

BRAIN INJURY

Fall 2023

HOPE

MAGAZINE

SERVING ALL AFFECTED BY BRAIN INJURY



**Lighting the Way
For Survivors Worldwide**

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Welcome

Publisher's Introduction

HOPE MAGAZINE

*The Voice of the
Brain Injury
Community*

Fall 2023

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Introducing the Fall 2023 Edition of HOPE Magazine

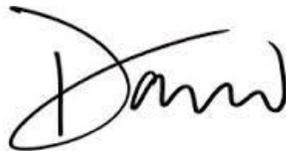
After a long, seemingly endless hot summer, fall has finally arrived in New England. As the leaves turn golden and the air becomes crisp, we are proud to present the Fall 2023 issue of HOPE Magazine. This edition is more than just a collection of pages—it's a heartfelt tribute to the brain injury community. Our stories, diverse as they are, convey a powerful message of resilience, strength, and the transformative power of hope.

Each article has been thoughtfully chosen to resonate with our readers, offering both relatability and encouragement. These narratives remind us that even in the face of adversity, the human spirit remains steadfast and resolute.

Our collective journey, replete with challenges, is also abundant in moments of triumph and growth. This season, let us reflect on our shared bonds—not only as individuals on parallel paths but as a united community brought together by HOPE.

Thank you for letting us be a part of your journey. Here's to an autumn filled with introspection, growth, and unwavering resilience.

Warmest regards and happy reading.



David A. Grant
Publisher



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*"Hope is important because it can make
the present moment less difficult to bear."*

—Thich Nhat Hanh



Fall 2023



Advocacy

Education

Inspiration



Steps of Resilience: My ABI Journey

Murray MacDonald

Hello! I'm Murray, an ABI survivor. I'd like to share my journey with you, and perhaps it might resonate with someone out there.

Who could've predicted the tremendous impact Encephalitis would have on my life? Up until 2006, I was unfamiliar with it. Now, I confront its effects daily. This condition reshaped many perspectives I held dear, but in the process, it equipped me with the tenacity to make every moment matter. It instilled in me an emotional drive, urging me to seize every tomorrow with renewed vigor. Sure, life looks different now, but I'm constantly reminded to appreciate what I have and chase my aspirations with all my heart.

To an outsider, my journey might be invisible. My physical appearance doesn't betray my struggles, nor the fact that I have had a brain injury with lingering effects. The severity of my symptoms was, and sometimes still is, a battle. Gaining confidence remains a challenge. Adjusting was not just personal but a family affair—dealing with my disorientation and fleeting memory. Yet, volunteering at The Step Up Work Centre and The Ottawa Valley Brain Injury Association fortified my self-esteem. Life, I've learned, resembles a vast staircase, and the pace at which we climb is uniquely ours.

The unwavering support from my loved ones has been a beacon of hope. Being part of The Brain Injury Association, surrounded by friends who understand, has been instrumental in my healing journey. Many of us have grappled with the feeling of losing a part of ourselves. For me, most pre-Encephalitis memories are a blank slate. Others have lost jobs, independence, or even their sense of self-worth. Yet, at The Step Up Work Centre and The Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley, we've found solace. We've learned to celebrate our abilities, no matter how mundane they might seem. Every little act, from laundry to cooking, is a testament to our perseverance. We all possess gifts that can uplift someone else.

So, if there's one thing I want to impart, it's this: Focus on the strengths of the 'new you'. Find ways to harness your abilities, not just for personal growth, but to help others too. Remember, you're not traversing this path alone. We're a community, standing by each other, every step of the way. Thank you for walking a few steps with me by reading my story.

Meet Murray MacDonald

A survivor of Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) due to Encephalitis, Murray's journey has been one of transformation and discovery. Prior to 2006, he was unfamiliar with the challenges that would soon reshape his life. Today, he stands as a beacon of resilience, navigating life's vast staircase with tenacity and an unwavering spirit. Murray is an active volunteer with The Step Up Work Centre and The Ottawa Valley Brain Injury Association, seeking to empower others on their own unique journeys. His story serves as a testament to the power of community, support, and the human spirit's ability to rise above adversity.



TBI, To Be Seen

Shoshannah Violet Cotton



TBI, To Be Seen

They say rest like it's easy
like it's enough to stop the aching
Sometimes I wish someone recorded the impact
Ms. Frizzle's school bus sent inside my skull
to document the soft squish
my brain made against the cranial cavity
Would you believe me then?
Would the worker's compensation insurance sensation
send me the funds to cry my eyes out in therapy
if they got punched in the face too?
I'm not one for violence
but I'm definitely not one for silence either
Invisible injury is a cloak no one wants wear
yet everyone pretends it isn't there
When you could educate yourself
through pocket blue light
you really have no right not to learn
I've learned to be kinder to my eyes
let my eyelashes love the fragile skin
beneath as they close after a grocery store
sends me into sensory overstimulation
I've learned to let breath become me
when my head holds a stampede in my skull
I've learned to choose meditation moments
over late night social tokens
And through all this learning
I wasn't teaching
Not like before
Everything I've taught myself
Couldn't have been found
while pushing my brain to perform
like a productivity pinwheel

The wind could not make me spin anymore
I needed to be grounded
Needed to know myself
as something other than Teacher
And I am still searching my soul
for it's next film star feature
This cinema life is a script I write and write
The cameras roll and the footage is raw, unedited
My brain injury isn't a hiccup in production
It's the peak conflict that fuels the story line
bring depth to this script I'm writing
Harnesses healing at the hips of hope
The darkest hours of my life have been lived
in moments that held fire no one could feel but me
In pain no one can see or believe
that is where strength sizzles
that is the twilight twinge of heroism
the place where self scrapes
at the surface of our consciousness
and we are washed in what we will become
I might look like I'm fine
but that's because
this disability doesn't dishevel my appearance
It took my brain and shook my cognition
my vision, my emotional regulation, executive
functions
It told me I had to become my career
so I could stop living in fear of slowing down
It's when I stopped asking to be understood
that I was finally found

Meet Shoshannah Violet Cotton



*Shoshannah Violet Cotton is a Queer Jewish Poet and Educator who lives along the southern coast of Maine with her two cats. She finds inspiration for her poetry by the ocean, amongst the trees, and within human connections. Shoshannah is working on self-publishing her first poetry collection *Uncharted*, which should be available for purchase later this year. You can find more of her work on her instagram @shoshannahvioletpoetry.*

A photograph of sliced bread in a bowl and a sifter on a dark surface. The bread is sliced into thick pieces, showing a porous, airy texture. The bowl is white with a dark interior. A metal sifter filled with white powder is visible to the left. The background is a dark, textured surface.

**Have You
Seen the Bread?**

Sarah Grant

After my husband's car accident, concussion-related challenges seemed to pop up daily. Dizziness and balance issues, constant ringing in his ears, and word-finding problems started immediately.

His PTSD kept us awake at night with terrifying dreams, and his days were spent trying to figure out how to return to work in his newly disabled body. The bills piled up, and everyday life items seemed like great obstacles on our road to recovery.

As we both adjusted to our "new" life, we also faced the funny quirks that came along with it.

Sometimes, he would say things that made absolutely no sense, and we'd collapse into giggles – we still do this today. Sometimes, he would say things that made me blush, and if we were in public, some of those things could be inappropriate.

Usually, he didn't realize that what he'd said could be hurtful or embarrassing. He was crushed if I mentioned that something may not have been the right thing to say. It was a fine line for me to walk – ignore bad behavior and lose our friends and family or speak up and hurt his feelings.

During those first couple of years, we had a lot of mysteries in our house. Things would go missing – lots of things, like forks and spoons. So many utensils went missing that we emptied the silverware drawer during one meal. We bought new forks and spoons several times during the first five years after the accident.

Since we still had children in the house, they were usually blamed for the missing utensils, drinking glasses, and for using the last roll of toilet paper. When the kids grew up and moved away, and we were still scratching our heads, I realized the problem was bigger than I thought.

Through it all, we have been able to laugh and find humor in the day-to-day hurdles. Now and then we treat ourselves to coffee "out." This isn't the kind of coffee we brew in our pot, but instead is made by someone else, exactly how we want it. My husband calls it, "Fancy coffee."

During one of these coffee outings, we splurged for frozen coffees. Here in New England, there is a Dunkin' Donuts every couple of blocks, and my husband loves their Mocha Coolattas. (He also struggled with consuming mass quantities of sugary treats soon after his accident, but that's another story.) If you're not familiar with the drink, it's made of frozen coffee, lots of cream, chocolate syrup, and then it's all blended to a slush. His always came large and covered in whipped cream. To be clear, this isn't a diet beverage.

After buying our drinks that day, we took a drive out to the beach. We talked about life, our kids, the news, chores around the house, and sang along to the songs on the radio. Eventually, he reached for his Coolatta and it was empty. Still driving, he stared at me for a long time. (My drink was still mostly full.) I figured what the outcome would be, so I wasn't surprised when he finally said, "Did

"During those first couple of years, we had a lot of mysteries in our house. Things would go missing – lots of things, like forks and spoons."

you drink my drink?!” This same scenario has played out over the years with candy, French fries, sodas, and coffee. He didn’t believe my answer, and we still laugh about it.

With all of the changes his brain was going through and the noise of a freight train in his ears, he was easily distracted all the time. Random things showed up where they shouldn’t have. There was cheese in the cabinet. The pepper shaker appeared in the fridge. Tennis shoes made their way to the garage as if by magic.

While making his peanut butter sandwich one day for lunch, he called me at work to say he couldn’t find the bread. I’m not normally a sandwich-eater, but I was certain that we had a new loaf, purchased just a couple of days prior. He was disappointed for lunch that day, and it was a priority when I got home from work.

Sometimes, finding things that are put away in the wrong places can be difficult. My first clue was that the toaster was on the counter. We always cleaned it after using it and tucked it into a cabinet. When I looked into the cabinet, there was the loaf of bread, ready to be eaten. Apparently, after breakfast, he put the bread away where the toaster belonged.

At lunchtime, he didn’t connect the relationship between the toaster being on the counter and the bread missing. He is able to realize that this happens now and will usually retrace his steps to figure out what happened.

A couple of years ago, during a time that nothing went as planned and he was repeatedly frustrated, I started a game. An ordinary can of turkey gravy turned up in the living room, next to the television remote. It took him a couple of days to realize that it was there, but he surprised me by asking, “Did I leave this here?” I felt terrible that he thought he actually left it there, but he played the game. The next day, I found it in the bathroom.

Random things showed up where they shouldn’t have. There was cheese in the cabinet. The pepper shaker appeared in the fridge. Tennis shoes made their way to the garage as if by magic.

The day after that, he found it in his office, next to his phone. We didn't put it in obvious places, but we didn't hide it either. It was a way for us to make light of things. It's not his fault that he's sometimes absent-minded. If I had as much going on in my body and the noise in my ears that he does, I would be distracted too!

We've learned the benefits of routines, which build habits, which create predictability. By the same token, if things are crazy busy, if we have visitors, or even if we have a bad night's sleep, the "normal" is a little off-kilter and we make adjustments.

Today, he frequently is able to connect the dots, but I do still find things where they don't belong. Just this morning I heard, "We must be out of bacon," followed up by, "Found it!" The package of pre-cooked bacon he has every morning for breakfast was in the freezer. Life certainly is interesting with a brain injury!

Meet Sarah Grant



Sarah lives in Salem, NH with her husband David and their three cats Belle, Boo and Buzz. She started an online Caregiver group in 2013, to help make sense of what she was experiencing, and it has since grown to almost 10,000 members around the world. She can usually be found outdoors, enjoying life with her husband. You can learn more about Sarah's online community at www.facebook.com/TbiCaregiverSupport



**Brain Injury
Affects the Entire Family.**



My Battle with a Basal Ganglia Stroke

Steve Smith

My name is Steve Smith. I'm 59 years old and I survived a basal ganglia stroke at the age of 58. This is my story.

On New Year's Eve of 2022, the world seemed to twist and swirl around me while I struggled to comprehend why I had awakened with my body not responding. My left side felt numb, making me realize that something was terribly amiss. I managed to convey my concerns to my wife, who sprang into action, dialing 911.

The wailing sirens grew louder, and before long, firefighters and paramedics rushed into our home, their rapid movements a blur. Amid their efforts to stabilize me, the palpable fear in my wife's eyes was obvious. We were eventually separated as I was loaded into an ambulance.

Upon arriving at the hospital, a whirlwind of tests, scans, and unfamiliar faces followed. The diagnosis weighed heavily: a stroke had struck my basal ganglia, a crucial region deep within the brain responsible for movement and coordination.

“At Doctors Hospital of Augusta, I found myself trapped within my own body, struggling to command my limbs to respond.”

At Doctors Hospital of Augusta, I found myself trapped within my own body, struggling to command my limbs to respond. My medical team tried to prepare me for the possibility that feeling might never return. I refused to accept that. I held onto hope. My wife's presence served as my anchor, providing unwavering support and a glimmer of hope during those dark moments.

The doctors discussed inpatient rehabilitation. Though it was difficult to fathom, I grasped the gravity of my condition. The road to recovery appeared daunting, but my determination to fight was unshaken. I was going to beat this. During the acute phase, sensation gradually returned to my left side. I took my first steps and started walking with assistance, learning to use a hemi walker.

The hospital became the backdrop for my wife's birthday and our wedding anniversary. I lost my job and my health insurance. Our dearest friends rallied around us to keep us afloat financially. My wife balanced going to work and staying by my side.

Time crept by as we awaited approval for the rehabilitation unit. The lingering uncertainty gnawed at me, and I longed to start reclaiming my lost abilities. Finally, news arrived, and I was transferred to the rehab unit. The therapy sessions proved arduous, each movement feeling like an uphill battle. Days turned into weeks, and although frustration sometimes overwhelmed me, I refused to give up. Your attitude is everything. You have to get your heart, mind, and spirit on board.

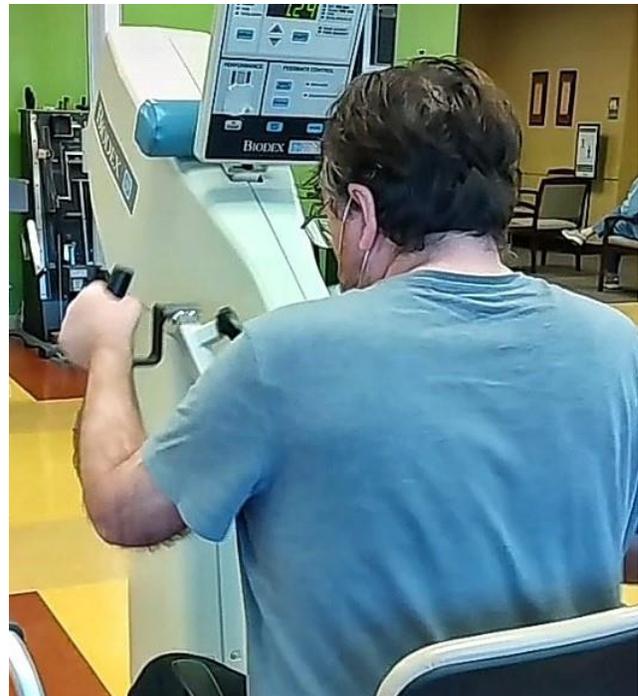
I gradually relearned tasks such as entering and exiting a car, walking outdoors, climbing stairs, and eventually regained feeling in my hand after successful e-stim sessions.

Leaving the hospital and returning home was a mix of emotions. We replaced our entryway with a wheelchair ramp, as my hemi walker couldn't navigate the stairs. The familiarity of our home brought comfort, yet the weight of my disability cast a shadow. Mundane tasks had transformed into

monumental challenges, and the realization that life had changed irreversibly was a bitter pill to swallow.

With my wife's unwavering support, I navigated this new reality, mourning the loss of my former abilities while striving to adapt but refusing to quit.

Outpatient rehabilitation marked the next chapter in my journey. Each session was proof of my determination and the patience of my therapists. Progress came slowly, but over time, I started noticing improvements. I transitioned from a hemi walker to a four-pronged cane, gradually increasing the distance I could walk each day. The path was demanding, yet the unwavering love of my wife and our close friends fueled my perseverance.



Weeks turned into months, teaching me to embrace my limitations and celebrate even the smallest victories. The stroke had transformed me, reshaping my identity and challenging me in unimaginable ways. Through it all, my wife remained my rock and confidante. Since then, I have developed complex regional pain syndrome, but I'm determined to continue improving despite the constant burning of my nerves. We're witnessing positive responses from stellate ganglion blocks and maintain hope for ongoing progress.

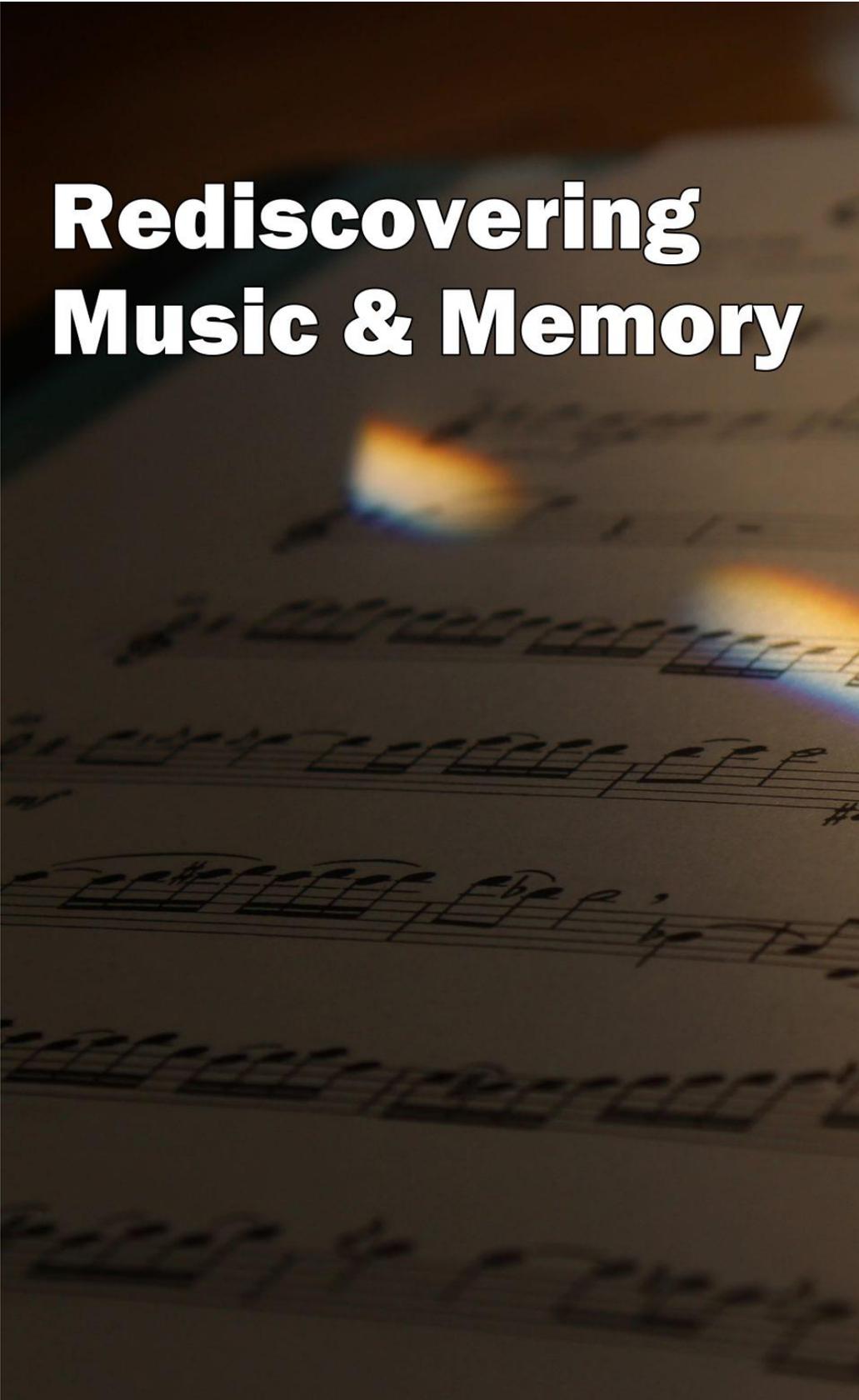
As I continue rebuilding my life, I've discovered a resilience within myself that I never knew existed. I enjoy the company of my two cats, speaking with fellow stroke survivors online, and cooking healthy meals with my wife, Ann. I never give up pushing my body to improve more each day.

Ann was inspired to apply for a job at the same hospital where we lived through the most difficult experience of our lives. She still works there today.

Meet Steve Smith



Originally from the UK, Steve Smith moved to Georgia nearly 20 years ago to marry his beloved wife, Ann. Holding a Bachelor's degree in History and Geography, Steve worked as a Wine Steward for Kroger, serving golf patrons during Masters Week. At 58, he faced a life-altering basal ganglia stroke, but with resilience and determination, he's committed to improving his hand function and walking ability, supported unwaveringly by Ann and their close community.



Rediscovering Music & Memory

James Hinchliffe

Hello everyone, James here! (Well, James is present, but his sister is doing the typing!) I struggle with typing, much like many other things since having a Traumatic Brain Injury.

On 15th May 2022, following a night of working, I was unfortunately hit by a car. At the scene, I was GCS 3 – basically, things weren't looking good! Although I had no broken bones or other injuries, I had a fracture to my skull, causing my brain to swell. Thanks to the incredible paramedics who worked wonders on me, I was taken to the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield, where I then spent the following 16 days in an induced coma. During this time, I had multiple life-saving surgeries. The first being a craniotomy to remove part of my skull and reduce the pressure on my brain to start the very long healing process. I became a regular in the operating theatre over the first few months, needing drains for the fluid around my brain and eventually having a shunt put in. Touch wood, the final bit of surgery I required was the cranioplasty, which took place on 11th January 2023.

“I became a regular in the operating theatre over the first few months, needing drains for the fluid around my brain and eventually having a shunt put in.”

The timeline of my story goes a little like this: 15th May 2022, admitted to Intensive Care Unit; 3rd June 2022, moved to High Dependency Unit; 12th July 2022, transferred to a Neurology Ward; 15th August 2022 brought a change of scenery to a Neurorehabilitation Centre within Northern General Hospital, Sheffield. This remained my home until my final discharge back to my parents on 21st July 2023.

When I was being moved between wards initially, my understanding of the situation was very minimal. My mind was racing with questions, but due to the expressive aphasia I had acquired, I couldn't verbalise anything other than 'yes' and 'no', and even then, they weren't reliable answers at the time. I knew there was a problem with me, but I didn't understand what, couldn't ask, couldn't remember much, and couldn't make sense of why my family was always around me while I lay in a hospital bed.

Once I'd made my way to the Neurology Ward after spending my first hospital stint in a solitary room, I found shared rooms very hard to deal with. Not least of all because I was the only 'young' patient there. A lot of older gentlemen were explaining their stories, but I struggled to connect. I expected to be 'back to normal' the following week and found the constant chasing of this unrealistic expectation very upsetting.

Following the move to the rehab centre, I found having to re-learn everything incredibly frustrating. Everyday things I learnt as a child now felt impossible. Walking, talking, reading, writing, even being able to care for myself in a basic way – I needed help with everything. The staff at the centre worked tirelessly, alongside my family, to try and re-wire my brain through daily physiotherapy, speech & language therapy, occupational therapy, psychology sessions, and even acupuncture. It felt like a never-ending Groundhog Day of feeling drained, incompetent, and fearful that this was all my life would ever be.

With the festive period on the horizon, my family was putting plans in place with the staff to allow me a few hours at home on Christmas Day – the first sight of 'normality' was slowly coming into

view. There had been an ongoing arrangement between my family and my group of friends to meet up before this – it would be the first time I had seen anyone outside of my immediate family. However, in the hours leading up to me being collected to go, I suffered an anxiety-induced seizure. Luckily, my parents (who had just walked over the threshold of the ward doors at that point) didn't see this happen.

I woke feeling dazed, even more confused, and scared that I couldn't recall a thing. In hindsight, I had unintentionally worried myself over my appearance (at this point, I still didn't have a large chunk of my skull, so my head was misshapen, and the left side of my face drooped), and the panic of not knowing what to say during a conversation.

As a result, I ended up with more medication to add to my already extensive daily bundle. Don't worry, all's well that ends well – I made it home for Christmas! In fact, I was allowed to stay for three nights, surrounded by family, good food (even if my sister does say so herself), and the grounding knowledge that things were looking up. Moving into the new year, and following a successful few nights away, I was then allowed to come home on weekends. My dad would pick me up on a Friday afternoon, and I could enjoy not being in a hospital setting for 48 hours. Absolute bliss, although the Sunday blues hit hard every week!

So, let's take a step back for a moment. Life before my accident wasn't the best. Honestly, I was probably a typical 25-year-old who worked in a bar, which meant I drank a lot, smoked a lot, worked every hour God sent but was always in debt. I really wasn't in the best environment for my mental health. You don't realize it, though, when you're living it, do you? My main passion in life has always been music. I was in a band at Uni (shameless plug, find us under Hover Bored on Spotify) and found solace in my guitar and songwriting. Possibly one of the hardest things since having a TBI is not being able to pick up my guitar as I used to and just play. But I'm working on it!

Since being discharged from the hospital, I have reconnected with the world.

Meet James Hinchliffe

James Hinchliffe, a 26-year-old from Wakefield, West Yorkshire, grew up closely with his parents and two older siblings. A passionate musician, he earned a degree in music from BIMM Manchester and played in a band called Hover Bored. Besides music, James loves traveling, having ventured as far as Japan and hurriedly returning amidst the onset of Covid. He aims to travel again soon, with Krakow being his next destination. Presently, James is dedicated to rehab, focusing on regaining body movement and advancing in his speech & language therapy.

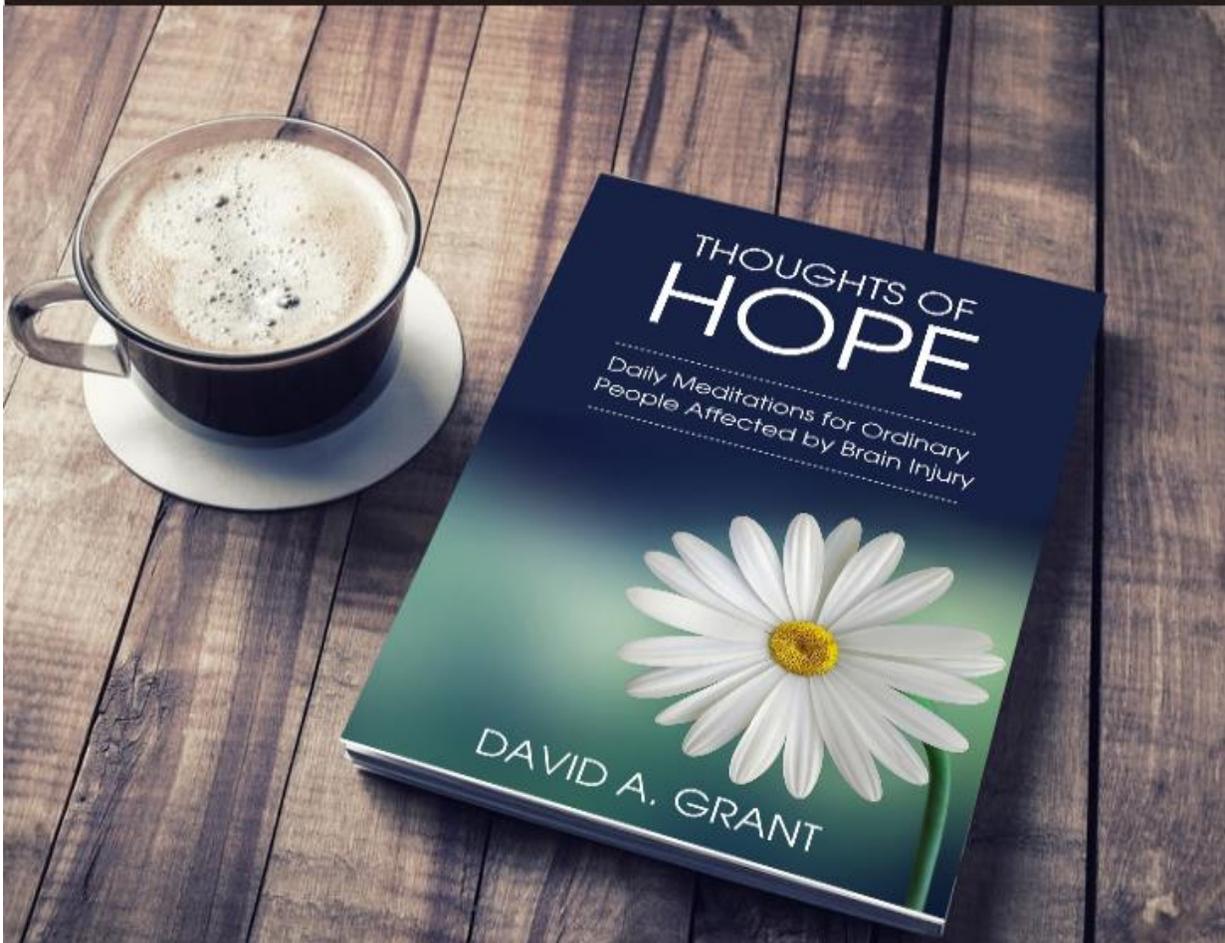
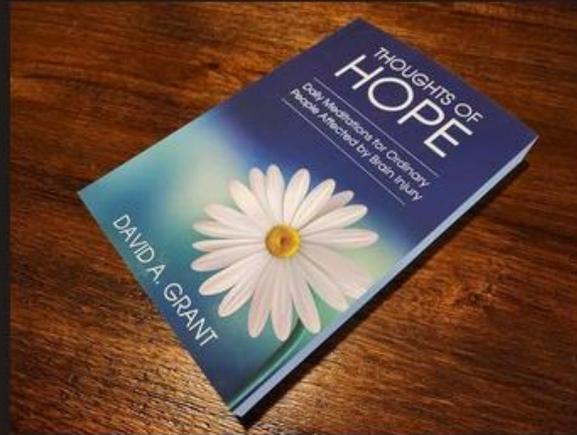


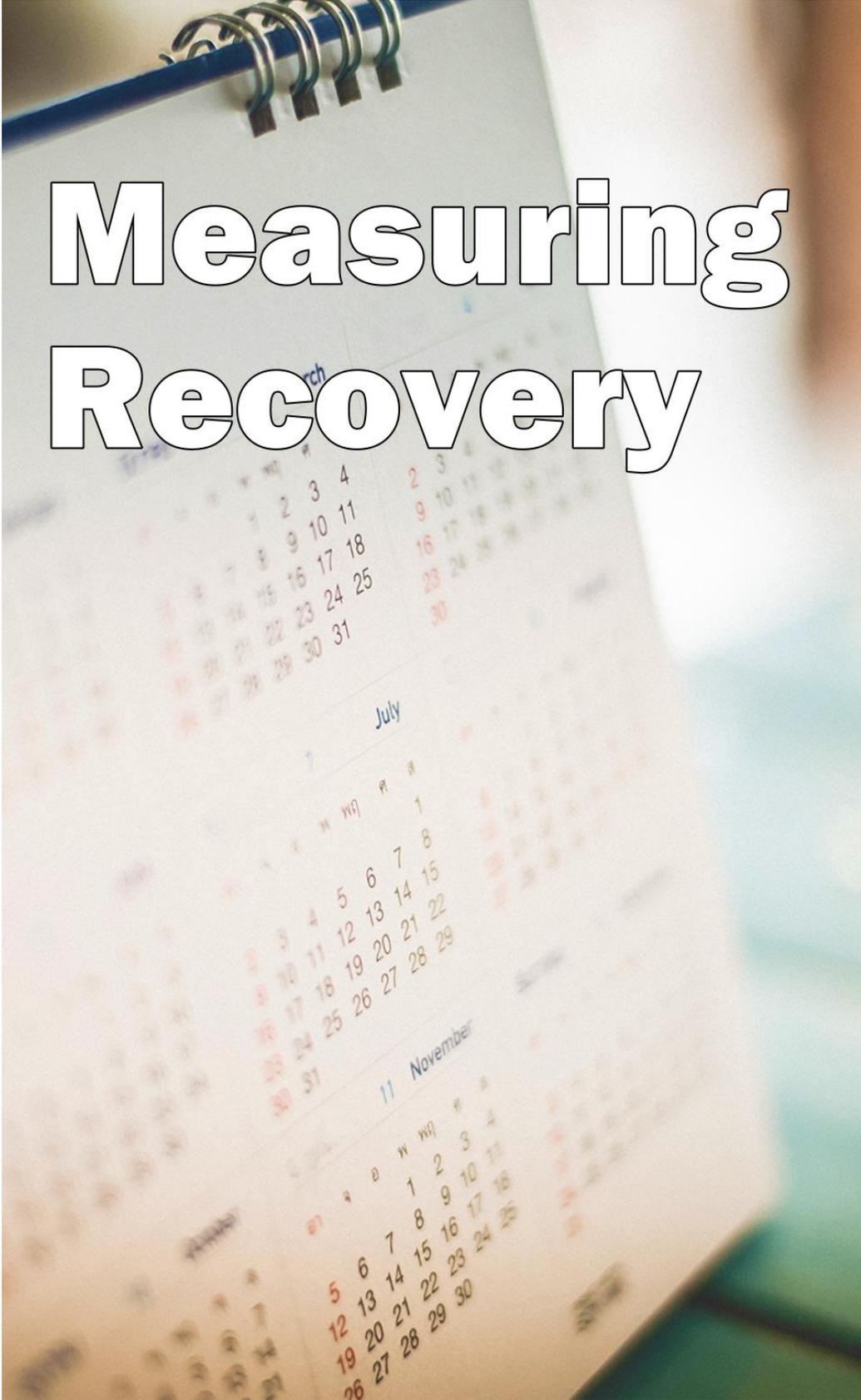
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THOUGHTS OF HOPE

Daily Meditations for Ordinary People Affected By Brain Injury

This 365-day meditation book is for anyone affected by brain injury!





Measuring Recovery

Lisa Cohen

Each brain is unique, and everyone recovers from brain injuries at their own pace. A doctor once told me that the moment air hits the brain, we lose the ability to measure how one heals. Before my surgery, I was often advised, "Try not to look online; it will only scare you." Damage to the brain differs with each injury, whether traumatic or acquired. Labels aside, many in support groups find it hard to accept that there's no set scale or timeframe for recovery. Some doctors may provide a misleading scale of measurement. It has been said by some that the brain stops healing after a year of recovery, but this isn't true. All I can speak to with certainty is my own journey of recovery and the time it's taken to get to where I am today.

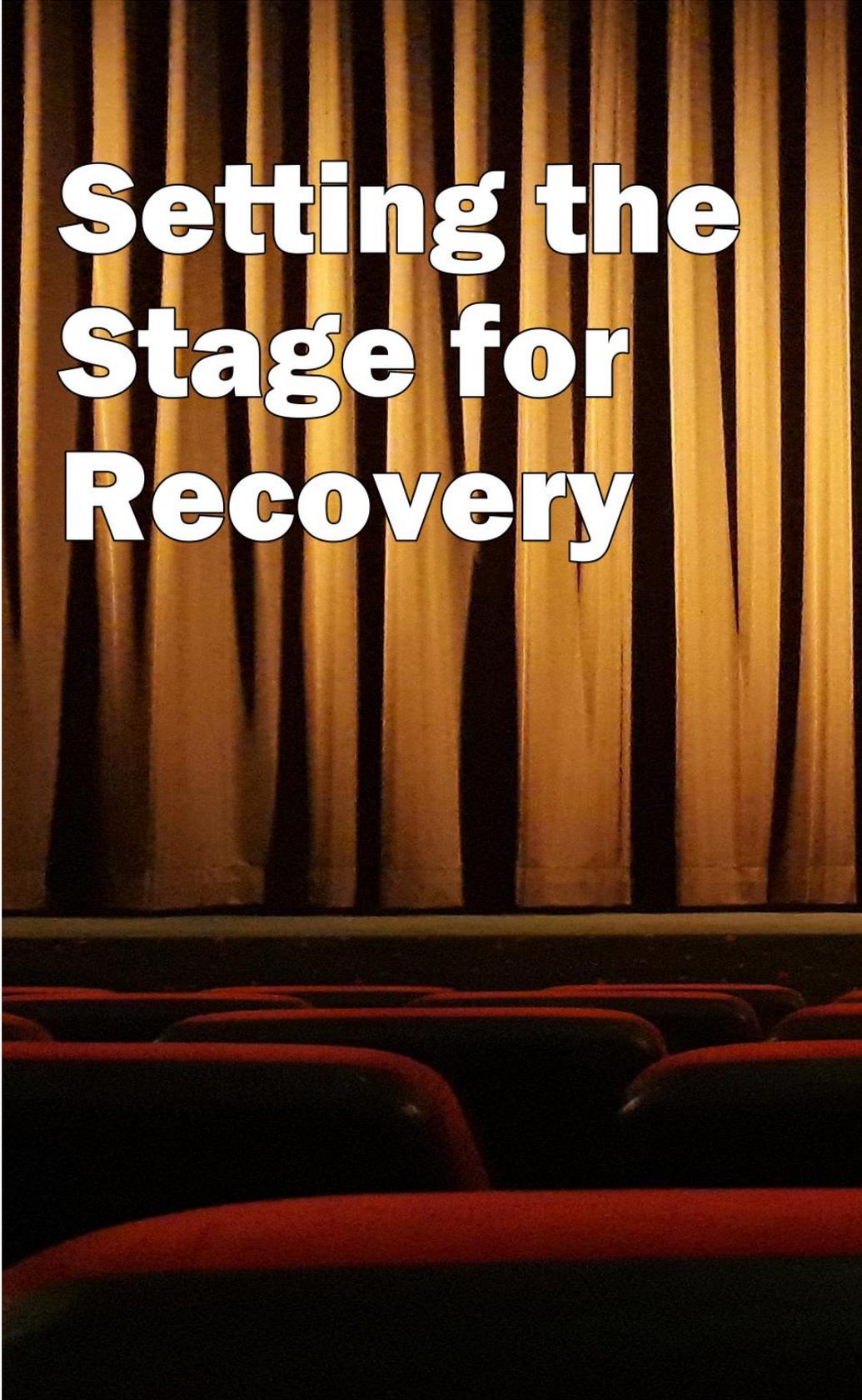
It took me nine days in the hospital to be wheeled outside in a chair. One month passed before I felt connected enough with the outside world to use a phone. By the second month, I was showering standing up and unaided. At four months, I was concerned that my tumor might have returned, and I'd be hospitalized again. By month six, I was admitted to inpatient rehabilitation because, by some standards, my recovery was deemed slow. By the eighth month, I experienced swelling, constant headaches, double vision, nystagmus, ataxia, and tinnitus, yet my recovery couldn't be precisely quantified. Ten months in, I took a trip to Italy. Around the twelfth month, I left therapy and began planning my return to graduate school.

We mark our recovery by years. Each year, we celebrate a "craniversary": acknowledging two years, ten, or even twenty since our new chapter began. We gauge our recovery generally, comparing what we can and can't do now. We recognize flaws in the system where doctors put measurable scales on our recovery. Many survivors are told they won't walk again or remember, yet they defy these predictions. Sometimes, recovery happens a decade or more later. Brain injuries are often gauged by opinion, not fact, but we hold hope that this will change one day.

Meet Lisa Cohen



On May 20, 2014, at the age of 23, Lisa underwent brain surgery to remove a 2.7cm tumor from her cerebellum, roughly the size of a walnut. The recovery was far more challenging than she had anticipated. Lisa spent nine days in the hospital before being released into the care of her parents. For several months, she was merely surviving, not truly living. Six months post-surgery, she entered inpatient rehabilitation at Helen Hayes Hospital. Since the surgery, she has grappled with double vision, nystagmus, ataxia, and tinnitus. Her journey is a testament to resilience, highlighting her transformation from merely surviving to truly thriving in the face of life's challenges.



Setting the Stage for Recovery

Aimee Duffy

Adjusting to memory issues resulting from my TBI continues to be one of my toughest challenges.

Before my motor vehicle accident, memory, organization, and the ability to multi-task were my strengths. While I've seen significant improvement over the past year and a half, I've come to realize that I might never return to my previous capabilities in those areas. As we all understand, some days are harder than others in accepting our new identities.

A strategy that has greatly benefited me is being proactive and setting myself up for success. For instance, when I started driving again after the accident, I would get lost in the town where I've lived for nearly twenty years. I struggled to navigate to places I used to visit daily. This was both frightening and frustrating. I would often react with tears, expletives, and self-reproach. Such reactions only exacerbated the situation. To mitigate this, I began entering all destinations into my GPS. It was a proactive move towards success!

Though I didn't always rely on the GPS, knowing it was there if needed alleviated my anxiety. I would still try to reach my destination without its assistance but took comfort in knowing I could refer to it if things began to look unfamiliar.

Furthermore, I established a Morning Ritual and an Evening Ritual. My Morning Ritual comprises ten tasks to complete before departing each morning. They range from "brush and floss teeth" and "take medications" to "feed the dog" and "ensure bags, computer, and purse are in the car."

Though I didn't always rely on the GPS, knowing it was there if needed alleviated my anxiety.

My Evening Ritual involves prompts to use a Gratitude Journal and a meditation app, as well as preparations for the subsequent day, like "charge iPad," "set out clothes," and "place laptop and purse near the door."

Fortunately, I no longer need to constantly refer to the physical lists of my Morning and Evening Rituals since they've become habits. Yet, unpredictability remains, as I never know when a TBI-related lapse will occur. These used to induce significant anxiety and frustration. Now, if I'm ever at a loss, I simply glance at my refrigerator door where the Morning and Evening Rituals are displayed. Once again, it's about ensuring success!

The anxiety of the "What if...?" scenarios can be overwhelming. Chastising myself or reacting negatively when memory fails is counterproductive, often leading to a negative feedback loop. I've trained myself to recognize when I'm not at my best, accept it, and rely on my rituals for support.

Supporting oneself to guarantee success is truly empowering. Honestly, I wish I had adopted this approach even before my TBI. This strategy has cleared up mental bandwidth, allowing me to start and conclude my days with a profound sense of peace.



Meet Aimee Duffy

Amiee M. Duffy is a devoted mother of three children and a seasoned educator with over two decades of experience. Throughout her teaching journey, she has developed a keen understanding of Executive Function and Working Memory. Amiee is passionate about leveraging this knowledge to better serve and cater to the diverse needs of all students in her classroom.

Let's Get Social!

What do almost 40,000 people from 26 countries and five continents all have in common? They are all members of our vibrant Facebook family at [f/braininjuryhopenetwork](https://www.facebook.com/braininjuryhopenetwork)



Join our Facebook Family Today!





Dawne McKay

Suddenly Changed

One week before my accident, I was vacationing in Florida with my boyfriend when I was abruptly awakened in the middle of the night by an overwhelming sensation that something terrible had happened to someone I was close to. This was an emotion I'd never felt before, and I half-expected a call with news of an unexpected demise. Despite my efforts, I couldn't shake this profound anxiety. Precisely one week later, I was in a devastating car accident.

On my way to work, while stopped to make a left-hand turn, an SUV rear-ended me at 80 mph. This pushed me directly into the path of an oncoming transport truck. My life changed dramatically in just a few seconds. Initially, I was taken to a nearby hospital, but due to the severity of my injuries, I was soon transferred to a trauma center.

Upon arrival, I recall being met by a Chaplain, a testament to how fortunate I was to have survived. My injuries included a moderate head wound, five broken ribs, a fractured vertebra, a broken finger, and a severe seatbelt bruise on my thigh.

Remarkably, I only spent three days in the trauma unit before being discharged, even though I was unable to walk. I remember being eager to leave, to shower, and change into my pajamas. However, the reality of my situation soon set in: the overwhelming fear of getting into another car, the sheer pain after the effects of the morphine faded, and the startling realization that I couldn't walk.

My days became filled with nursing care, sessions with physiotherapists and occupational therapists, interactions with PSWs, and countless medical check-ups. The financial burden, recurring flashbacks, sleepless nights, chronic pain, and anxiety were daunting. The accident halted my career and dramatically shifted my social dynamics. I quickly discerned the true nature of my friendships, a realization that many in my situation share.

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Never having experienced such a traumatic incident, the recovery process was steep and challenging. My accident took place in 2012, and I continue to receive outpatient rehabilitation, grappling with chronic pain, insomnia, and distressing memories.

Nevertheless, I strive daily for positivity. I recently initiated a Facebook support group for Motor Vehicle Accident Victims. I aimed not only to find the support I sought but also to extend it to others in similar predicaments. The group, now with over 200 members, consists of individuals at various stages of their recovery journeys.

The camaraderie that comes from knowing you're not alone has proven therapeutic. It's evident that once motor vehicle accident victims are discharged, there's a vacuum in terms of connecting with

peers who've shared similar experiences. This group focuses on emotional support during members' physical, financial, and legal recoveries. Medical or legal advice and solicitation are strictly prohibited within the group.

In the unpredictable journey of life, traumatic events like motor vehicle accidents can upend our sense of normalcy and challenge our physical, emotional, and social well-being. My own experience has taught me the value of resilience, the profound impact of communal support, and the necessity of forging pathways for mutual understanding and healing. The Facebook group, while just one initiative, underscores the importance of creating spaces for collective recovery, reminding us that even in our most isolated moments, we never truly walk alone.

Meet Dawne McKay



Dawne McKay is a survivor and beacon of resilience who has turned personal adversity into a mission to support and connect with others. After enduring a life-altering car accident in 2012, she embarked on a challenging journey of recovery, both physically and emotionally. Recognizing the power of communal support, Dawne founded a Facebook group dedicated to assisting Motor Vehicle Accident Victims, emphasizing the significance of shared experiences and collective healing. Her story serves as a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the transformative power of community.

Living With Hope

By Patrick Brigham



News & Views

By David & Sarah Grant



The HOPE community is rich with tales of resilience, determination, and innovation. Each story we encounter offers a unique perspective, and today we aim to shine a light on some of these shared experiences.



In one story, a life was altered in mere seconds due to a devastating car accident. Beyond the immediate physical trauma, the aftermath brought on emotional pain, flashbacks, and unexpected life changes. Yet, amidst this turmoil, determination prevailed. Then there's the personal narrative of another survivor grappling with the aftermath of a traumatic brain injury.

Here, the struggles, particularly concerning memory, are palpable. Life pre-accident was markedly different, with strengths such as organization and multitasking taking center stage.

Post-accident, the journey was about acceptance, adaptation, and recovery. Through the development of morning and evening rituals, the application of tools to reduce anxiety, and a commitment to self-care, this individual showcases the power of perseverance and the importance of self-support.

These stories, and all the stories that we've published since 2015, serve as powerful reminders. They speak of resilience in the face of adversity, the boundless capacity for growth, and the interwoven connections that bind our community together. As we reflect on these candidly shared stories, let's be inspired and find ways to support and uplift each other.

We wish you peace,

David & Sarah