

JANUARY 2016

# TBI HOPE & INSPIRATION

Magazine

WHAT LIES  
WITHIN

THE JOYS  
OF PARENTING

BUILDING A LEGACY

*After TBI*

Shattering the  
ONE YEAR MYTH!



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TBI Hope &  
Inspiration  
MAGAZINE

*Serving All Impacted by  
Traumatic Brain Injury*

**January 2016**

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**Publisher**

David A. Grant

**Editor**

Sarah Grant

**Contributing Writers**

Brian Maram

Craig Phillips

Rosemary Rawlins

Melissa Robison

Jeff Sebell

Jennifer White

David A. Grant

**Resident Cartoonist**

Patrick Brigham

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# Welcome

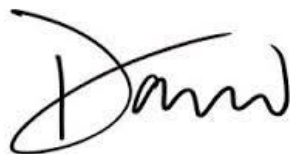
Welcome to the January Issue of TBI Hope and Inspiration Magazine. With a new year comes the promise of new and exciting discoveries in the world of traumatic brain injury.

Called by many a *Silent Epidemic*, talk about traumatic brain injury is ever-so-slowly becoming part of a new worldwide narrative. Last month's release of the movie *Concussion*, starring Hollywood heavyweight Will Smith again drew the public eye – and the mainstream media's attention. Slowly fading are the days where TBI is an unspoken reality for millions.

Again this month, we are pleased to offer you a publication packed full of survivor stories. Many readers have reached out over the last year to let us know that they have seen reflections of their own lives in the stories published here.

If you have felt alone in your journey, it is our heartfelt hope that you find the end of isolation in the stories shared in our publication. No one wants to walk through tough times alone.

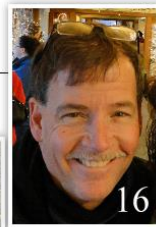
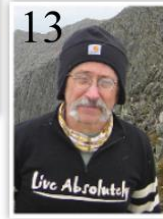
May this new year bring blessings and acceptance to you and those you love,



David A. Grant  
*Publisher*

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# What Lies Within

By Rosemary Rawlins

The brain controls everything, so when a brain is injured, it feels as if everything's out of control, and there's nothing we humans love more than being in control.

I don't know what it's like to want to say one word and have another word come out of my mouth, or to try to walk, only to find my feet all tripped up, but I've witnessed the man I love most struggling to perform simple tasks, and I've felt out of control myself because I could not help him.



In the early days of caring for Hugh after his severe TBI, I'd feel a bit annoyed when people would say things like, "Take it one day at a time." I'd sometimes whisper in my mind, "How about YOU take it one day at a time, I'll go back to my old life, thank you!" Not nice thoughts, I know, but true. I wanted control. I wanted a problem I could fix.

Many years have gone by now, and I've learned a good deal about resilience. In a resilience study, Dr. Emilie Godwin reports that resilient individuals and families know how to "normalize crisis." The phrase sounds like an oxymoron to me. Normal and crisis don't belong together, like the words "awfully good" or "painfully lucky." But when I realized what she meant by this, it all made sense. Normalizing crisis simply means that people see their problems as something manageable, something they can handle. When we don't normalize crisis, we remain in crisis mode (one definition of crisis is "dangerous or worrying time") and we're stuck in a frame of mind that keeps us from moving forward. In short, we see our problems as hopeless.

Over the course of my entire experience as a caregiver I've learned this vital lesson: All of our problems have solutions. They are among us and within us.

We find solutions to our problems and even our crisis-like problems when we reach out to others, when we accept help, when we listen and follow sound advice. These are the solutions we find among us. When some problems prove too difficult to overcome, when they feel insurmountable and there seems to be no help available at all, the solution lies within us. We dig deep to find the fortitude, acceptance, and grace to move forward day by day until we eventually emerge from the fog as we draw strength from our personal faith and our human need to seek meaning from adversity.

Sometimes, the only answers to our problems lie within us. These answers may be hard to find, but they are worth seeking because they bring us peace. The first step is knowing they are there, inside us, waiting to be found.

*Reprinted with permission from BrainLine.org*

### ***More about Rosemary***

*Rosemary Rawlins is the author of Learning by Accident, a Caregiver's True Story of Fear, Family and Hope, the Editor of BrainLine.org blogs, and a nationally known keynote speaker.*

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# No was Never an Option

By Brian Maram

The year 2011 started full of promise for me. Out of the blue and with no warning, a week into the New Year, I was struck down by a near fatal hemorrhage in the pons area of my brainstem. Surviving such a deadly stroke came with a very high price tag. I was given a 1 – 5% chance of survival.

My family were informed that if I survived the first forty-eight hours, I would need to come to terms with the fact that I would never walk again. The thought of being wheelchair bound for the balance on my now unnatural life, scared the living daylight out of me. With the odds stacked against me, I was determined to prove them all wrong.

After having spent some time in ICU, I was transferred to a semiprivate ward, where with the aid of a speech therapist I was taught to speak coherently again. Still numb, disorientated and overwhelmed by what had just happened to me, I was transferred to a rehabilitation facility where I would have to spend the next two months.

On admittance to the rehabilitation centre, I was examined by a doctor and placed onto an untold amount of medication. For someone who had never taken so much as a pain killer before, I was suddenly on more medication than I care to think about, not to mention all the serious side effects that all these medications were causing me.

Accepting the reality of my future as a stroke survivor was the hardest thing I have ever had to contend with. This meant accepting that my life would never again be the same as it used to be. Disabled and filled with uncertainty, I was determined to learn to walk again. Against all the odds, I embarked on an intensive rehabilitation program. There was no stopping me now and I would spend every possible moment in the rehab facilities gym; working on those flaccid muscles of mine.

Six weeks after entering rehab, I was able to walk short distances with the aid of a four-prong crutch. One step at a time and with pure determination and perseverance, I eventually progressed to a single-prong crutch. Once discharged, I continued my intensive program as an outpatient at a local neuro-physiotherapist.

Soon after returning home, my marriage of fourteen years crumbled and fell apart when my wife took our two children and moved out. At the lowest point in my life, my family and friends abandoned me. With nowhere and no one to turn to, I was left desolate, without a support system. I was suddenly forced to face the daily challenges that the stroke threw at me on my own.

My stroke ultimately revealed the true colors of those around me. Through all the trials and tribulations, I have grown into a wiser, stronger and better person. I came to learn who and what is important in my life. Where ever possible I try to motivate and inspire other stroke survivors and their families.

Each year I have entered a fun walk, which is held by a popular local radio station, on the roads of Johannesburg and meanders through the scenic suburbs. At first I would walk as far as I could and use my wheelchair when I got tired. Last year I completed the full five kilometer walk without the use of a wheelchair or crutch. This was a huge achievement for me, especially after being told that I would never walk again.



Not once did I ever doubt myself that I would never be able to walk again. With the right attitude, I kept pushing on. A very large contributor to my success were the hours I spent in a Hyperbaric Oxygen Chamber (HBOT). I purchased and imported a portable chamber that I could use at home. Daily use with the recommended breaks saw enormous changes. Slowly sections of my brain and body appeared to wake up. After a while I was able to read more than a page of a book without getting exhausted. Combined with my intensive physiotherapy, the high tone started to ease off a little, allowing me to regain some gross movements back into my motionless limbs.

Five years later and after thousands of hours in the gym, I am able to get around, independent of a wheelchair or crutch. Although my balance is still severely affected, I

do take things slow and those around me have learnt that when we walk, we get to do a high definition walking as we appreciate more of the scenery around us.

Life has been an uphill battle, but through it all I have learnt so much. This world is full of people with ugly characters, but thankfully they are the minority. They are outnumbered by those with good hearts and who are willing to be there for you. A positive attitude attracts positive people. Even with the limitations that I have, I have come to realise that the new people in my life are there for me and not for what I can offer them.

### ***More about Brian***

*Brian Maram is a Traumatic Brain Injury / stroke survivor from Johannesburg, South Africa. Brian takes pleasure in motivating other stroke and TBI survivors. He is in the process of writing a book about his journey and a first-time contributor to TBI Hope and Inspiration Magazine.*



## Compensatory Corner What Works for you?

*We continue to offer strategies that help those impacted by Traumatic Brain Injury. Compensatory Corner is your place – by survivors, for survivors.*

“It’s taken me a long time, but I have learned to slow my pace down. I tried for years to keep up the pace I had before my brain injury. I was left exhausted, and frustrated at what I could no longer do. Slowing my pace has made my life easier.”  
~G.D.

“When my family takes me out, these days, we visit places like restaurants and cinemas early in the week when the crowds are less. It helps a lot.” ~K.F.

“Bright lights have been a trigger for headaches for me. Regular sunglasses help a bit, but I’ve found that the really dark ones are even better. Plus I look cool!” ~S.P



# Try a Little Empathy

By Jennifer White

One of the biggest complaints I have read in the Traumatic Brain injury (TBI) group that I am a part of is that many TBI survivor's family and friends do not get why we can't just move on from the worst day of our lives and get over the TBI. I can only speak for myself and do not pretend to understand everyone's situation, but here I will try to explain to you why I can't just get over it!



For the past 15 years since my acquired brain injury (ABI) I have done what everyone has told me to do, including trained psychologists. I have just tried to live through it and focus on leading a normal life. I will say that most of the people who tell us to “just get over it” have never had a brain injury. After my ABI I went through an exhaustive Master Gardening Program and finished it. I taught myself how to quilt and have made over 20 quilts, when prior to the ABI I had never used a sewing machine. I have written numerous magazine and newspaper articles pro bono since I am on long-term disability and cannot make any money or jeopardize my disability payments which help pay for my husband and my cost of living. I tried running, but then broke my femur so I had to stop. And I have searched endlessly for articles that have been written on childless marriage since the ABI essentially ended my hopes of motherhood. Now I am working on a memoir so that I can leave my family with some remembrance of my past, since I will be childless.

Simply, it is difficult to just get over the brain injury that almost ended my life. I was 37 years old and the Vice President of a nonprofit marketing firm in Atlanta, Georgia. My future looked positive and my hopes for a successful future seemed inevitable. I had a massive brain stem stroke, died in the ambulance en-route to a hospital, spent over 3 weeks in ICU and 6 months in rehabilitation. I could not walk and learned to use a

wheelchair to move me forward. I lost 40 pounds on an already slim frame and had to relearn how to write my ABC's. I had 3 surgeries, a permanent shunt inserted in my head, and a feeding tube in my stomach. I have a supportive family, which many TBI survivors do not have. A neurologist that I saw prior to moving to St. Louis, MO from Atlanta, GA diagnosed me with PTSD and prescribed an antidepressant to sand down the horrible memories that I was left with and still encounter. Now I watch my former colleagues win awards and speak to groups of fundraising professionals. Each day I send my husband, a doctor of education, off to a job where he is excelling - while I search the internet and my cookbooks for the perfect meal.

I get it. Families have histories with their children who might create questions about medical recovery. But, for many more people, TBI's are devastating and memories are long lasting! Perhaps a lifetime. So I recommend that families of TBI survivors settle in and accept your new reality of living through a TBI with your family members. It should be reciprocal. Survivors of a brain injury should give it all they have to get better and families should offer empathy to their family members with a TBI. No one deserves to have this happen. To me it has been traumatic, with many moments embarrassing and sad, very sad.

### ***More about Jennifer***

*Jennifer White is a traumatic 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.*

## **Living With Hope**

By Patrick Brigham



# Creating a Healthy Relationship with Hope

By Craig Phillips



Through my process and experience I discovered something that I would like to share with you. What I discovered forever changed the way in which I looked at hope. What I discovered was that for many years I had a dysfunctional relationship with hope. I expected hope to do for me what I needed to do for myself. Let me explain. For many years I found myself buying into the notion that if I

just hoped enough, what I hoped for would manifest itself. Sort of like that magical thinking manifested in fairy tales.

Consequently, when hope did not manifest itself, I became discouraged and despondent. You see I had bought into the notion that hope had let me down, because hope did not play by the rules that I had made for hope. In my cynicism, I found myself scoffing at the idea of hope. My cynicism surrounding the idea of hope continued until I reached a spiritual bottom and experienced a spiritual awakening. My spiritual awakening revealed to me that hope had always been present.

My spiritual awakening revealed that hope is neither passive nor ambiguous, but active and engaging. With my spiritual awakening, hope opened my eyes and revealed that I could no longer sit on the “side lines” waiting, but that I needed to get in and stay in the “game.” The “game” being the process of creating hope in my life. What’s more, with my spiritual awakening hope helped me to realize that I needed to be an active participant in my life by taking an active role in the process of hope.

My spiritual awakening showed me that I needed to learn from each of my circumstances — past and present — to engage with hope. Hope also helped me to realize that as I made the effort to learn from each and every circumstance, that I would be given opportunities. Hope then revealed to me that by taking advantage of these opportunities I would, in effect, be contributing to and taking an active role in the creation hope. With my spiritual awakening I began to realize that I no longer had to wait for hope.

### ***More about Craig***

*Craig J. Phillips sustained an open skull fracture and a severe traumatic brain injury in 1967 when he was only ten years old. Today, Craig possesses an undergraduate degree in theology and physical education / recreation as well as a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. He continues to motivate and inspire others.*

# Contributors Wanted!



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# Building a Legacy after TBI

By Jeff Sebell

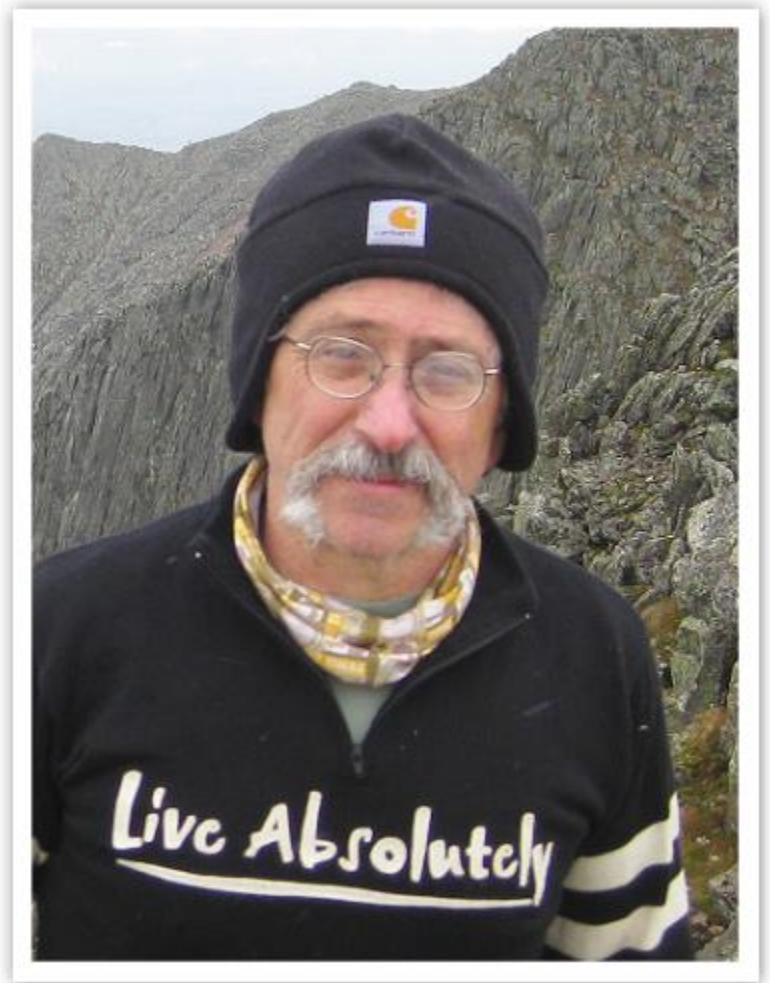
When I think of how I conduct my life, especially since I have experienced a TBI and, frankly, am not always clear on what the best thing to do is, I try not to focus on myself or my own needs. Rather, I tell myself that what I do is not really for myself: I am not living my life for my own gratification.

Instead, I have two purposes in mind: I want to live my life in a way that positively affects the lives of others and I am mindful of the legacy I am creating for my children and for their children. My goal is to pass down a positive legacy, a legacy that will make them proud and, hopefully, give them a foundation for the way they live their lives.

## What do I mean by legacy?

Many people think of their legacy in terms of material goods, bestowed to their descendants, however, that is not what I am talking about. The legacy I want to grow, nurture, teach, and pass on to my children is "how I am remembered". This legacy is what I stand for, the mark I leave on the world and what others think when they hear my name. Legacy is the stuff that, although it is without a monetary value, is priceless in the way it can impact and guide lives.

While we are in the early stages, or prime, of our lives, we don't always think in terms of the legacy we will leave. When we are younger we feel as though we have a long life ahead of us and we are focused on living. This is as it should be.



Neither do we think about it when we are wrapped up in the TBI wars; it takes all our time and energy to focus on fighting to get better and live our lives. In fact, we might even think of the idea of legacy as pointless, simply because we sometimes feel as though we have nothing positive to give; no lessons to teach.

However, my thought is that the richness of our lives, which we may not even be able to see, gives us a new perspective which when passed on to others, through our actions, can be powerful. With time, we can see not only the immediate future, but we have a better view of the distant future, and are better equipped to think in terms of legacy.

Often the reality is that it's only after we have had some kind of episode in our life and the inevitability of death becomes more real to us, that we stop thinking of life only in terms of ourselves. We get a more rounded view of the world, and only then do we start thinking in terms of legacy. The idea of "legacy" I refer to involves the following three questions:

- How can I pass down lessons of life to my descendants?
- How do I do teach others things I think are important?
- How can I live my life so that my lessons are communicated in a meaningful way?



## **Giving Our Lives Meaning**

For one thing, thinking in terms of legacy, or what we are able to teach others and what our life can represent, puts a more proactive and constructive spin on our own lives, especially when we are bogged down or feel hopeless after TBI. Thinking in terms of legacy can help drive us when hope is hard to come by and the future looks uncertain. It can give us a reason and purpose for living.

The reason is, if we are thinking in terms of legacy, by definition, we are saying there is a future we are working towards: a future beyond our own lives. It means we haven't

given up, and even though we may not know what the future holds, we know it is there and this is our opportunity to have an impact and make it positive.

By not always focusing on ourselves, we can instead put the emphasis on how what we do impacts others. Thinking in terms of legacy can get us out of the very self-centered world we can sometimes, understandably, often fall into.

We are all trying to build a life for ourselves after brain injury, and are faced with numerous obstacles and difficulties as we do that. One way of approaching life after TBI, is to make these obstacles and difficulties add to what we can teach, and give our actions and lives meaning.

### ***About Jeff Sebell***

*A long-time survivor, Jeff is the author of “Learning to Live with Yourself after Brain Injury.” You can read more about Jeff and his journey on his blog at [www.TBISurvivor.com](http://www.TBISurvivor.com)*



# Shattering the One Year Myth

By David A. Grant

As the years continue to pass by, I have gained one thing that I was not capable of having early on after my injury - I have gained a perspective that comes with time.



Like so many others who share my fate, I get a bit reflective every year around TBI anniversary time. It's a bit of a "take stock" time for me as I look at where I am today – compared to where I was. I now allow myself to look to the future with hope, a realistic hope that I will continue to heal.

But there was a day that someone stole my hope and left me completely and utterly devastated.

I'm a big fan of taking personal inventory. A year after I was struck down by a teenaged driver while I was cycling, I decided it was time. I had heard a lot about neuropsychological testing. It was time to see how many of my marbles remained. I wanted a clearer understanding of my deficits so that I could have a starting point, a place to begin the next chapter of my healing.

After hours of grueling testing that took place over the course of several days, I sat down with my wife, Sarah, and the neuropsychologist. As we reviewed the results of my test, it was clear that my assessment was not quite what we expected.

"David, you are in the bottom five percentile in the areas of complex problem solving and verbal recall," he said as dryly as if giving driving directions to a stranger. This fact alone was shocking enough. But there were more sucker punches to my soul awaiting.



“You are permanently disabled, and any gains you have from here on out will be small at best,” he shared, as my wife and I sat there trying to comprehend the gravity of his diagnosis.

Still keeping a stiff upper lip, I asked about scheduling a neuropsychological test a year out, suggesting that we could use this first test as a benchmark to measure future gains.



“There is no need, your gains will be insignificant at best,” came the authoritative answer. As our visit wound down, there was a final hope-stealing shot across my bow.

“Most brain injury survivors see an IQ drop after their injuries. It’s clear that you were a very intelligent man before your accident. Even losing some of your IQ, you should be able to get by relatively okay now,” he

propounded, as we were getting ready to leave his office.

Many years have passed since that meeting. Swimming in a sea with other survivors over the years, I have heard this same misinformation shared over and over again – after a year, you are as good as you are going to get. Please check your HOPE at the door. No need for optimism. Go directly to TBI jail, do not pass Go, do not collect \$200. Hunker down and just grin and bear it. You are lucky enough just to be alive.

Balderdash!

As time continues to pass, I now recognize this kind of advice for what it is: old-school science. The old-school TBI science was simple and easy. After a year, any gains would be small. Thankfully, a new school of science is now dominating the national brain injury narrative. New school science embraces neuroplasticity and challenges the archaic belief that recovery has an end game. New school science embraces the hidden power of the brain and human body. New school science says that as long as you have a heartbeat, you will continue to heal. And best of all, new school science is a science of hope - hope that the way things are today are not how they will be next year, or in five years.

One of the first to push old school science to the side was Dr. Jill Bolte-Taylor. In her book, *My Stroke of Insight*, she speaks of measurable gains through the eight-year mark. Last year at this time, I attended a conference in Maine. The keynote presenter, who is also a doctor and the parent of a survivor, took to the podium in front of her peers and continued this new narrative.

“As a medical community, we got it wrong when we told you that recovery was over in a year. We got it wrong,” she shared. You could have heard a pin drop.

I hold no ill will, anger or resentment to the well-intentioned doctor who temporarily stole my hope. He was only preaching what his old-school science had taught him. As the tide continues to turn, more and more members of the medical and professional community are letting go of the one-year myth. The Dark Ages of brain injury recovery are slowly fading into the past. I need only look at my own life to see some of the long-term gains.

At two years out, my vertigo almost ceased. At three years out, I was again able to work beyond 2:00 PM every day. At four years out, I was able to read books again – something I thought I had lost forever. The list goes on.

Today I have real hope – hope that I will continue my path toward recovery. Not “whistling in the dark” hope, this is true hope based on my life experience as well as emerging science. I don’t kid myself for a moment because I know I’ll never be who I was.

But today, where I am going is so much more important than where I was.

### ***Meet David A. Grant***

*David A. Grant is a traumatic brain injury survivor from Salem, NH. In addition to publishing TBI Hope and Inspiration Magazine, David is also a staff writer for Brainline.org as well as a contributing writer to Chicken Soup for the Soul, Surviving Traumatic Brain Injuries. David has also written two books since sustaining his brain injury in 2010. For more information about David, please visit [www.metamorphosisbook.com](http://www.metamorphosisbook.com).*

# The Joys of Parenting

By Melissa Robison



The joys of parenting a seventeen year old daughter! I thought my struggles were everyday things, such as making it out of bed without puking, or remembering where I was. This week my daughter Kat has taken that all to a new level by acting out and disrespecting me. Just when I thought she finally understood what added stress does to someone with TBI... she whammies me.

My body reacts by tensing up in a ball, and the voice in my head just begs, "Please no, don't do it!" Yes, she has been told a stressed out mommy means more time in a wheelchair for me, but I think most teenagers don't think too much about others. No matter what bumps she hits, I still have to be on top of my game enough to react and parent her. Kat is a mastermind at pushing my buttons, and I just want to wave a big white flag above my head and beg for mercy.

I admittedly just can't take the stress, as it turns in to overwhelming self-blame. The stress mounts itself and manifests as increased short term memory loss and an increase in my balance problems. It simply means a boat load of really bad days, of me barely leaving the house, and when I do I have constant feelings of being lost which causes anxiety attacks that just flank each other. Also, bad balance keeps me needing the assistance of a wheelchair or walker, so I tend to greatly restrict where I go, and frankly I'm far away from accepting my thirty-eight year old once extremely active self in this condition. Like I said, for me it is mounting.

My daughter Kat clearly still needs me to be on top of my game, and is dealing with losing her father to suicide two and a half years ago, so the last thing I want to happen is for Kat to feel unloved or not important. The struggle of finding some balance between trying to be that 100% kickass parent and giving myself enough space to heal is still a mystery.

Taking it day-by-day does sound great but doesn't work for me, because as a Virgo and a TBI survivor, worrying is just what we do. In need of a practical solution, I sacrifice myself for Kat's needs.

A no frills, downright real description of what it looks like for me to track down Kat, a six foot tall super model pretty blond girl on the fourth of July follows. After Kat is an hour late I take to foot on the beach she was dropped off at four hours prior. Trying to stay on the walking path because I have trouble on uneven ground, my heart racing, and fists clenched, I walk as fast as I can, amazed at myself for not having any walking assistance, but also terrified at the police helicopters lighting up and circling above this downtown Long Beach, California area.

I'm telling myself not to look up as my walking quickly starts veering off to the side and off the concrete path. The drug addicts and drunks are all that are left out after curfew and very aware of my safety, I pretend not to notice a gentleman, probably a good two hundred pounds more than me, breaking into a car to my left. As fights occur on the other side of me, I look down at myself, and feel grateful I was wearing an oversized sweatshirt and long shorts, which is nothing that will attract unwanted attention from anyone.



I try to look straight ahead so I do not make eye contact with anyone, and want so badly to watch behind me, but I know what quickly turning my head without holding on to something will do- cause me to fall hard on the ground, looking more vulnerable. Horrified, I make it about a mile when I get a call saying Kat is now at the pick-up location, some two hours late, but gratefully in one piece. Now I'm a section of the beach where there are about a hundred steep stairs to walk up to get to the road and I am cursing my daughter's name left and right. Awaiting double hip surgery, I have grand plans to inform my careless teenage daughter about the physical pain she has caused me.

After getting Kat home safely it takes me a couple days to cool down. I get it, this is just teenager stuff, but I also feel like I just don't have the stamina to deal with it. Do I try to live by the, "if you love something let it go" theory? Or clamp down harder on rules and drive myself insane when Kat breaks them? I hate that I have to take my health into

consideration when doing my God given duty of raising this soon to be an adult. The better I feel, the more quality mother daughter time I'll have with Kat, and I just want to maximize those days so damn bad.

Now knowing the TBI diagnosis, I find myself constantly reflecting. Probably like a huge majority of people I share this diagnosis with, it often leads me to wishing I had my old life back for a thousand reasons.

What else can I do, or we do, but just try to remember to take a breath and sit with these feelings? Though I know my daughter is stronger because of my struggles, and will most likely be hugely successful someday because of these hurdles we face, I still have to make it a strong priority to have this thought enter my mind before the mounting self-destructive thoughts regain control.

Ahh, the joys of parenting!

### ***More About Melissa***

*After five days in a “hot box” training with the 101st Airborne Division, Melissa was sent to Air Assault School. Fatigued from not having proper sleep or nutrition, she passed out unconscious and fell flat on her back from two to three stories up in the air. Nineteen years later the VA gave Melissa the TBI diagnosis. A single Mom of one, she proudly shares that she has a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Master's Degree in Technology Management, and is a several time volunteer First Responder.*

## **Join our Facebook Family**

What do almost 17,000 people from 26 countries and five continents all have in common? They are all members of our vibrant Facebook family at [f/TBIHopeandInspiration](https://www.facebook.com/TBIHopeandInspiration)



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# The Back Page

## Introducing the Fourth Strike TBI Documentary Project

Over the last few years, the national narrative continues to broaden as it relates to Traumatic Brain Injury. The release last month of the movie *Concussion* starring Hollywood superstar Will Smith is yet another step forward as the mainstream media spotlight continues to shine on concussion and TBI.

A few years ago, I had a dream – a dream of launching a monthly publication to serve those impacted by traumatic brain injury. As we close in on the one-year anniversary of our publication, that dream has proven to be a successful reality. Every month, we feature stories about, for, and often written by, brain injury survivors. Not a month goes by that I don't see an email from a reader offering a thank you. Most use a variant of the same theme: "I no longer feel as alone as I did before."

Our publication is a bit home-grown, raw and unfiltered as many of our contributors are. We now serve twenty-six countries and have readers from every continent except Antarctica. Every issue is read by thousands of survivors.

The gears started turning again as I thought, "*What's next?* How can we best serve those who have lives impacted by TBI?"

Starting this spring, we will begin filming a full-length TBI documentary – Fourth Strike. Like our publication has proven to be, our goal is to offer an insider's perspective regarding the effects that a brain injury has on not only the survivor, but on the family as well.

Do I have any film production experience? Not a bit. Do I have a dream, passion and hope? Yeah, you could call it that. A bit of fear? Unquestionably. But the take-away is this – if even a single survivor or family member comes away with a new understanding and the end of TBI isolation, then it's a worthwhile project.

I invite you to visit [www.FourthStrike.org](http://www.FourthStrike.org) and sign up for email updates. From news of this summer's trailer release to production updates and more, you'll never miss a beat. And for those who continue to benefit by our monthly publication, thank you! You are the reason that we do what we do.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dann'.