

August 2016

TBI HOPE

MAGAZINE

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WHO COULDN'T SPEAK**

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MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

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TBI HOPE MAGAZINE

*Serving All Impacted by
Brain Injury*

**August
2016**

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Welcome

Welcome to the August 2016 issue of TBI HOPE Magazine.

There is no such thing as a “typical” brain injury. TBI can strike anyone at any time. From professional athletes to high schoolers, no one is exempt from the possibility of a Traumatic Brain Injury.

This month, we are delighted to bring you stories from survivors around the world. We are also pleased to bring you a story from our youngest contributor to date. Sierra is a sixteen year old survivor from Ontario, Canada.

We wish Sierra a warm welcome to our amazing family of contributing writers.

To our regular readers, welcome back. To those new to the TBI HOPE family, prepare to be inspired!



David A. Grant
Publisher

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"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference."

~Winston Churchill



Beginning my New Life

by Sierra Badgley



October 4th, 2015 was the day my pre-injured-self died, and my new life began. It was a nice brisk morning as we arrived at my aunt's house with my dirt bike in the back of the truck. We were celebrating Thanksgiving with my family so I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to not only see my family, but to do what I love most: ride my dirt bike. I started off in first gear, then second, third, and finally fourth gear. I was enjoying the ride in the big field without a care in the world.

Suddenly I hit a pothole, flew over the handlebars and was thrown off my bike half way across the field. I was knocked out for a few seconds (from what I recall) before I woke up covered in blood, unaware of my condition and surroundings. My helmet was completely smashed, along with my confidence. I've endured many things over the years, but this was by far the worst. My uncle ran over to me, picked me up, placed me in the truck and my dad quickly drove me to the local hospital. Apparently, in between there, they cleaned me up with water but I don't remember much.

Once I got to the hospital, I asked the nurse if I was going to die. I don't remember getting a straight answer. I was terrified at the time. I knew that having brittle bone disease was going to complicate a lot of things. My condition remained unknown. The doctors and nurses did everything they could for me. Due to my poor memory, I can really only recall certain details.

Everything was pretty much in the dark at this hospital. The nurse came in to my room later on and told my parents there was nothing more they could do for me. I needed to be

transferred to the children's hospital in Ottawa in an ambulance. I had a neck collar, and was hooked up to an IV. It doesn't sound that bad of course, aside from the fact that I couldn't move my body, nor did I want to. The fear of the unknown is what scares us the most, and it definitely got inside my head.

My ambulance ride was a bit of a blur. The nurse kept telling me to stay awake, which seemed equivalent to telling me to get up and walk away. It was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I could feel my eyes fluttering, opening and closing. I finally arrived in Ottawa, where my day got worse (who knew that was possible). My experience with the doctor in emergency wasn't great. I was sent home in a horrible state. My injuries consisted of a fractured elbow, concussion, neck injury, broken nose, damaged nerves in my mouth, and a few scrapes and bruises. Seems pretty lucky right? Too bad this was just the beginning. My injuries escalated. It wasn't until they REALLY took a look at me, that they realized the trouble I was in. I came back a few days later.



Elbow surgery was undecided the day that I was injured, but as long as it was healing properly it wasn't going to be necessary. The doctor asked me if I could move my left arm at all, I said no. He thought it was odd, therefore he sent me to get a CT scan instead of another X-ray. This was the moment I was told I needed EMERGENCY surgery.

Not only was my elbow fractured, but it was completely smashed. Pieces were floating in areas where they shouldn't be, and on top of that, my brain injury was causing its own set of problems.

After getting two pins put in my elbow, my parents (as well as I) thought I was finally in the recovery process. Unfortunately, the symptoms of my concussion were actually worsening. This had been my sixth concussion. My previous head injury hadn't healed from August 2014, so it was only shy of a year later when this accident happened. I was puking, I couldn't see, I was sensitive to noise/light, the headaches were unbearable and nothing was helping.

School created another whole new issue for me. Despite having doctor's notes, my mom coming in for various meetings, me explaining myself and how I was feeling, nobody believed me. They treated me as though I was invisible, and continued to refuse to provide me with any sort of accommodations. The expectations of keeping up my grades, being my "old self", and recovering well was all putting extra stress and pressure on my brain. It was too much to handle. As my recovery prolonged, I was diagnosed with post-concussion syndrome. It was a relief to finally have some questions answered, yet I was still being perceived as a liar. The rest of my grade ten school year was a struggle, between my physical recovery, mental recovery, and school life.

October will mark my one year brain injury anniversary. I believe you can never fully recover from something like this. I do however believe that God put us through this journey to test our strength, determination and willingness. Riding dirt bikes and taking risks is a choice I MADE. It's up to me to deal with the consequences. The memory loss, headaches, and loss of self is just one part of me. I believe that the only limits that exist are the ones you put on yourself. I do what I love and hope for the best. I live my life to the fullest every single day because I don't know what the next chapter is going to read. My brain injury challenges me, but a doctor once told me that only 10% of our happiness comes from what we wear, what we kind of house we live in and what kind of car we drive. The other 90% comes from how we view something. My name is Sierra Badgley, and this is my story.

Meet Sierra Badgley

Sierra Badgley is a sixteen year old brain injury survivor from a small town in Ontario, Canada. She will be attending Grade 11 this September. Ever since her accident, she has made it her mission to spread awareness and to advocate for brain injury survivors everywhere. Advocating is just one part of Sierra. On a daily basis she likes to run, ride dirt bikes, blog, and cook healthy meals. Since her accident, her main focus has been working towards achieving her goal of becoming a police officer.



The Resilient Soul

by Karen Leavitt



It seems that I have always witnessed strong, resilient people in my world.

As I grew, I knew with unabashed certainty I was destined to become a nurse. That was crystal clear. I knew that it was to be such an honor and a privilege to know and care for someone when they needed it most. It was as much a privilege to come to know their families and friends. Life does come with twists and turns, ups and downs - even some blind corners for us to try to navigate. That's just life.

As a nurse, I was privileged to see these remarkable Resilient Souls day in and day out. I witnessed firsthand people finding the strength inside of themselves to carry on against all odds. I observed the power of faith, love and hope while serving my patients. My journey as a nurse was truly a gift.

A little over three years ago, my life changed forever when an unexpected turn of events came to pass. I was involved in an automobile accident with a young driver one day after work. The accident left me with a severe concussion. Over time, my concussion did not get better, in fact I got worse – a lot worse. I would walk into walls, I was unable to focus and unable to read. I could no longer watch television, my balance was off and I found myself unexpectedly and completely dyslexic.

One morning, shortly after my accident, I woke up and could not even speak. My words were garbled. I would make up words that made no sense and then just blurt them out similar to what a stroke patient might do. Those close to me didn't know what to make of it and often would laugh. It was clearly uncomfortable for them.

My frustration grew daily. Memory loss was evident when I was unable to recall the specific medical term for what I was experiencing. I knew something was wrong and wondered whether I had experienced a stroke. After several additional doctor's appointments and a stay at a neuro rehab, I learned that I was suffering from expressive aphasia. This was familiar to me as I had witnessed it in my patients while I was still a nurse. I was now walking in the shoes of my patients.



Over time, the losses continued to mount. Along with the pain of deep loss from the accident, my horse fell and died in a freak accident. My car was gone, my home and my family were in shambles. Everything that defined Karen to those who knew me was now gone. Even my own stepchildren could not understand what had happened to me. They did not like the "new" Karen. I was impatient, no longer fun, and I grew tired quickly. I was not able to do the things with them that I once did. Noise and sound sensitivity quickly took its toll as well. Our family gatherings came to an abrupt halt. Life as I knew it had changed in an instant. All I was left with was my faith.

The months continued to pass and the physical injuries healed. I looked like the "Karen" everyone knew, but I had an internal invisible injury. I now was a member of an all too quickly growing club. I was now a traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivor.

The months in neuro rehab taught me the types of compensatory skills I would need to survive in the real world. Getting used to my new life was a grueling experience. I was once an active athlete, and a very capable nurse. I could multi-task with the best of them. Simple tasks had become tedious and overwhelming because of my injury, frustration once again rearing its ugly head.

Months of rehab later and the hard cold facts of my brain injury became clear. I had injured torn areas of my brain used for language and math. I would not be able to continue to practice nursing any longer.

Though I was wearing a seatbelt, I still went through the dashboard the evening of the accident. All that had come to pass since my accident brought me to a very dark place. It was almost unspeakable. I had lost all hope and wanted to die. Several attempts at suicide were, thankfully, unsuccessful.

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It was during this timeframe, this time of darkness and despair, sometimes called the dark night of the soul, that something deep inside of me began to stir. I did not want to listen or even pay attention. It was an inner voice trying to guide me. It grew louder and stronger day-by-day.

My speech slowly began to come back. A wonderful therapist helped walk me through the recovery process. Slowly, I was indeed coming back. My inner voice continued to guide me. I knew with certainty that I needed to reach out to others to help them. My soul needed to shine a light, to let them know that they were no longer alone.

At my core, I am a nurse, an educator, and an advocate. Things began to fall into place and one after another, and completely

unexpectedly doors began to open. I launched an international talk radio show, "The Sky's the Limit." I began speaking to groups. I was reaching beyond my own life's circumstance, situation, and diagnosis to find my true passion and purpose in life again.

In my nursing career, I was privileged to help so many people. Now it was my turn to help others in a different capacity. I realized that I had the same the Resilient Soul that I had seen in others, others who had inspired me. Today, I am grateful to be a very successful talk radio host, and public speaker. My radio show guests have aligned so beautifully to highlight their own resilient souls and respective journeys.

Whoever we are, whatever in our lives has (or has not) happened, how we respond to these moments defines us. We are all more much more than simply what has happened in our lives. We are learning life lessons every day and living in the moment – regardless of where we are in our journey.

My wish is that you come to the realization that we all have resilient souls inside of us.

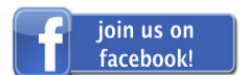
Meet Karen Leavitt

Karen Leavitt is an inspiration to all who know her. A career nurse for many years, she is a natural caregiver, leader and educator. Karen is the author of the highly acclaimed new book, [The Resilient Soul](#). She is always striving for more, both personally and professionally. You can read more about Karen at www.Karen-Leavitt.com.

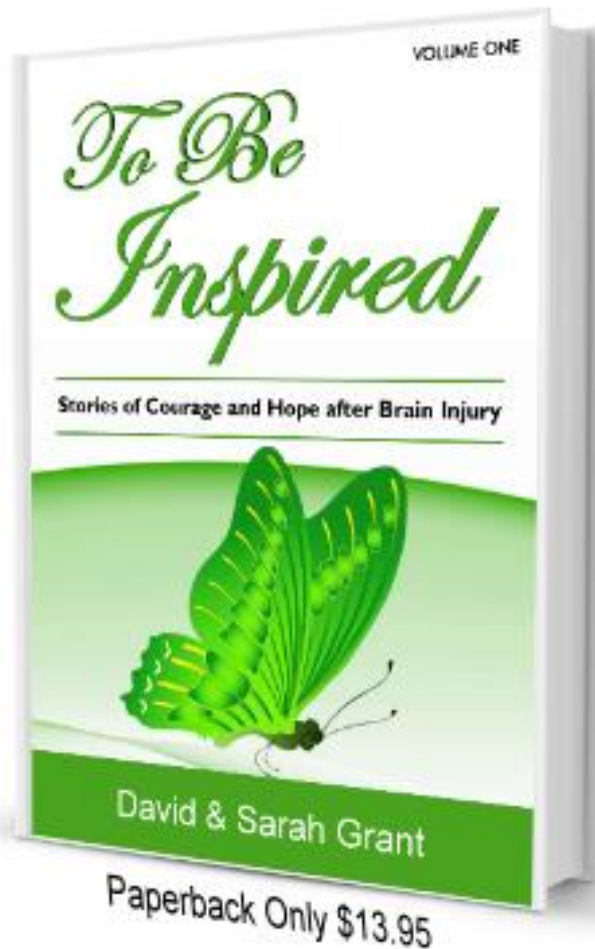


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Introducing a New Book Supporting those Affected by Traumatic Brain Injury!



There Is Life After Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) affects millions of people around the world every year. Brain injury, however, is a family affair. Mothers, fathers, sons and daughters – all are touched in some way when brain injury becomes part of life.

This is a collection of stories by souls who have found a way to live life after TBI. You'll read story after story of people – people just like you and me – who have found the ability to build meaningful lives.

Prepare to be inspired!

Meet David and Sarah Grant

David A. Grant sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury in 2010 when he was struck by a teenage driver. In the years since, David and Sarah have become outspoken advocates - doing their part to help end the silence that surrounds TBI.

Their monthly magazine, TBI HOPE Magazine, is now read worldwide as their advocacy work continues.



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Looking Through the Prism

by David A. Grant

“If every day was like this, I wouldn’t be alive today.”

My words hung in the air and in a heartbeat I knew that she understood the real depth of my struggle. Over the last five years, I’ve learned that this second life can be at times unpredictable. There are good days... days where I am able to move from sunrise to sunset with relative ease.

And then there are days like yesterday.

Tough TBI days come without warning. There is no advance planning, no adaptive or compensatory strategies to prevent them. Unasked for, and often at the most inopportune of times, they strike without warning.

I should have known that trouble was on the horizon. I awoke after another tough PTSD night. Strike that, I didn’t really wake, I just opened my eyes, my head already more full of brain fog than a school bus full of kids on their way to Summer Camp.

Normally, I hop out of bed, pour a cup o’ Joe, and flip on the morning news. Not yesterday. Laying there, eyes wide open, the endless ring of tinnitus screaming through my head, I had not strength nor desire to even move – but move I did.

Sarah knew I was having an off day. Though I'm generally not a whiner or constant complainer, I let her know I was not playing my A-Game. I can be pretty sure that she already knew.

More so to keep my mind off things, I set to putting up the last of our outdoor holiday decorations. It gave me time to just be alone. It's hard to be around people on those tough TBI days. Moving through our yard at half-speed, gravity felt doubled, and I knew that my processing speed could be compared to the 133 MHz days.

If there's anything I've learned along the way it's that every tough TBI day passes. I have a 100% success record of making it through tough days. If you find yourself reading this, so do you.



Most of that afternoon is a blur. At some point, at a time I am unable to recall, I realized that my ability to speak had left the building.

Now you hear me, now you don't. Presto-Chango, step right in and see the Amazing Disappearing Voice. For only 50 cents, you too can see one of the Seven Non-Wonders of the Modern World!

"S-s-s-sSarah, Iam get t-t-t-ting tired of of of of (of) this," I stammered at one point, looking down my nose toward a mouth no longer connected to much of anything.

And in hearing the sound of my vocal struggling, complete despair struck me like a hammer. There are times that I prefer having an invisible disability. No one knows my secret.

Walking through Target yesterday, most any passer-by would know in a New York minute that I have issues, that I am compromised... and that there is more going on than meets the eye.

The day wound down as I lay in an almost fetal position on the couch, mind numb, killer headache and the TV on in front of me. By this time, I was unable to follow conversations and just watched a succession of seemingly unrelated pictures dance across the screen.

I remember looking at my watch a few times, just longing for the day to end.

While this may sound like it might not have been the best of days, I might be tempted to disagree. You see, I made it through the day. That alone is more of a success than most will ever realize. And yesterday's tough day becomes tomorrow's ammunition. The next time one of those "Tough TBI Days" decides to strike without warning, I can look back and know that I have the ability to walk – or at times crawl – through the dark times.

A final note of gratitude is in order...

There were a couple of years when EVERY day was a tough day. I had hundreds and hundreds of days just like yesterday. I still marvel that I made it. Thoughts of suicide came easily as oblivion looked better than the life I was living. TBI old timers told me that it would get easier. Not easy, but easier.

It's always helpful to look at life through the "what could have been" prism. Today the good days outnumber the tough days. I have more days that are livable, enjoyable and worthwhile. I'm not in a wheelchair. I can walk, run, hike, and bike. I can wrap my arms around Sarah and tell her that she is loved. My life has a new meaning and a new direction.

Sure, there are tough days – days like yesterday. But if you have a heartbeat, you too have tough days. Mine are just a bit, well... different than the tough days I had in my first life.

Yesterday is gone. It's a cancelled check. Tomorrow never really comes. Today's goal is to live well in the moment.

Meet David A. Grant

David A. Grant is a freelance writer based out of southern New Hampshire. He is the author of [*Metamorphosis, Surviving Brain Injury*](#), a book that chronicles his new life as a brain injury survivor. David is also a contributing author to *Chicken Soup for the Soul, Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries*. David is a BIANH Board Member as well as a member of the Brain Energy Support team Board of Directors. David is a regular contributing writer to Brainline.org, a PBS sponsored website.



Setting Yourself Up for Success

by Amiee Duffy

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black pen, writing on a notepad. The notepad has a white cover with black stars and is resting on a wooden surface. The background is blurred, showing more of the notepad and the hand.

Adjusting to the memory issues from my TBI continues to be one of my most difficult challenges.

Prior to my motor vehicle accident, memory, organization, and the ability to multi-task were strengths of mine. And although I have seen so much improvement in the past year and a half, I realize that I will probably never be who I was in those areas. As we all know, some days are more difficult than others in accepting our new selves.

One thing that has helped me greatly is being prepared and setting myself up for success as much as possible. For example, when I first was able to drive again, I kept getting lost in the town in which I have lived for almost twenty years. I couldn't get to places I went to every day. This was simultaneously scary and frustrating. I would cry, swear, and berate myself. My reaction obviously only made things worse. So I began putting all trips into my GPS. I set myself up for success!

I didn't always look at the GPS, but I knew it was there if I needed it. That relieved my anxiety. I still attempted to get where I was going without using the GPS, but I was secure in the fact that if suddenly things looked unfamiliar I could look at the GPS and continue on my way!

I also have created a Morning Ritual and an Evening Ritual. My Morning Ritual consists of a list of ten things that I need to complete before I leave in the morning. These are things such as "brush and floss teeth", "take medications", "feed dog", and "make sure bags, computer, and purse are in car."

My Evening Ritual includes reminders to use a Gratitude Journal and a meditation app as well as to set myself up the next day by doing the following, "charge iPad", "prepare clothes for next day", and "put laptop and purse on bench near door."

Fortunately I do not need to rely on the actual physical lists my Morning and Evening Rituals entail, as they are primarily habits now. However, I still continue to have my TBI moments and I don't necessarily know when they are going to pop up. This used to make me highly anxious and frustrated. Now, if I get stuck, I walk over to my refrigerator and hanging on the door in a page protector is my Morning Ritual on one side and Evening Ritual on the other. Again, I set myself up for success!

I have found that the anxiety of "What if...?" is burdensome. Beating myself up or reacting in frustration when I can't remember basic things accomplishes nothing and even leads to a downward spiral. I have learned to notice when I'm foggy, accept it, and look to my rituals to support me.

Learning to support one's self to ensure success is empowering! Honestly, I wish I had used this strategy prior to my TBI. I have freed up a lot of space in my brain to be used for other things and I begin and end my days much more peacefully.

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.





Mission Impossible

by Nathalie Kelly

I was in the grocery store when I first realized something was wrong with my brain, so it is poignant and fitting that the subject has become one of my most popular YouTube videos.

Seven days after my sailing accident, I realized that I should be hungry, but I wasn't. I hadn't eaten all week, but I thought I was "just emotionally shook up" from the accident which had left me with sea legs. It was hard enough to make it the twenty feet to the bathroom; the trip to the kitchen felt like a distant galaxy.

I thought I should eat. So I forced myself out of bed, staggered to the kitchen, and realized I still couldn't handle this undulating sea beneath me well enough to stand up and fix any food.

I did the only logical thing I could think of. "I'll get in the car and drive myself to the supermarket and buy a sandwich from the deli."

I had no concept that I was in no shape to drive. I had no concept that I would actually have to stand in line in the deli longer than I would have to stand in my own kitchen.

I had no concept that a supermarket could be a challenge. I had been going to supermarkets for 45 years without a hitch.

I never made it to the deli department.

Inside the supermarket doors, I was stopped dead in my tracks, overwhelmed by a massive deluge of sensory overload.

A million little choices go into buying groceries that I had never noticed. The subconscious mind processes most of it without our awareness. Without any filters, suddenly I was conscious of every single detail.

I felt like a thousand wild animals were charging at me in a stampede. I couldn't take it all in. Each grocery item was a wild animal coming at me in what felt like an attack. Every



single word on every single package was another wild animal. Together, they all charged at me in an overwhelming rush of colors, shapes, and sizes.

I had never noticed how many words were in a supermarket. Each one screamed “Look at me!”, “Buy me!” Labels and signs were everywhere, and painful to look at.

Each one required the insurmountable effort of slow, painful, r-e-a-d-i-n-g.

To top off the chaos, people bustled by with clanking shopping carts, neighbors chatted noisily in the produce section, music swirled through the air, and bright lights came from the ceiling and bounced off the floor, blinding from every direction.

A deluge of sensory input was coming from all directions. What was going on? What was happening to me? I was panicking.

“Okay, I have to focus, concentrate, and get out of here,” I coached myself. Every single decision seemed as monumental as climbing Mt. Everest, making me exponentially more irritable and closer to sheer panic.

“Did I want fruits or vegetables or crackers or bread or cheese or cookies?” Fruit.
“Did I want cherries or peaches or oranges or strawberries or apples or bananas or blueberries?” Stone fruit.
“Did I want nectarines or peaches or apricots or green plums or purple plums?” Nectarines.
“Did I want organic or local or Amish or Georgia or California?”
Oh my God, why is this so hard?

Every decision was trudging through knee-high muck. Time slowed down. I never noticed before how many decisions it took to do the simplest thing. It was taking forever. Everything in me screamed “GET OUT OF HERE!”



Standing in front of the nectarines, I suddenly got so dizzy and disoriented I thought I would pass out right there on the cold shiny linoleum floor.

I needed food. I just had to push through and do this.

“Get something, anything, and GO!” I told myself. Nectarines.

My hand reached out to grab one and then stopped mid-air. Brain freeze.

This was not the brain freeze my kids got from eating ice cream. This was a brain freeze that I had never experienced before.

My brain froze mid-action and ceased to know how to send a message to my body. I couldn't figure out how to pick up the fruit. I couldn't figure out how to move my hand.

Alarmed, I instructed my hand how to do this. “Reach down. Open fingers. Close fingers. Get the heck out of here. Get back to bed. This is serious.”

I was scared. I dashed home and typed these words before I fell back into a deep sleep:
“Bak to bed. This isnt godo. Thsis is seriouwls,

“I;ve been in bed 7 dayes. room is spinning. IHared to feed myself becuse its hared to stand up and prepear food. Half to holdm on.

My braiin isnt working.

I am forgetting my words mid-sentence and havint to really concentrate to speak. Even them it feeels solw and belabored. I find myself stuttering or just unable to speak. I'll start a sentence and then my brain jsut shuts off and I have to wait for it to go again.

A lot of spelling words is like that too. Just shuts off and I cant remeber how to spell. The wireis are misssig.

Its geting worse.

I scaryd.”

The nectarine rotted on my kitchen counter.

It took six years before I could go into a grocery store without feeling traumatized by it.

Finally, I found a doctor who could explain all the many components of why this is so hard for so many of us with TBI. He was able to explain why so many of us find grocery shopping to be “Mission Impossible.”

Meet Natalie Kelly

Nathalie Kelly, The TBI Coach, can be found at www.TheTBICoach.com or on [YouTube](#). This story is excerpted from her upcoming book, *Brainstormed, How I Lost My Mind and Found My Heart*.



"I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it." - Maya Angelou

Measuring Recovery

by Lisa Cohen

Each brain is unique and everyone recovers from brain injuries at his or her own pace. A doctor once told me that the moment air hits the brain is when 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 is different for each injury whether traumatic or acquired. Labels aside, most members in support groups struggle to accept that there is no scale or time frame for recovery. Some doctors will lie with a made up scale of measurement. Doctors have been noted as saying the brain stops healing after a year of recovery, but this is not true. All I know for certain is my own current recovery and how long it took me and to arrive where I am today.

It took me nine days in the hospital to be released outside in a wheelchair. It took me one month to care about the outside world enough to use a phone. It took me two months to shower standing up and on my own. It took four months for me to worry over the possibility that my tumor had grown back and I might end up back in a hospital. By month six I was admitted to inpatient rehabilitation because my recovery was, measured by standards, slow. By month eight I had swelling, constant headaches, double vision, nystagmus, ataxia and tinnitus but my recovery could not be measured. By ten months in, I went on a trip to Italy. Near twelve months, I left therapy and planned my return to graduate school.

We mark our recovery by years. Each year we celebrate a “craniversary”: we say it’s been two years, ten, or twenty since the new us lived. We measure our recovery in a general sense, comparing the things we can and cannot do. We find flaws in the system of doctors who place measurable scales on our recovery. Many survivors are told they cannot walk again or will never remember, but they do. Sometimes, recovery occurs ten or more years later. Brain injuries are often measured by opinion and never fact, but we hope one day this can change.

Meet Lisa Cohen

May 20, 2014 I had brain surgery where doctors removed a tumor 2.7cm, about the size of a walnut, from my cerebellum. At the time of my surgery I was only 23 years old and was not prepared for the recovery that was to come. I spent nine days in the hospital and was eventually released to the care of my parents. For months nobody had any idea how to help me and I wasn’t living. I was simply surviving.

Six months after my surgery I went to an inpatient rehabilitation hospital called Helen Hayes. It was there my recovery was in high gear; I attended physical, occupational and speech therapy twice a day. Since the surgery, I have struggled with double vision, nystagmus, ataxia and tinnitus.

My story is about overcoming an obstacle in life, becoming a stronger person and learning to be more than just a survivor.



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Suddenly Changed

by Dawne McKay

One week prior to my accident, I was on vacation in Florida with my boyfriend, and I was suddenly jolted awake in the middle of the night with a terrible feeling that something awful had happened to someone close to me. It was a feeling that I had never experienced before and I thought I was going to get a call that someone had passed unexpectedly. I carried this feeling with me for days and I just couldn't seem to shake this unsettling anxious feeling, no matter how hard I tried. Exactly one week later, I was involved in a horrific car accident.

I was on my way to work and had stopped to make a left hand turn. I was rear-ended by an SUV clocked at 80 mph, and I was pushed into the path of a transport truck. My life as I knew it suddenly changed in a matter of seconds. I was transported to a local hospital, but my injuries were so severe that they had to transport me to a trauma hospital. When I arrived in the trauma unit, I remember being greeted by the Chaplain as I was truly lucky to be alive. I suffered a moderate head injury with laceration, five broken ribs, fractured vertebrae, fractured finger and a horrific seatbelt wound on my thigh.

I only spent three days in the trauma unit, as they decided to discharge me even though I couldn't walk. I think back to that morning and I was actually excited to be leaving the hospital and couldn't wait to have a shower, wash my hair, and put my pajamas on. I didn't realize that I would be absolutely terrified to get into another vehicle, how bad the pain would be once the morphine had worn off, and suddenly I realized that I could not walk and I was in excruciating pain. Daily nursing, physiotherapists, occupational therapists,

PSW's and numerous medical follow up appointments had now become my new way of life. Not to mention financial strain, flashbacks, sleepless nights, constant pain, the "what if's" and anxiety. I had a job that I loved and my social life and friendships as I once knew them came to a screeching halt. Friends who I thought would be there for me weren't, and I suddenly found myself realizing who my real friends were. (This is apparently quite common, as I talk to people in similar situations.)

As I had never been in a motor vehicle accident quite like this, it was a HUGE learning curve and recovery for me. My accident happened in 2012 and I still continue to attend outpatient rehabilitation. I am still trying my best to cope with the chronic pain, sleepless nights and flashbacks.

Today and every day, I try my best to be as positive as I can and I recently decided to create a Facebook support group for Motor Vehicle Accident Victims. I took it upon myself to not only build the support I was seeking, but to spread it out to others who were in similar situations. The group has over 200 members, and a lot of them are either recovering from their accident or just starting to go through the process. Knowing you are not alone is the main thing and bringing people together and finding support in one another is very therapeutic. I find that once motor vehicle accident victims are discharged from the hospital, they really don't have anywhere to reach out to other victims. The group is strictly to provide members with emotional support while they recover physically, financially and legally. No medical advice, legal advice or solicitation is allowed in the group.

Meet Dawne McKay

Dawne started her career as a legal secretary and for the last 15 years has worked in the healthcare industry. In 2012, she was a survivor of a life changing automobile accident. She is the creator of an online [Motor Vehicle Accident Support Group](#) that recently went live this past April 2016. This is a closed group on Facebook designed to bring victims together to share their story, share information, resources and emotional support. Dawne's advocacy work continues.





The Disc Jockey Who Couldn't Speak

by Jeff Sebell

If you have ever checked out my website/blog or read my book, you may already know some of this. “Now,” as a well-known radio commentator used to say, “I’m going to tell you the rest of the story.”

My story starts when I returned to college four months after waking up from a month-long coma. I wasn't in any shape to return to school, but I had made up my mind that plunging back in would be far more productive than spending the next nine months watching TV at my parent’s house.

Give and Take

I was not going to do well academically, but that wasn’t as important as experiencing and re-experiencing as much of life as I could. I had to take risks.

In keeping with that idea, I decided to resume my weekly radio show.

Once on the air, I became aware of some...hmmmm...how do you say it?

Speech problems.

I slurred my words. I couldn't say certain letter groupings, such as -dge. I stuttered and I stumbled.

I was surprised at how bad I was. But, I just didn't worry about what other people thought. I knew I stunk, but, the way I looked at it, I was on a mission, and that mission was to get better. I put myself out there for everyone to see (and hear), with nowhere to run or hide.

This created the attitude and set the tone for my life after brain injury: “forge ahead vigorously”, as my Latin teacher used to say. I made decisions not based on what other people would think, but rather, what I thought was best for me.

Air Checks Are Us

After I finished school, with no idea what to do, I decided to move to a ski town: Breckenridge, Colorado, where a friend lived. When people asked what I was going to do for work, I told them, “I'm going to work at the radio station.”



The next question always was, “Is there a radio station in town?” To which I would shrug my shoulders. There had to be, I thought.

I remember pulling into town one evening and driving down main street, looking for the radio station. Hoping.

In 1980, Breckenridge, with no traffic light and The Gold Pan Steak House, the oldest operating bar west of the Mississippi, still retained much of the charm of an old gold mining town.

When I saw the radio station, I gave a fist pump, parked, stepped into the building and met the owner. He listened to my story, took my resume, and had me make an air check tape. The next day I came back and he told me I had the job.

My life changed when he told me I had a job. To this day, I'm not sure why or how I got that job, but I was on cloud nine: living in the mountains and being self-reliant (on \$50 a week salary), all while playing tunes at a radio station.

My car accident and month-long coma seemed far removed, even though they were only two and a half years in the past. This was one of those moments when it seemed as though my TBI had never happened.

Then, a few days after I started, while doing the midmorning shift, my boss came storming into the studio. I had just finished reading the hourly news and was sitting back, thinking, "Hmmm, that didn't go so well," when he said to me, "You're going to have to talk as little as possible." I was a disc jockey banned from doing my job. Well, I thought, he could have fired me.

Instead, he dumped a pail of ice cold water on me. I did the only thing I could do: I minimized my talking and buckled down, realizing I needed every waking moment to practice and learn. I became my own speech therapist.

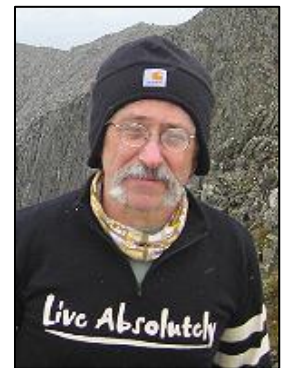
I borrowed a tape recorder so I could listen to myself read newscasts off the AP wire. I brought the news home and stood before the bathroom mirror as I read so I could concentrate on the movement of my lips. I wanted to be as relaxed and confident as possible (there's that ugly TBI tension again).

I improved enough to have the "talking ban" lifted, and not only was I allowed talk, I was made Music Director and given a raise to \$100 a week. I was there for a year and a half, and the ugly start to my job was long forgotten by the time I left. When I was moving away, I asked my boss why he didn't fire me and he said, "I never saw anybody work so hard."

Those words gratified me and told me the hard work was worth it: someone had noticed and rewarded me. And that's the story of the disc jockey who couldn't speak.

Meet Jeff Sebell

Jeff 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. His book "[Learning to Live with Yourself after Brain Injury](#)," was released in August of 2014 by Lash Publishing. Jeff is a regular monthly contributor to TBI HOPE Magazine.



It's Time to **SHARE HOPE**

Let's have some fun! Hope shared is Hope doubled. It's time to share some Hope.

Sharing Hope is 1-2-3 easy.

Just print your copy of our cartoon mascot Hope, and take a picture. You can email us your best shot or even post it directly to our Facebook page. Get daring, get a bit crazy... and you never know. Though this is not a contest, some fun, excitement and surprises might just happen!

Let's Get Started

- 1. Print Your Hope Character and Cut Along the Dotted Lines**
- 2. Have Your Picture Taken With a "Little Hope!"**
- 3. Email Your Picture to hope@tbihopeandinspiration.com**



Not into pictures? No worries. Print out your own Hope and bring her with you. Put her on the dashboard of your car, in your pocket on your dresser and more.

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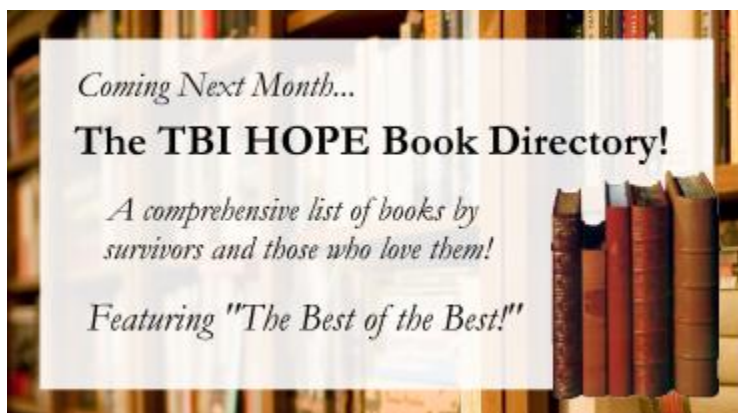
TBI HOPE Back Page



One of our core goals here at TBI HOPE Magazine has been that of helping to end the isolation that so many who are affected by TBI live with. After traumatic brain injury becomes part of the “new normal,” lives get smaller. Sometimes life gets complicated by other complications like PTSD, and a wide range of other challenges that survivors, and those who love them, face every day.

Monthly, we receive emails from around the world – offering sincere and heartfelt thanks for our publication. It’s humbling and validating at the same time. Having the ability to share in the experiences of others – all from the comfort of home – has been helpful to so many.

Last month we announced the formation of our **TBI Book Directory**. This is an online platform that TBI Book Authors can use to put information about their respective titles in front the people who are most likely to buy their books.



We have happily extended the deadline for new title submissions. If you are an author of a book that helps those within the concussion community, or have read a book that has personally helped you, we’d love to hear from you. Send us an email to info@tbihopeandinspiration.com with a link to the title on Amazon. All books deemed to be helpful will be included in this exciting new book directory.

Peace to all affected by TBI,

David