. I had gotten lost for a while in those years.

In December of 2012, I took an IQ test at Quincy Community Care Rehab and the results discouraged me from going back to school in the spring. The doctor told me, "You should stay here another 6 months." That was the first time I had cried since my accident, I was so mad. I couldn't stay in the hospital any longer, and told them, "I am sorry but I'm going back to school. I don't care if I fail every class, but I need to get back on my feet."

So, against the doctor's suggestion, I went back to school and I graduated with my Bachelors in Psychology.

After graduation, I finished doing a couple of internships and I came back home. I had had a couple of different jobs up to this point but none were my calling. I had worked as a lifeguard, an activities assistant at a nursing home, and a nanny, but still nothing was calling my name.

Then, I fell into yoga. At first I was skeptical of it. No running? No sweating? I don't get it. But I decided to take an intensive month long course to get my yoga teaching certification. I understand the culture of yoga now, and I'm in love with it. It heals the mind, body, and spirit. I have finally surrendered to the peace that so many people seem to ignore! Yoga has taught me to slow things down and appreciate being present. I am finally done rushing.

Like my favorite athlete, martial artist Bruce Lee used to say,

"Clear your mind,
Become Shapeless, formless,
Like water
When you pour water into a cup
It becomes the cup
Put it into a bottle
It becomes the bottle
Put it into a tea pot
It becomes the teapot,
Now water can flow or it can crash
Become water my friend"

-Bruce Lee

Meet Lauren Fender

Lauren is a volunteer at Beth Israel Deaconess in Plymouth, and South Shore Women's Resource Center in Plymouth. She considers herself blessed to have these opportunities. She speaks about her story at driver's education classes in New Bedford, MA in high school health classes, and at DUI classes in Quincy MA at Bay State Facility. Today she is working with the Brain Injured Direct Care at 7 Hills Foundation.





Memory

by Jennifer White

As I enter my 16th year as a survivor of a massive acquired brain injury at 36 years old, I continue to struggle to remember the things that once came easily to me. Ask me what those things are and I might say “I cannot remember”. Thankfully most of the chilling details of my three surgeries, 10 days in ICU, a couple of weeks in the hospital, and a 6 month rehabilitation stay have left little memories.

Simply, I have forgotten many of the details of having the massive stroke that threw me into early retirement and changed my life forever. But as I have lived since the ABI, I have had many memories that I will never forget, like the life and death of my mother, the day I fell down a flight of stairs as I foolishly tried to navigate the stairs while I used crutches to steady myself after breaking my femur, and the day I realized that all of the friends that I had prior to the ABI have moved on to get married, have children, become grandparents, and see their children get married and have their first grandchild. I had to face the fact that I would never have children from an injury I never expected to happen to me.

One day I was managing my life, albeit working way too much, but going to work making everyday decisions that everyone has to make. I thought about my career, my husband, and my future. How many children would I have and when would I start having them? I also thought about social security, retirement, aging, etc. Although I still think about social security, retirement, and aging, I have, over the years, accepted my life with no children. My former friends are no longer friends who I speak with often, but memories from my past.

When I was in therapy and asked the doctors why I could not remember certain things they would tell me “you will remember the things you want to remember.” They were right. I wanted to remember that I love my husband, my sister is my best friend, my brother is smart and can be really funny, and I have a good life in spite of the pain I have felt in my past. The reality is that I had little control of my future other than trying to be a good person, doing healthy, not self-destructing things, and fighting for the things I believe in. When I was sick I had to rely on other people to help me. I let them help me, and it felt liberating to accept help from people who so unselfishly offered it.

When I struggled with memory, I designed a cardboard box and wrote the words “memory box” on the top of the box. After forgetting where I put the box almost every time I needed it, I decided that it was an idea that I should keep as an idea only. This is where I think many of my ideas should stay.

Now I practice sequencing a lot since this has been a big challenge for me. What goes first, second, etc. What time is it? For example, 8:10 a.m. is earlier than 8:30 a.m., but later than 7:30 a.m. When I practice sequencing it makes me feel like I am being proactive in my recovery. Of course after the ABI I felt defeated and felt sorry for myself. I constantly tried to find the answer to the question “why me?” After never getting an answer, I finally resolved the question in my head with “bad things happen to good people” and an additional question emerged. The question was “how do you want to live your life today?” I ask myself that question every morning.

Meet Jennifer White

Jennifer White is an acquired brain injury survivor from St. Louis, Missouri. When she’s not writing about her life as a survivor, she enjoys spending time with her family and of course, quilting.

She has been a regular contributing writer to our publication and her survivor insights have helped many.



A Bit of This 'n That...

Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors Prayer

God,

I come before You as one whose injury
Cannot be seen by your other children.

While others see me, they know not that
My wounds are invisible.

I come before you as a
Traumatic brain injury survivor.

You alone know the depth of my pain,
Of my despair, of my confusion, of my
aloneness,
And of my overwhelming loss of self.

Humbly, I ask of You...

When exhaustion strikes, please
Grant me the strength I need to continue.

When others leave my life, help me to
Remember that You are always there with me.

When unsteadiness causes me to stumble,
Please take my hand and lead me safely
forward.

When my memory so often fails me,
Help me to never forget what is really important.

God, so many of your children walk daily with
Challenges that dwarf my own.

By understanding this, I can see my own
Life in a better perspective.

Help me for today to accept my fate in this life
Knowing that if I trust in you,
All will be well.

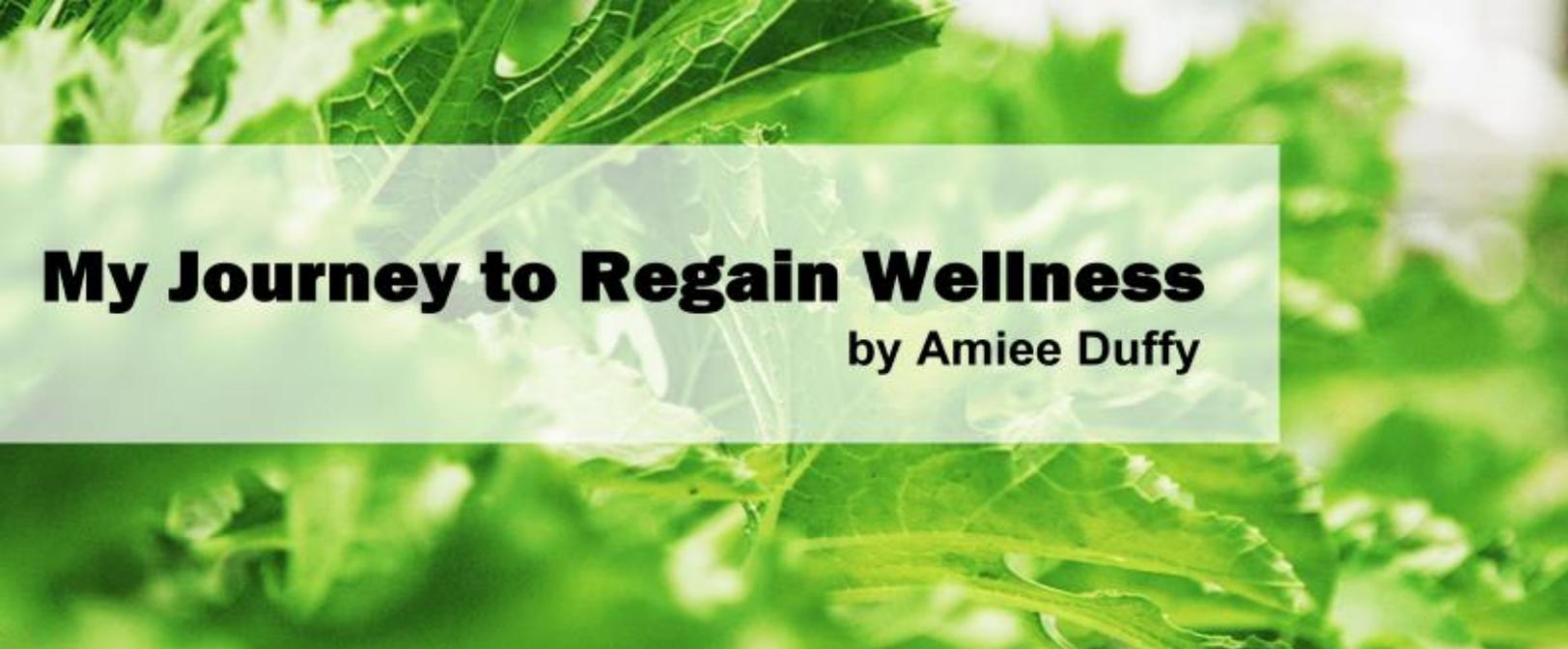
Amen.



TBI HOPE

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My Journey to Regain Wellness

by Amiee Duffy

As I continue on my journey of health and recovery since sustaining my mTBI, I have been inspired to travel down the path of diet and supplements. I really do not want to be on prescribed medications for an extended period of time. But right now, I am. I have tried almost ten different medications in the span of one year. Currently I am taking two medications daily to combat headaches and fatigue and executive function issues. I would say they are helping me to cope and survive the day, but I want to get back to THRIVING!

Interestingly I began my supplement journey about six months prior to sustaining my TBI. I began regularly taking a multi-vitamin as well as D3 and krill oil. Honestly, I'm not sure whether they made a difference or not. I continued taking these supplements after my mTBI and when I was able to begin researching information on the brain and supplements, I added magnesium and turmeric. During a meeting with my neurologist I asked if these were harming or aiding in my progress. He said they were not harming me in the least, but there was no scientific evidence to show how they may be helping me. However, he suggested I begin taking 400 mg daily of B2 vitamins as there was current research at that dosage to support brain health. B2 has been shown to reduce fatigue and depression as well as to improve memory. This certainly sounded great to me!

I honestly do not know if there is a difference in how I am feeling and thinking. Obviously, I have been improving since my accident and I am not sure if taking the vitamins and supplements have helped or if my recovery would have been the same. However, I am unwilling at this point to stop taking them to see how I would feel. I will tell you that after

two months of taking these additional supplements, I had my annual physical and my primary care physician ordered various blood tests. One of the tests was for inflammation because of my chronic fatigue with TBI. The results were the best I had in years, so my doctor recommended I keep doing what I was doing.

The blood test for inflammation led me to begin doing some research in diet. I needed to get more fruits and vegetables in my diet in an easy way. I fortunately was able to go back to work, but with three children I had to find a way to eat more healthfully amid work, after-school activities, and supporting my children during homework. My employer happened to send out a flyer for South Shore Organics, which sends weekly organic produce to a designated drop off point. The produce changes from week to week and recipe ideas are included. This worked for me! I didn't have to think about what



to purchase, recipes to look up, or even go to the supermarket or Farmer's Market. I began roasting vegetables three to five times a week. My children have even found some new favorites and have asked for different dishes including those with squash, leeks, and kale!

I leave my home by 6:45 am. Breakfast is not my thing - well, wasn't my thing. I looked into green smoothies on the internet and I began making Simple Green

Smoothies. I signed up for a free 30 day challenge and I bought the book. I have now had a green smoothie almost every day this year. I love them and they start my day off better. There is some work to it, but as with all things related to TBI, once you have a routine you have conquered half of the problem. My routine is basically to cut up, measure, and place fruit in individual freezer bags each Sunday. I also measure out the kale or spinach and place that in individual baggies in the refrigerator. Before I had the routine down, I would leave the blender, recipe, and unrefrigerated ingredients on the counter so they were ready to go in the morning. As we know, setting yourself up for success post-TBI includes prepping the night before!

I feel I am only beginning my journey to regain wellness. I am planning to integrate an anti-inflammatory diet into my daily life. I currently am not drinking alcohol or soda, and

my morning beverages are green tea as well as apple cider vinegar with pineapple juice. I use coconut oil and coconut aminos in cooking. But, I want to make clear that the changes I have made do not make me feel like I did prior to my motor vehicle accident. However, the plan is continued recovery so that eventually the healthy lifestyle changes I have implemented as a result of my TBI will become a positive out of a negative!

As with any dietary changes and addition of supplements, be sure to ask a physician before you take them. Many medications and supplements can cause adverse effects if combined with prescription medicines. This is my own experience and I am not a physician.

Meet Amiee Duffy

Amiee M. Duffy is the proud mother of three children. She has been teaching for over twenty years and is looking forward to using what she has learned about Executive Function and Working Memory in order to better serve all students in her classroom. Amiee is a regular contributor to TBI HOPE Magazine.



TBI HOPE

Where do over 17,000 Members of the Concussion/TBI Community Come together Every Day?

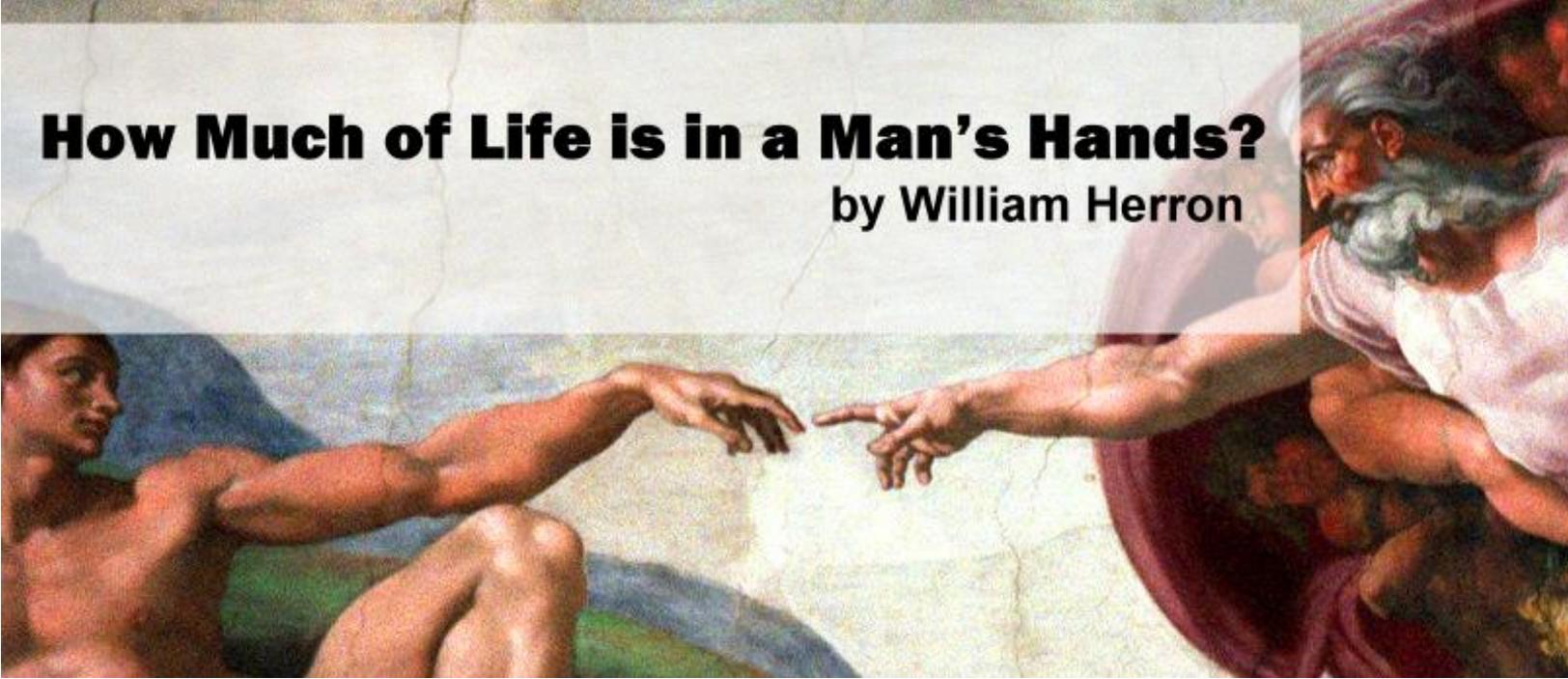
We'll give you one guess...

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How Much of Life is in a Man's Hands?

by William Herron



On a man's hands thin lines can swirl and snake their way in chaotic patterns separating every human being on the planet from one another. Plush skin can symbolize youth and journeys just beginning, or wrinkles can indicate knowledge obtained and wisdom shared. Well-maintained fingernails can display style and fashion, a watch placed above on the wrist showcases success and wealth, and even the most important element for unity among couples is symbolized by jewelry on the ring finger.

Softness by touch can generate a gentle calming presence, while thick rough calluses oftentimes are the only physical attribute proving a lifetime's worth of hard work. One's hands can showcase status, transform into working tools used every day, or grasp everything a person deems important. A person's hands are used so frequently that most are unable to imagine a life without their use, or fathom the life lost if this usage was suddenly taken from them.

So how much of life is in a man's hands? For most of society this thought is never entertained unless unfortunate circumstances unexpectedly becomes a reality for them or a loved one. For this reason, a majority of the population fails to understand the challenges and loss of everyday living which these individuals and families fight through. The physical sighting of such circumstances can elicit sympathy, but not solutions.

These individuals strive to obtain the latter and can feel undermined or embarrassed by the former. Many may even lose their ability with no physical method of detection. The loss of one's hands can severely affect their daily independence. Independence can

drastically alter confidence, daily norms, and can even trigger emotions of guilt when suddenly needing additional help from those closest to them. These hardships are best understood one story at a time.

After fifteen years of breaking his back as a blue-collar stone mason providing for his large family, severe pain now prevents Charlie from gripping the tools needed to labor. Staring at his hands he misses when they were filled with scrapes and seemed stained from brick residue. Charlie's back isn't what gave out as rheumatoid arthritis unexpectedly took away the use of his hands. After a lifetime of mastering his craft he suddenly worries about how he will obtain the money needed to feed the mouths, place clothing on the backs of, and sustain a roof over the heads of his family. His fear over their well-being prohibits the



thoughts or accommodations needed for his own self-sufficiency in those areas.

After receiving the diagnosis, Brian sits for a long period reflecting on his life along with the changes he's about to endure. Only in his forties it seems like just yesterday he dropped to a knee and pulled out the ring asking his wife to marry him.

He remembers how badly his hands shook as he reached for it, and held it while asking the most important question of his life. He had never felt so proud once receiving her answer. Now

without control, his hands have begun shaking like they did during that moment, but pride no longer follows. It also seems like yesterday he had to feed and clothe his new born children- now teenagers. His mind now races towards a day they may soon have to do the same for him.

Calvin, A successful business man remembers shining in his suit when closing high pressured business deals with a signature handshake. A recent stroke has left Calvin's left arm in a state of paralysis. He is learning new ways to accomplish his daily routines but he never expected the changes to affect his wardrobe. Accustomed to wearing high end clothing that seemed to be directly linked to his self-image, he now frustratingly stares at the limited and unattractive clothing options that allow for his independent dressing. He

constantly wonders if people place negative perceptions of inattentiveness or sloppiness caused by his choices of sweat suits. Calvin still can use his right hand to complete his signature handshake but feels like the man behind it has been lost.

Lastly, imagine Staff Sargent Ramirez's return home after an explosion took him away from combat. His injuries caused him to lose his right arm. This man can be defined as a hero after his bravery in battle and service for his country. Many will recognize his courage and commend him for his sacrifice, but few will ever recognize his new fears, some which could cause him to sacrifice many of the everyday norms. During a day-long job interview he declines every offer for a bottle of water. Dressed in his finest business attire he decides it's not worth the risk of trying to manipulate his clothing in the situation where he needed to use the public restroom. This man fought for our independence but who is fighting for his?

Whose hands are these men's lives in? So much of "everyday life" is altered or lost for individuals with disabilities. Many of these everyday aspects are routine that are not thought of and oftentimes ignored by society. Look around - do you see these stories playing out in your community, workplace, or even within your own family? Who will take matters into their own hands, when so much has been taken out of theirs?

Meet William Herron

Raised in small town Perry, Ohio, William served four years in the United States Navy before leaving to graduate Lake Erie College. He is blessed to be the father of Arianna, his beautiful 2 year old daughter.

He enjoys working at Downs Designs Dreams where he gets the chance to help families find proper fitting, fashionable, clothing that allows for independent dressing every day Using their Adopt-a-Jean Program.





Left for This by Kylie Wyatt

A lot of people ask what it's like to have a traumatic brain injury. I smile as I reply, "I don't remember," which is my attempt of adding humor to the truth. Most don't get it. I suppose it's one of those things you only get if you've been there.

I have a hard time explaining what it's like to have my brain no longer function as it did. To learn new ways and strategies to be able to function throughout a day. The struggle and frustrations from feeling as though I lost who I was.

For those with relentless curiosity, I admit it's better than I thought it would be.

Here's my story...

The Accident

I still remember the way the air conditioner hit my neck, blowing my hair as it blasted away the hot July heat.

I didn't mind that traffic was backed up on the highway. I had taken the time to pray and ask God what He'd have me do.

Life was going great; I was supposed to be happy achieving what I wanted. While I was grateful, I also had a sense I was missing something. I wondered in all my striving if I had failed to be more, to do more, for Him.

What if God was looking for my willingness to do His work, but I was too caught up in mine? I didn't want to be that way. I didn't want God compartmentalized conveniently into my life. I wanted Him to move in my life, and I wanted to be used for His purpose.

As "Amen" left my lips, I felt the impact from behind. A kid texting and speeding in a SUV never looked up. The high speed sent my body whipping back and forth.

I should have prayed specifically. Obviously God slotted me into the wrong category. Getting hit by a car wasn't what I had in mind...I was thinking more along the lines of teaching Children's Sunday School.

The timing of the accident was too perfect. God can take months and even years to answer



my prayers, but He must have been in heaven lining up cars, waiting for my final word.

Obviously this is a lesson in grace I thought. No, I would not throw the car in reverse, and back over the guy who hit me while he was texting. No, I would not be irritated; he lacked manners and compassion, and didn't get out of his car to check on me.

I would show mercy and grace, knowing he probably regretted a stupid mistake. God knew what would happen, so I would choose to be thankful for His timing and the given opportunity to extend grace.

Having never been in an accident before, I couldn't believe I could be whipped around like a rag doll and not be hurt worse than I was. The officer on scene and the doctor in the ER warned me how bad it would be especially with such a hard impact.

I thought everyone was making a big deal out of nothing. They didn't know what I have lived through before and the pain I've endured. While it didn't feel great, I naively assumed a sprained neck would be similar to an ankle - I'd feel it right away.

The next morning, I couldn't lift my head off the pillow. I painfully lifted my sore arms and used my hands to support my neck so I could sit up. I shook as I opened the pain killers the doctor prescribed.

Standing in the hot shower, the water mixing with my tears, I didn't dare let go of my neck. Like an infant, my head was too heavy to hold up. If it tipped and I used my neck muscles, the pain sent me through the roof. I took back every thought I've ever had about a high pain tolerance.

Something's Not Right

I started sleeping 20+ hours a day. When I'd eat, I'd fall to sleep at the table. When someone was talking to me, I couldn't keep my eyes open. I was told the whiplash was the most severe one could be, just short of snapping my neck. All I wanted to do was take some more pain pills and muscle relaxers and go to sleep so I wouldn't feel it anymore.

Everyone assumed my drowsiness was due to the prescriptions and bodily injury. A week and a half later I stood in the middle of an aisle at Target, and came undone. My body wash had been repackaged. I didn't know if it was the same, I didn't know why it was changed, I didn't know if I'd like it. As I stepped back and looked at all the shining bottles lining the shelves, I started to panic, what would I choose, would I like it? I started crying and couldn't stop.



The thing is, I knew it was crazy. I knew it didn't make sense. But it didn't matter. I couldn't stop.

I went in to see my family doctor. She mentioned something about brain injuries during accidents and how I'd have to go to a rehabilitation hospital and would not be going back to work for some time. I heard her words and they terrified me. As a single mom I couldn't

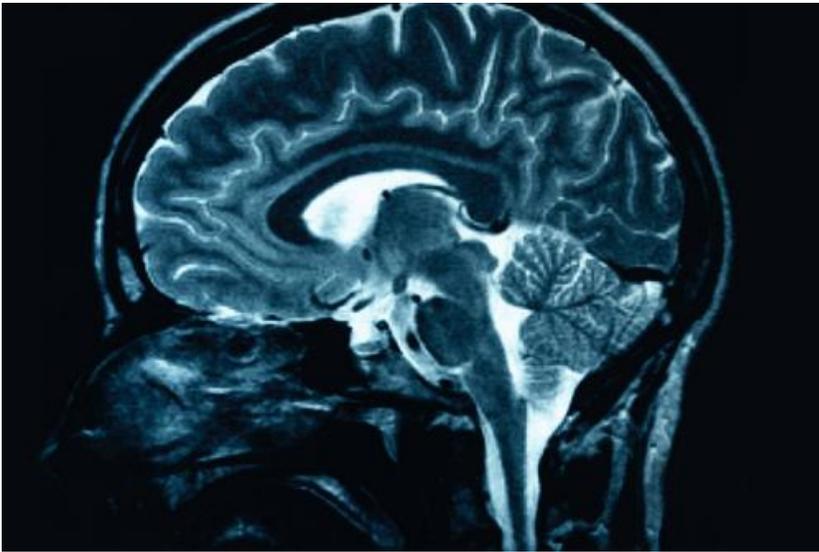
be missing work. I cried, knowing as an inconvenience I'd be fired. To me, it didn't make sense why family and friends were freaking out about a brain injury. My job was on the line.

Crazy with a Touch of Paranoia

One of the worst days of my life was the day of the appointment with the traumatic brain specialist at the rehab hospital. I freaked out and didn't want to go.

There was something wrong with me and I knew it. I didn't need anyone else to tell me what crazy is. Besides, I would have to get dressed to go and I couldn't. I laid in bed in a heap of clothes crying. I didn't know if I should wear a tank top or short sleeves. Although it was August, I worried about the hospital being cold and if I needed to bring a jacket, or wear jeans. On top of that, there are so many colors to choose from. How do I pick the right things? How do I know what I pick is right?

I began wondering what the hospital does with crazy people. Do they lock them up, drug them, take away their children...I resented having ever read *The Bell Jar*.



Traumatic Brain Injury Diagnosis

I looked at the doctor debating if I could trust him enough to tell him what was going on. I couldn't keep my thoughts straight long enough to do so. My mind was so garbled. Humiliation burned my cheeks knowing the nurses probably told him I was in tears handing back the medical forms I was unable to fill out. Not seeing other options and knowing I needed help, I laid it all out.

I told him about the headaches which never go away. Feeling as though someone took a potato peeler to my brain, it hurts so badly.

Sleeping 20+ hours a day.

Nausea and dizziness. The bed spins and rocks when I'm laying down. Closing my eyes makes the bright lights come.

Ringing in my ears.

Static vision - it looks like I'm looking through an old television.

Sensitivity to light, sound, movement.

Can't quit crying.

Can't follow conversations. Be talking and suddenly not know the next word I was going to say or what I had just said, or what the conversation was even about. I can't find the word I'm looking for or need to say but can define it.

Can't make decisions or know what to do.

When I finish speaking, the doctor looks up from his notes and tells me I'm not crazy. I don't buy it. He tells me I have a traumatic brain injury. He looks at me and I

can see a sense of sadness in his eyes, but I don't understand why. I'm going to get better. I'll be just fine.

At my first appointment with the Speech Therapist, she asked if anyone told me I sheared my brain.

Of course not. I did what?

She looks at me and says the doctor probably went over it with me. I'm at a loss for words because if he did, I may not have remembered.



She explains to me how the brain sits in fluid and when it's whipped back and forth suddenly, say hit from high speeds from behind, the fluid can't protect the brain. The brain hits and rubs against the inside of the skull.

Another word for it is Diffused Axonal Syndrome. The pathways in my brain are strained or broken. Some will heal with time, some will reroute, but what I don't regain I'll be shown ways to handle and deal with it.

For the first time, it dawns on me I'm not going to be ok. This isn't the flu, it isn't a cold, or a broken bone. I'm not going to be the same.

I decide right then and there it's not going to be me. I'm not going to turn out like everyone else. I will do whatever I have to do, and I will figure it out and I'll be just fine again.

I was going to join the ranks of those who doctors told would never walk again, and then they did. I failed to consider all those the doctors told, and who never did, and not because they didn't listen or try.

I Get Worse, but They Call it Better

I leave my car running. I can't find my kids when they're in the basement playing. I get lost in my neighborhood, on my block, on my street. I blow dry my hair but don't stop until my scalp is burned and my hair crunches. I freak out in a thunderstorm. I lose my train of thought and can't remember what I'm talking about or what people are trying to tell me. I talk to someone I haven't seen in weeks and they talk about what we did yesterday. I'm a mess.

I tell the doctors they need to do something. There is something terribly wrong with me. I'm supposed to be getting better, but I'm getting worse. As I tell them, I pray there is something they can do to make it stop. To halt its progress and get the damage to reverse.

The brain injury specialist smiles and tells me I am getting better.

Obviously, he's not listening. In frustration, I start over, telling him what's going wrong with me. I tell him he has to understand so he can figure out how to fix it.

His smile changes to a serious look as he tells me it only feels like I'm getting worse, but in reality I was so far gone before to know how bad off I really was.

I believe what he says. I lean against the back of my chair and take a deep breath. He continues to talk and I know I should be listening but I can't.

All I can think about are other times in my life when I've been as truly terrified as I am now. There aren't very many.

Living with Traumatic Brain Injury

The hardest thing about living with a TBI is feeling that what I do, doesn't feel like me. As though everything I do is wrong, merely because it's not the way I've always done things. The way I think and learn and retain information isn't the same.

I always figured if I had to relearn how to think or do things, it would be in my old age from a stroke. Then, I'd have plenty of time during the day. I didn't know it would happen from a brain injury in my 30's while I'm a single mom with young kids to care for, and a demanding job.



A lot of people try to be optimistic and hopeful. They tell me I'll figure it out. I'll get through this time and learn a new norm. It fails to encourage me, but it does strike a chord of anger and resentment. Like it's that easy.

It didn't feel ok. The last thing I wanted to hear was others telling me it was or would be. Not when it wasn't ok with me. Far from it.

Acceptance hasn't come as a sudden decision. Acceptance started to come in small little ways at times where it didn't hurt me anymore to have to use obnoxious time-consuming strategies. When my resentment of them diminished and against all odds, I started embracing them, needing them, and not hating myself for it.

I had to learn to lower the bar for myself, to give myself a break. It was hard. I wanted to be the same person I've always been. The problem is, I'm not.

I started letting go of frustrations and getting upset when I couldn't do what I thought I should. Being angry and upset wasn't getting me further along. As I learned to let go, I started to gain excitement in my accomplishments - because they are accomplishments. No matter how small and pathetic they may seem, they're huge. They are what gets you to the next. They lay the foundation. Once I understood and felt it, I started to be proud of my progress.

There is also a discipline to learn. Sometimes I'm busy and I'll think I won't have to use a strategy, such as writing something down to remember.

But I'll forget it. I have to do what I know will be successful no matter how small it may seem. It's worth feeling good and confident, instead of getting frustrated and upset.

"The harsh truth is there are no benefits, no positives, for brain damage", I still remember the pressure in my chest hearing those words. I snapped back at the doctor, "I like things sugar coated."

As the doctor went on to explain, even a heart attack can lead to someone feeling better, but brain damage is never good and doesn't provide benefits. Ever.



While he's right in the medical sense, I will tell you he's flat out wrong in others.

Life has never been harder, but I also love and appreciate so much more about it. I take better care of myself now than I ever have. I'm aware of how events and situations affect me.

Walking around feeling a little broken can make you more aware of the brokenness in others, even those who are blind to it themselves.

I thought when the year mark hit and I knew the vast amount of healing had taken place already, I'd be depressed. But I wasn't. I was truly happy. I wasn't where I wanted to be

(back to pre-accident self) but I had made it. I had learned to live again. I thought about all 365 days I had endured, and my sense of accomplishment soared.

Having a traumatic brain injury has made me fearless in ways. As hard as it's been to survive and get back to life, I know I can face anything. The empowerment I've gained has been unreal.

What I have to remember is I'm still me. Maybe I'm not exactly the same, but I don't need to be. God doesn't need my strengths and abilities to use me. He can use us all right where we are, in ways we never could have imagined.

Meet Kylie Wyatt

Kylie is a freelance writer and blogger. She lives finding light in tragedies, and encouraging others to believe there's a plan. God can bring good where there is none.

Her smile and confidence inspire the least likely to believe. Kylie lives a very real life in Nebraska with her two kids.



Join Our Caregivers Group on Facebook!

Because a TBI Affects Everyone!





Hello from the Other Side

by Jen Kalashian

I hope the Packers win....

I hope the weather will be good this weekend...

I hope I can lose 10 pounds before that wedding...

Sound familiar?

Just what is this “*hope*” we speak of? *Hope* is more than a vague wish that something will happen. It is a sure and confident expectation in God’s future faithfulness and presence. *Hope* is that faith, focused on the future. Uncertainty over what the future holds creates a constant need for *hope*.

Hope requires us to risk trusting that the dreams God has given us will come true without the foundation of knowing exactly how things will play out, or when resolution will occur. We visualize our hopes being played out a certain way. We close our eyes and imagine how happy we would be if ...if our *hope* as we have so often visualized it, will ever come true. *Hope* is an expectation or belief in the fulfillment of something desired. Sometimes *hope* dies; joy withers and despair enters.

While I do not have a TBI, I have been in the health field since 1996 as Cook, Life Skills Trainer, Community Integration Specialist, Job Coach, Mentor, Med Tech, Unit Coordinator, Hospice Volunteer and Care Giver in hospitals, CBRF’s, group homes and private settings. I *hope* I can shed some light on the responsibility associated with caring for your loved one as we see them on a daily basis in the most intimate of settings.

Just what is it like to be on the other side of TBI? I consider it a privilege and calling to be involved in your family situation, as we equip and prepare your loved one with the necessary tools to move into a less restrictive environment, with the ultimate goal of perhaps returning home. We are dedicated professionals who understand the journey, all your hard work, and share in your joy when discharged.

We listen. We ask questions. We are here for your loved one. We laugh. We cry. My *hope* is not in this New Year, but in the One who makes all things new.

Happy first year anniversary to Publisher David Grant and the rest of the TBI Hope and Inspiration Crew. I *hope* you have many more continued anniversaries.

Meet Jen Kalashian

Jen Kalashian, B.S., is working at Lakeview Specialty Hospital and Rehab in Waterford, WI for the past 9.5 years in the capacity of CNA, CBIS, Community Volunteer Advocate, Events Coordinator and back-up facilitator for the monthly Brain Support Injury Group, the Survivors. Jen is a first-time contributor to TBI HOPE Magazine.



Contributors Wanted!



TBI Hope and Inspiration Magazine is always looking for stories to publish. Submit your story by email to mystory@tbihopeandinspiration.com.

[View Our Submission Guidelines Here](#)

TBI HOPE Back Page



From the Desk of the Publisher...

It is our hope that you've enjoyed this special one-year anniversary issue of TBI HOPE Magazine. Our all-new format coupled with stories of true hope and inspiration have made this an especially exciting issue to bring to you!

Back in 2010, life forever changed for me and my wife Sarah. It was on a typical late fall day that I became a new member of a new kind of family – those who live lives affected by Traumatic Brain Injury. Though it's only been a little over five years since my own injury, the changes on the concussion landscape are sweeping. From last year's blockbuster hit *Concussion*, to a national media who now embraces all things TBI, we are living in a time of dynamic and sweeping change – change in public perception, changes in treatment protocols, and most importantly, the silence that surrounds Traumatic Brain Injury is beginning to end.



No one wants to experience a Traumatic Brain Injury. But to look at this through the prism of perspective, never has there been a better time to live in this often unpredictable world of brain injury.

As we move forward through our second year of publication, we will continue to bring you the type of content you've come to expect. As the fastest growing publication of its kind in the world, you can expect nothing less.

To all our contributing writers, a thank you seems to fall short. You have given of your time, opened your hearts and shared what is undoubtedly the toughest journey that you never expected. Your contributions offer light to those who would otherwise be walking a dark path.

David