

JUNE 2015

TBI HOPE & INSPIRATION

Magazine

Miracles Happen

Lessons Learned from an ABI

The Beauty of Self Forgiveness

Laugh

When You Can

Grieve

When You Must



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TBI Hope &
Inspiration
MAGAZINE

*Serving All Impacted by
Traumatic Brain Injury*

June 2015

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Welcome

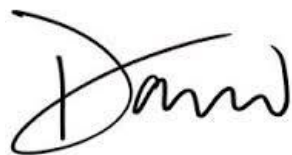
Summer is here in full swing for those of us living north of the equator. For many of us, it's time for summer cookouts, time with family, perhaps time spent at the beach or a local lake.

While these rights of summer passage come easy to many, living with a brain injury brings with it a special set of challenges. Many living with a TBI shun crowds, overstimulation can make amusement parks an off-limit zone and the thought of fireworks exploding overhead can make some of us impacted by PTSD want to stay close to home.

The good news is that there are lots of summer activities that can enrich your day-to-day life. If you are located near a forest or woodland, short and easy day hikes in the quiet solitude of nature can help to recharge us. Even putting a couple of sandwiches in a bag and grabbing a blanket can turn a trip to a park into an impromptu picnic.

While much of what we could do is now behind us, a rewarding and meaningful life can still be lived. Today, I focus on what I can do, rather than what I can no longer do.

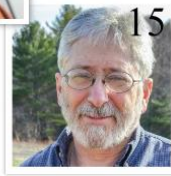
Looking at the world through this new set of eyes, I see new possibilities – and not just limitations. It's worked for me... and my hope is that it will work for you!



David A. Grant
Publisher

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Getting Lost: Life with Traumatic Brain Injury

By Amy Zellmer



Yesterday I got lost driving home from my local Target store. This is the same Target that I frequently visit, driving the same route that I always take. Yet, all of a sudden nothing looked familiar and panic set in. Where the heck was I? How did I get here?

Just over a year ago, I sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Little did I know at the time how much of an impact this would have on my life. Most people don't know that TBI is one of the leading causes of death in the United States and that every 13 seconds someone in the US sustains a traumatic brain injury.

Getting lost and/or confused is my "new normal". Fortunately, I no longer burst into tears and crawl into bed for three days after an instance such as this. I have learned to understand my new limits and that this kind of thing is going to disrupt my daily life occasionally. It's just the way that it is – at least for now.

The good news is that I have an iPhone. When I do get lost, I pull up my map and find my way home. Usually once I get back on track, I realize where I am and can navigate my way without further incident.

What's really frustrating is that if you knew me before, you would understand that my "internal GPS" was amazing. I had such an incredible sense of direction (thanks, dad, for those genes). I always was able to find my way around, even in an unfamiliar city. My friends looked to me to navigate new places when we were out adventuring. Now, I get lost right in my own backyard!

Recently I went to Washington, DC and knew that I would have to travel on the Metro, DC's subway system. My friend helped me do my research so I would know exactly which line to take, and where to get on and off for my stops. I even

downloaded an app that gave me step-by-step instructions along the way. I understood that I needed to purchase a SmartTrip pass, yet when the time came to use the automated machine, I was baffled. There was a line of people behind me waiting to use the machine, so I pretended to do something and then got out of line. I waited until the line went down, and then asked a young woman for assistance.

Once I got to my first line change, I was completely confused as to which side of the platform I needed to be on. I could read the sign, but was unable to process whether I needed to be on this side of the tracks or the other. I eventually asked someone for assistance and got on the train going the correct direction. What was most frustrating to me, was the fact that I have navigated Chicago many times in the past, as well as NYC subway without any problems. But of course, that was before I had a TBI.

My “old life” is still so vivid in my memory, while my “new life” is completely different. I am easily frustrated by things that I used to be able to do effortlessly. I am slowly learning to embrace the “new normal” and understand my limits, but it’s still hard. Especially when it comes to cognitive or memory issues that I know would have never stood in my way two years ago.

“My “old life” is still so vivid in my memory, while my “new life” is completely different.”

I have also come to understand that all of this has happened to me for reasons beyond my control. I have been called by the Universe to be a messenger, to educate the masses about TBI. While it is a leading cause of death in the United States, hardly anyone understands how devastating a concussion can really be.

Meet Amy Zellmer

Amy Zellmer is a writer, photographer, coach, and TBI survivor. Located in Saint Paul, MN she is a regular contributor for the Huffington Post. She enjoys traveling the country with her Yorkie named Pixxie. She loves chocolate, Miss Me jeans, Starbucks, and everything glittery and sparkly.

Miracles Happen

By Jennifer White

I acknowledge that physicians are correct a lot when they diagnose people. They are right a lot.

However, the human spirit is unquantifiable and our desire to live is powerful. Does it trump a doctor's diagnosis? Sometimes I think so.

The power to depend on oneself for survival is strong. And, I think that there are those with a Traumatic Brain Injury whose desire to live is more powerful than the prognosis he/she is given.

As in any profession you have people who are sensitive and those who are blunt and see things in black and white.

This is an opinion article and my opinion is that doctors and perhaps other health care professionals have seen so much and experienced so much pain and death that they have rubbed a thick callus on their personalities - perhaps to sustain themselves through all of the grief. However, the very last thing that a person needs who has a TBI is a negative physician who doesn't understand the hope and strength of the human spirit.

I get it - there is no time for optimism when you are so busy! But your patients are more than numbers on a test you run. They are people with a questionable chance of living. This outcome affects thousands of people each year. My own surgeon gave me a 4% chance of living after having a brain stem hemorrhage, but I lived and have fought like hell to stay alive.





It was devastating news to my poor husband and my devastated family but they were extremely supportive, and I believe that helps people who are dealing with TBI. Family dynamics are too varied. When I was in rehab my mother did not want me to feel any pain so she rubbed my feet, played soothing music and did not force me to do anything. This was her way of dealing with my injury.

My husband, on the other hand, lovingly encouraged me to move. This proved to be the winning solution. These are some points that I think that people with a TBI and families of a loved one with TBI should consider:

1. Don't assume that your loved one with a TBI can't hear you. It might be prudent to watch what you say and the tone in which you say things when you are around someone with TBI. I heard most of what people said and the tone in which they said things. People with TBI are confused, scared and many times sensitive to light and sounds. When I was in rehab I remember my mother speaking really loud to me. I thought "I am not deaf. I have a TBI."

2. Don't assume your loved one with a TBI can't see you. Although my brain bleed caused double vision for me I could still see.

3. If you are a caregiver, encourage your loved one with a TBI to participate in any therapy that will help them get better. You may be tempted to let them rest, but it takes energy to live. Inactivity breeds inactivity. Conversely, activity breeds activity. Of course this is if the injured person is able to move. I remember in rehab I was so tired. All I wanted to do was sleep and rest. But, the best thing for me was to follow prescribed therapies in order to improve my chances of survival.

"I realized that I had to rely on other people to help me get through the TBI."

4. If you are an individual with a TBI, let go and let people help you. Prior to my TBI, I was a VP for a marketing company in Atlanta, Georgia. I managed a staff, traveled around the country pitching new marketing ideas and was a total control freak. I realized in order to live through this nightmare that I had to rely on other people to help me get through the TBI. I felt so needy, but I found out later that my family was glad to help and happy that I let them.

5. If you are a caregiver of a TBI survivor try not to show your anger or frustration. I remember my mother throwing my wheelchair in the back of her car because she was tired, frustrated and worried. I knew why and it made me sad that my injury was causing my family so much pain. Walk away and take a deep breath. Never let your loved one with a TBI see your worry, frustration or anger. They know more than you think.

6. I understand the amount of pressure physicians and surgeons in particular are under. I get it. My brother is a surgeon and my sister is a nurse practitioner. But when you are treating TBI patients, you are not only dealing with TBI patients you are dealing with the family of TBI patients also. In many cases hope is the patient and family's lifeline. Without hope they have nothing. So please, if you are a health care provider for patients with a TBI put yourself in his/her position and the position of the family. Don't take their hope away. Keep your negative opinions to yourself. Even if you think the stats show it is impossible. Miracles happen every day!

7. Try to legitimize a TBI's patient's claims. Unless the person has a history of not being honest, believe him/her when they say something about their injury. They know how they feel better than you. Trust is very important to have in general and that goes for a TBI patient too.

TBI is very difficult for the injured and families. Like any illness or injury it is sad and painful. However the challenges that TBI patients and families face can be mitigated through love patience and sometimes even laughter!

About the Author

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.

Laugh When you Can, Grieve When you Must

By Donna Hafner

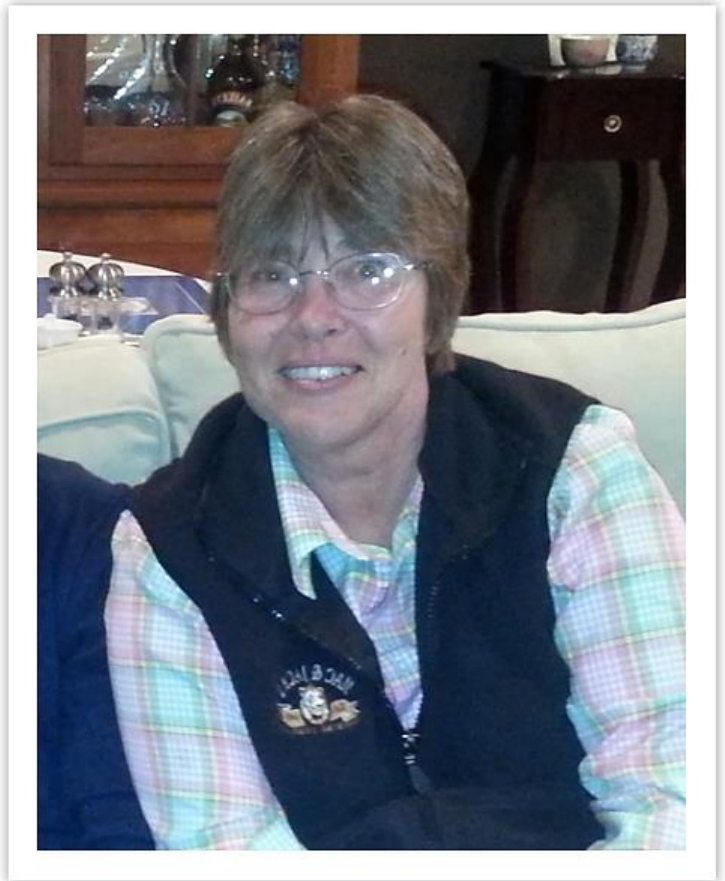
I'm in year three since my own brain injury. I have enough distance now from that fateful night to know that you can't go through this kind of gigantic, life-changing event without some continuing repercussions. That goes for both the survivor as well as those who love or care for us.

In the early months after my strokes, I was just brain numb. Though I could follow simple conversations and directions, and had re-learned the most basic activities of daily living (ADL) skills, I didn't yet have the cognitive ability to fully grasp the magnitude of my injuries or deficits.

I knew that I had a massive heart attack and a series of strokes, but I had no memory of these things thanks to my two week coma. I had no firsthand memory of the trauma that had occurred, nor did I have any idea of what my family and friends had endured while I was "sleeping."

So I often minimized my injury and exaggerated my skills when talking to everyone. I had no idea at all that I wouldn't be returning to the person that I used to be. My family may have had a clue, but I think that secretly all of us were expecting that I would ultimately "bounce back", as I always had. Heck, hadn't I already beat the House and lived against all odds?

My first year was spent in a cocoon of denial. I know now that it was a necessary part of my recovery process. It is the way that our brains protect us in stressful times. Recovery is an imperfect process that does not often happen in a linear fashion.



You make some headway, then go back a step or two, then lurch forward three steps and then, unexpectedly lose a step. Many of us refer to it as the brain injury dance. Recovery rarely goes in a straight line for long.

When it happens, we and our loved ones are exhilarated by our progress and worried sick at the setbacks. Seldom are we told in advance that this is normal. This can be a period of enormous frustration and can strain relationships and all concerned. It can even feel quite hopeless and disheartening at times.

The good news is that this is also the time that insight begins to occur. For me, it was in my second year that I was starting to get some perspective. I had some “time under my belt” in this new life now. I could begin to make sense of the ebbs and flows of my recovery. The reality of my deficits was undeniable.

My second year was just plain HARD. The grief was overwhelming. I didn’t want to tell anyone just how painful it was. I suffered a lot when I was home alone and felt that I didn’t want to burden my family and friends. They had already gone through so much already due to my medical catastrophes. It was a really tough time. As I later learned, this grief was normal and expected - I just didn’t know that at the time.

Had I been able to think more clearly, I might have reached out and gotten some professional support, but I didn’t. I just muddled through, cried and missed my old life and my previous skills and abilities. I had many fears about my future. Many of them I couldn’t even articulate fully, but they were there, lurking in the background. At times, I even considered suicide. It seemed like a viable option, but I knew that I didn’t want my family to suffer further because of me.

“I started learning how to live with a brain injury instead of fighting against my reality.”

I’ve since learned that contemplating suicide is common among people who are newly injured. It’s hard to see that a good future is even a possibility. It wasn’t until I found a local brain injury support group and heard other people talk about their experiences that this thought finally left my head. There were folks there who had more time under their belt who kept saying that it would be better. I didn’t really believe them at first. But slowly, I began to see that there were small improvements.

They gave me hints and suggestions and I started learning how to live with a brain injury instead of fighting against my reality. It wasn't easy but I slowly started finding that I laughed more about the ridiculous stuff that happens because of our injury. You have to admit, some of the stuff that we do is just absolutely funny. This doesn't mean that grief doesn't still show up. It does and that is normal. We've lost a lot.

I've found that when the sadness comes, it's good to acknowledge it, cry, have a small fit, be mad... and move on. I know that it isn't good for me to live in that sad space for long. It keeps me from fully living the life that I have now. I'm finally grateful that I did survive, but, it took a while to feel that way. If you are struggling with this too, don't give up yet. It gets better.

The words that I've repeated to myself over the last two years are, "Laugh when you can, grieve when you must." It's helped me along my journey. It reminds me that there will be tears and sadness at times, but laughter will return. I wish you all much laughter, fewer tears and peace.

More about Donna Hafner

Donna is a survivor in the truest sense of the word. Coming back from near death and living life as a brain injury survivor have validated why those closest to her know her by her nickname – Resilynt.

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Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- ACTION PLAN**
Keep the Heads Up Action Plan at all games and practices.

LEARN more AT:
www.cdc.gov/Concussion

Brain Trivia, Anyone?

A Few Interesting Neuro FAQ's



Q. How many brain cells (neurons) does the average human have?

A. 100 billion

Q. What is the longest living cell in your body?

A. Your brain cells can live up to an entire lifetime

Q. How much blood flows through the brain per minute?

A. 750-1000mL or 3 full soda cans

Q. How many thoughts does the average person have per day?

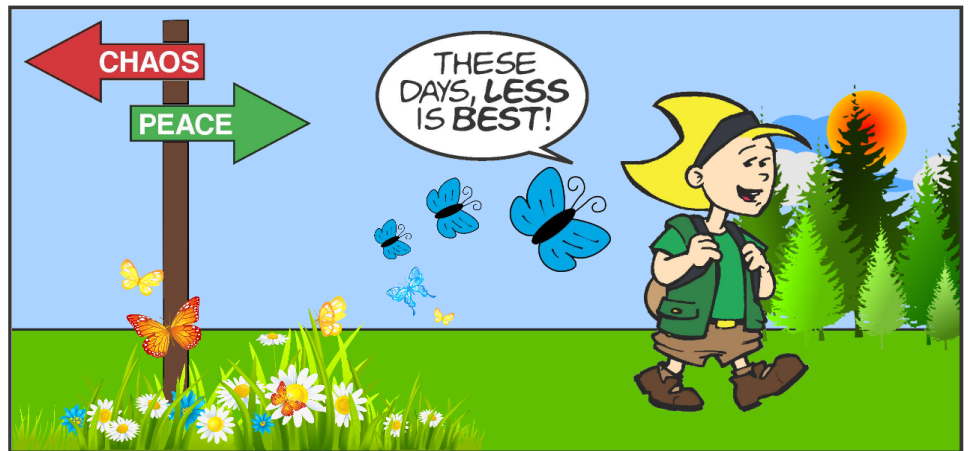
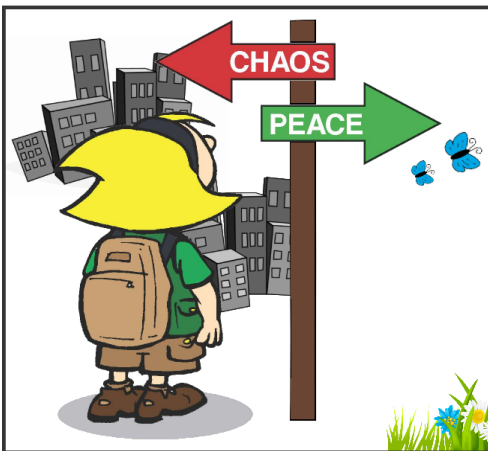
A. 70,000

Q. How much did Albert Einstein's brain weigh?

A. 2.71 lbs., significantly less than the average human brain, but he had many more glial cells than average

Living With Hope

By Patrick Brigham



Avoiding the New Neighbor

By John Byler

A big snow had fallen where I live in rural Massachusetts, and I headed for the quiet of nearby conservation land in the 11 degree cold. I walked to the end of our road and tramped across a field into a meadow, and from there to a little bridge across a frozen stream.

I stood on the bridge, aware that this was the first winter in many years that I had taken the time to appreciate the way the snow draped the branches and caught the bright December light. The quiet sharpened the new ringing in my ears but I felt at peace. When I headed home through the drifted snow I still felt at peace.

Then I turned the bend on our road and spotted our new neighbor shoveling snow in his driveway. For four months I'd been meaning to stop by to introduce myself and welcome him to the neighborhood, but I hadn't had a day when my brain felt good enough to do it. I obviously couldn't walk by him now without saying anything, so this simple thing had become complicated.

He didn't see me, so I quickly walked back around the bend to the corner where I stood in the cold and brooded, weighing my options. Decision-making with a brain injury is no longer an automatic process. If I pressed on, I'd have to introduce myself and apologize for my failure to welcome him. I'd have to talk.

I didn't want to talk. I never want to talk. I wasn't feeling especially friendly or, God knows, articulate. No, meeting him now would be way too complicated and fraught with embarrassment. When I stammered I'd feel compelled to say, "Oh, that? I have a brain injury." I've found myself in too many conversational corners where I have felt compelled to explain my brain injury and have seen the uncertain look on people's faces.



I see in their eyes or hear in their voices that they are trying to decide if I am mentally handicapped or even insane. Many times when the fact of my brain injury comes up, they start talking slower and simpler, as though to a child.

I didn't want to walk around the block and approach my house from the other direction because it would require a two-mile hike through heavy snow. That wasn't what I'd signed up for when I went out for a stroll. Plus, I didn't have my cell phone to call Lynne to explain why it was taking so long to get back. I decided to wait him out. And so there I stood.

When I stammered I'd feel compelled to say, "Oh, that? I have a brain injury."

More time passed. I put too much thought into how I should act when a car drove past. Standing around by the side of the road doing nothing in the intense cold looked weird. Thinking that it might be safe to approach the bend to listen for sounds of shoveling, I got closer and then closer, still out of my new neighbor's sight. I considered the possibility that he might simply be resting from shoveling, so I listened for other sounds of his presence.

Hearing nothing, I did something brave. I rounded the bend completely and walked past the foot of his driveway in full view. It was completely, blessedly shoveled from the road to his garage. I stood appreciating his work ethic, but mostly I appreciated his absence. I was emancipated! The knot in my stomach loosened, and I was free to walk the rest of the way home without having to interact with anybody!

I checked my watch. My indecision and my dread of social interaction were so overpowering that I had stood in the cold for an hour and a half. Yet most of the time, like the other TBI survivors you'll meet, I am lonely.

Meet John Byler

John survived a collision on Route 495 just outside of Boston in September of 2005. He placed his recovery in the hands of Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston. John knew he needed to write a book about the best of the strategies he learned. *"You Look Great!" -Strategies for Living Inside a Brain Injury* has resonated with survivors, caregivers and clinicians.

The Beauty of Self-Forgiveness

By Jeff Sebell



It's coming up on forty years since the night of my crash. Strangely, the idea of forgiveness for that other driver, for the person who did this to me, never crossed my mind until I started thinking about writing this.

I was so busy trying to regain and recapture those things I had lost that I never looked back to the event that caused it all. I just couldn't bother with it. In fact, I was disconnected from the events of that night, in much the same way my Traumatic Brain Injury removed me from my own life.

I did become angry - but it wasn't about the crash itself. It was about how people treated me after my coma, when I was struggling to get my life back. Quite a while passed before I could get over the slights that I attributed to my friends in college.

I felt they weren't there for me when I finally returned to school. I couldn't understand why people were acting towards me the way they did, and as a result I got really down on myself. I felt worthless.

Sometimes ignored, often misunderstood, I would beat myself up because I didn't understand what was going on, and felt it must be my fault. This caused a great deal of pain and resentment as I tried to make my way through a world that had become very confusing and alien to me. Often nothing made any sense, and I felt like I was going crazy.

At one point, nearly 25 years after the car accident, I had a revelation of sorts. Although, in my mind I had forgiven those who I felt had wronged me, I decided that wasn't enough. To make it mean something more I needed to take the next step. I needed to look my old friends up and talk to them.



I found out one lived in the very next town and made an effort to contact him. Eventually, I was able to connect with each of my friends, and found a wonderful weight lifted, as well as a return to a bit of normalcy.

I learned that my friends weren't the demons I had made them out to be. Forgiveness freed me from the angry chatter in my head, and in the process I also learned we had all become different people. I didn't feel the need or desire to resume a relationship with them, and I was at peace with that.

What I did finally see was that each of us carried regrets and hurts around from that time period, and that I needed to take responsibility for some things, and not go looking for ways to place blame.

By getting to a place where I could forgive, I began to see that I was being unrealistic in my expectations, and that I had, in one way or another, played a role in the way things happened. I also saw that blaming other people reduced my personal power by saying, in effect, that my life was not in my control. By blaming others, I was giving them control over me.

Forgiving my old friends wasn't about "giving in" or "giving up" or "compromising", it was about me growing and taking responsibility for my own life. I was making a statement that I was powerful enough to live on my own, without using blame as a crutch when things didn't go right.

About a year afterward, I began seeing a neurologist for the first time since shortly after my coma. My coma was in 1975, and they didn't have MRI's or CAT scans then, so my doctor suggested I have an MRI done. Even though we all knew I had a brain injury, I had never actually "seen" the damage.

The results came back showing areas of damage as well as areas of dried, twenty-five year old blood products in my brain. Although I expected this news, I was not prepared for my reaction. Years of rehabilitation, anger, confusion and

resentment were brought back, but it also provided me with a conclusion, an ending, of sorts, for my journey. On the drive home from the doctor I was overcome by the strength of the truth and had to pull over.

For the first time, I grieved the events of that night and forgave the other driver. At that moment, I not only understood how hard I had been on myself all these years, I saw what I had done to myself by not giving myself a break. The MRI was clear; my brain had real damage, and I shouldn't blame myself for the way I was.

Sitting in my car, pulled off to the side of the road, sobbing, I knew I had to finally let myself off the hook. First, I first forgave myself for the unrelentingly negative way I had treated myself, and then I acknowledged myself for all the battles I had fought and the good things I had accomplished.

I was not allowing myself to get in the way anymore, and finally, I was free to grow and explore my life.

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

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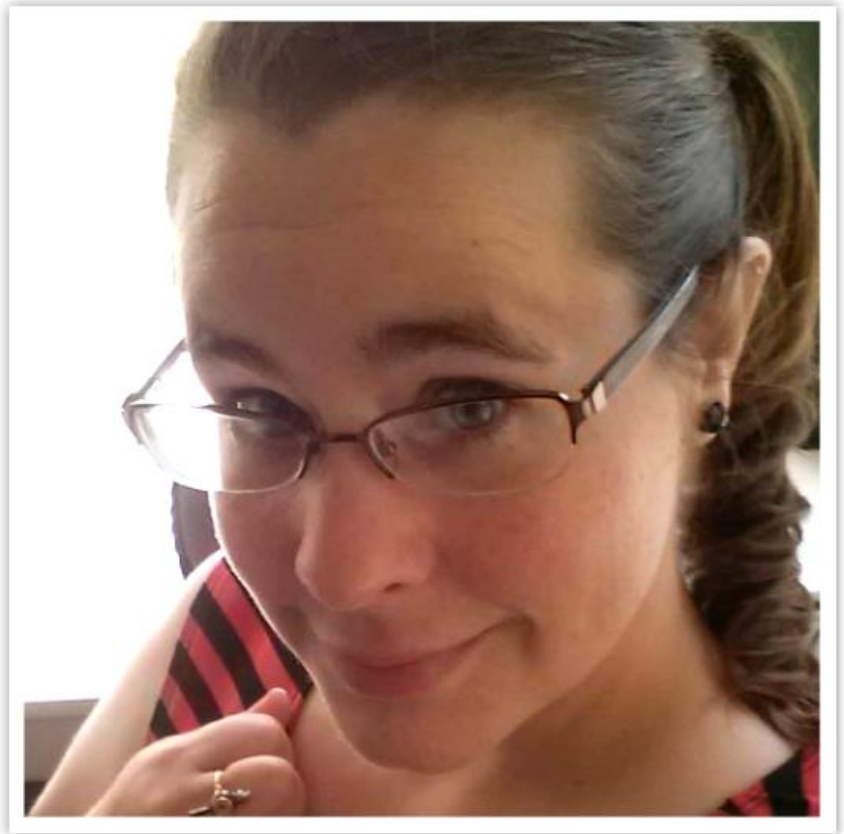
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Our First Lunch

By Lora Reynolds

After several years and changes to life's circumstances, I moved back to my hometown. It was then that I met my friend for lunch.

Thanks to the modern wonders of technology and an article in the local paper, I was able to reach out and find him again. Several online chats and a couple of rescheduled lunches later, we finally made it out to lunch.



We were friends in college. Though it was some years ago, I still had memories and moments attached to him and things I had planned to bring up and reminisce about.

We had been friends on Facebook for years and I had heard through the online discussions (ok, let's be real-- the gossip and grapevine) about an accident and him getting hurt. I was working with secondhand information and was not brave or perhaps foolish enough to bring the subject up that day to get the real and first hand story.

We had chatted online like old friends, because after all we were. We had plenty of other things we could talk about. I had been looking forward to seeing my long lost pal all week.

I arrived to the restaurant a bit late, but seeing him was amazing! He looked great and was just as handsome as I had remembered. That smile was unforgettable, and there it was-- just for me! I apologized for being late, and was quite embarrassed. "No worries, I haven't been here long, only about forty- five minutes" he says to me.



We laughed and I sat down. We got comfortable and re-acquainted before the waitress arrived. More apologies and the usual “How was your drive? Look at this weather. How have you been?” pleasantries were exchanged. It was so good to finally see one another after so many years and it was nice to have a friendly face in front of me. We placed our orders and caught up with each other over our meals when they arrived.

Everything was going so well.

As we finished up, I was a little sad. Here I was at lunch with an old crush of mine and things were going swimmingly. I didn’t want it to end, but knew it had to. The check came and our lunch was winding down. I was looking across at him and he had this strange look on his face. I asked if something was wrong.

I saw that internal struggle for words on his face and immediately panicked inside. “Oh no, did I say something stupid, do I have food in my teeth, OH GOD?” so many thoughts ran through my head. He stared at me a moment, looked down- then back up. “I don’t remember you. I have been struggling with trying to tell you that, I hope it doesn’t hurt your feelings, it’s not your fault. I was hoping that seeing you would trigger something, but it hasn’t. I am sorry, I don’t remember anything, but please know that I have enjoyed our lunch and know that I am quite comfortable and this has been fun, but I don’t remember you from before at all.”

How was I supposed to take that? I was AWESOME, I was fun, I was amazing (and I still am). How could anyone forget that? I was offended for about ten seconds and then my understanding and compassion kicked in. I laughed and said “It’s ok, now we get to become friends all over again. No worries!” I meant it.

Here this person was in front of me, struggling with a very real problem and exposing a very vulnerable and complicated truth. He had suffered a brain injury that affected him in ways I could never imagine. I knew this about him going in, it wasn’t a secret and it didn’t matter to me. However--How many times had he said this before? How many other people may have gotten angry or too hurt by a similar conversation to bother with him again?

That look on his face from earlier—there was a touch of fear in it. It could have been the fear of rejection—the fear of looking stupid—the fear of those ten seconds of my offense turning into “what’s wrong with you?” I had the choice to say “what the heck?” or really and truly admit that it was ok. There was a lot of stuff from college I couldn’t remember and I didn’t have an excuse! I chose to say it’s OK and MEAN it.

It was strange, I won’t lie, but I really did like the fact that we could have a fresh start, we could and would get to know one another again. I looked forward to it. I believe my comments garnered a look of “whew!” and “thank goodness!” I was glad to have given him that relief.

We planned to talk to one another in the near future and make a plan for another lunch or a similar activity. I knew that I had some reading and research to do if we were to have friendship, for I knew NOTHING about brain injuries. That smile from earlier would make it all worth it. I knew after that first day, that first lunch, that there was something special about this man.

What I could remember of him was that he was cute—a gentleman—and had made me smile and laugh on several occasions. What he could remember of me mattered not. All I knew was that conversation was easy and fun with him and I couldn’t wait to see him again. That lunch was the beginning of what has been an interesting (and wonderful, and rewarding yet sometimes challenging) relationship thus far, but has been an amazing journey that I am looking forward to continuing.

If I had just blown him off that day, never given him the chance to tell me his stories and come to understand where he is now from where he had been, what would that have made me? The short answer is a jerk. Make sure that you never give anyone that “look” or ever make them feel less than. If I had, I would never know the person I love today or be the person that I have become. Everyone deserves compassion and understanding.

Meet Lora Reynolds

Lora Reynolds is an aspiring writer from West Virginia. She is currently employed as a grant writer for a small non-profit in Lewisburg, WV. Her interests include writing, the outdoors, being with family and friends and her cat Mika. Her experience with the brain injury community comes from volunteer work with the Brain Injury Group of Southern West Virginia.

Pearls of Wisdom

Submitted by Carole Starr



Bev Bryant (1939-2014), pictured above in the middle, was an author, national speaker and co-founder of Brain Injury Voices. In her memory, Voices members extracted these ‘pearls of wisdom’ from her books and speeches.

To learn more about Bev and her writings, please visit: BrainInjuryVoices.org

Aim High

“I have learned that if we can keep our life full of optimism and positive thinking, that we can conquer anything that happens to us and look forward to the next challenge with confidence and determination.”

From Bev’s Speech “Humor in Healing”

Learn from Failure

I have the right to fail. I do not plan to, but I have that right. No one, absolutely no one, will ever take that right away from me. It is from that failure that I will move onward. It is from that failure that I will grow. It is from those failures that I will dare to be silent no more. It is from those failures that I will forge my

excellence. There is no loss in failing because I am making the attempt to succeed and facing the challenge. The only real failure is never trying in the first place.

From Bev's Speech "Let Me Fail"

Live in the Present

We cannot compare the past with the present, then and now. We have to live for today and plan for tomorrow.

From Bev's book To Wherever Oceans Go, p. 249

Find the Humor

Humor is about a state of being. It's about attitudes, optimism, and being happy. It's about being happy INSIDE one's self. It's about seeing things and events in a different light and from a different perspective. As a result of this new vantage point, you may also see new ways to deal with the problems. ...We must be able to find humor even in our failures. ...Do we look at them as walls and obstacles?

Or can we accept those failures as building blocks or stepping-stones.

From Bev's Speech "Humor in Healing"

Take Steps to Heal

Healing takes place from the inside out. Healing involves the struggle to rebuild relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Healing is recognizing the grieving process and coming to grips with our remaining strengths, asking for accommodations, using strategies, compensating for weaknesses and believing in ourselves.

From Bev's book To Wherever Oceans Go, p. 11

Find the help you need

Because of our brain injuries, we are forced to rebuild our flight path and rise up alone. We need professionals to help us rebuild the runway. The trek itself, in search of wings, can only be taken by the survivor. . . . I need the strength of my friends and colleagues, certainly not their sympathy.

From Bev's book In Search of Wings, p. 231, 218

Outside Looking In

By Roy Boschee

It was just a simple fall at the roller rink right? No it wasn't. It was an event that changed her life and the lives of all of us who care for her.

Traumatic Brain Injuries change the lives of those suffer from them, but it also changes the lives of those who care for them. We have gone from being in tune with each other to me on the outside trying to look in. This is the start of our story that will continue for a lifetime.



At first I worried she wouldn't survive, but she has always been a fighter and she pulled through it. Then there was the recovery which I thought would be a few months at the most and then it would all be back to normal.

The first thing I noticed was the loss of memory and the frustration of not being able to remember special events from the past. There was also the quick changes in her emotions. Both of these were such a change from the way things were. It was, and still is hard to see the pain in her eyes when a grandchild asks, "Do you remember when ..." and she can't and she sees the hurt it causes them. Because of what she was dealing with she had a feeling of being broken and undesirable as a person and it hurt knowing that was far from the truth, because the caring person is still there. Yes there is a difference, but no less desirable.

She has always been a great cook, but now she has lost her sense of taste, and struggles at times to follow a recipe. She has become overly sensitive to being touched, but struggles through it to make sure the kids get the hugs they need and deserve. A lady always on the go in the past is now limited to where and when she can and will drive.

There are so many more changes that have affected her life, which have changed our lives too. Some of the things I have tried to do, but don't always do a good job at is to be more patient, and never assume the simple things are easily accomplished. I have watched as she struggles to do the things she used to do, the frustration she tries to shrug off when she knows that going to events with crowds and loud noise will overwhelm her. In the beginning it was easy to

become frustrated and snip and vent my frustrations directly at her, but all that accomplished was to cause her to hurt and draw further inside of herself and push me away to avoid the pain she felt.

To add to everything her family began to step away from her. Once they were a source of support for her but lately the comments have been “She looks fine so she has to be faking it.” They have no idea how terrible those words hurt. I have watched her draw further inside of herself to avoid the pain, and that pain has carried over to us.

No matter how much I try to understand what she deals with every moment I never will. I have read everything I can about what to expect and have gone to seminars to learn more, but still I will never be able to fully understand. All I can do is be there for her and to provide support, listen carefully, never assume, and most importantly continue to show her I am there for her.

I know her life and mine has changed because of the accident. By truly caring for her, I know that it’s just a new beginning and a new direction in our lives. I will continue to try and learn from all the information that is out there, but mostly importantly, I will learn from her. So remember, listen, don’t assume, and never take out your frustrations on how our lives have been affected because of what she deals with every moment of the day.

Meet Roy and Tammy

Roy and Tammy have been close personal friends for years and have stood beside each other through many of life’s challenges. They both enjoy cooking, and working out in the yard. Tammy, enjoys crocheting and sewing blankets for new babies, when she isn’t trying to teach Roy the finer points of NASCAR.

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