

Sharing OUR Recovery

A quarterly newsletter published by Picking Up Pieces designed to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

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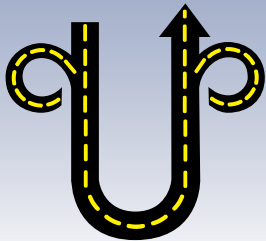
ISSUE 1

PIECES IN THIS ISSUE:

	page
* Welcome	1
* Driving in the Winter	2
* After a Motor Vehicle Accident	3
* Erasing Flu Symptoms	4
* Rehabilitation & Auto Insurance	5
* From Tragedy to Hope	6
* Survivor Support	7

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Sharing Our Recovery?

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Picking up Pieces



Welcome!

Introducing our first quarterly newsletter, *Sharing Our Recovery*

This newsletter is created by two organizations - Picking Up Pieces and MVA Support & Recovery. Picking Up Pieces is a help guide for motor vehicle collision survivors and MVA Support & Recovery is an online support group for MVA survivors. We connected in the fall of 2017 and realized that we both had the same goals for survivors of motor vehicle collisions and together **"we will make a difference!"** We are excited about our partnership and look forward to the formation of *Sharing Our Recovery*.

The purpose of our newsletter is to keep survivors and victims of motor vehicle collisions up to date and informed. Our vision is to recognize survivors and to continuously give them support. Surviving a motor vehicle collision is a daily struggle on several levels and no one should feel alone while they recover. Thank you for your support by signing up for our free quarterly newsletter.

As the holidays are quickly approaching, we wanted to emphasize that the holidays can be a difficult time for survivors of motor vehicle collisions. Coping with the daily stress of financial strain, physical pain, the change in routine and the pressure of guests can be overwhelming. It is important to be mindful of your feelings and to continue to provide self care through the holidays.

Good communications with your family is key to a happy holiday season. However, sometimes we are not feeling well and our attempts at communicating may sound like whining or complaining to our family as they may not be able to see that you are not well. Try to speak in a calm, logical and factual manner as you make plans or explain your limitations to family and friends. Beware that some people may not understand but if you calmly stand your ground, most will eventually come around. We have all learnt that unless people experience recovery from a motor vehicle collision first-hand, they may not see what a challenging time you are going through. Stay strong and pace yourself survivors!

Sharing Our Recovery wishes all of you a pain-free and safe holiday.





Now that summer has come and gone, temperatures are starting to change. Driving in the winter will test even the most attentive and skilled driver not to mention a survivor of a motor vehicle collision. Heavy snowfall can reduce visibility and slippery road conditions can certainly test you. Safest winter driving requires patience and preparation. Whether you are driving or a passenger in a vehicle, here are some tips for winter driving:

- Clear snow and ice off of your vehicle's hood, roof, windows, headlights and tail lights before you drive. Your visibility will improve dramatically and other drivers will not be put at risk with snow or ice being thrown onto their vehicle that can become airborne when you drive. If the snow or ice hits another car's windshield and the driver of that car gets in a crash, you could be found responsible;
- With weeks of frigid temperatures to come, it is important to have the right windshield washer fluid to get the job done. Use winter grade windshield cleaner as it is specifically formulated to stay fluid even in the coldest weather. Slick roads are often treated with a salty solution, sand crystals and/or sand to provide traction. This wintery mix can really hurt your visibility when it is splashed onto your windshield. Having the proper fluid is important;
- Check the condition of your wiper blades to make sure they are in good condition for colder weather. You can also switch to winter wiper blades which are designed for cold and winter conditions;
- Keep an eye on your tire pressure. Fluctuating temperatures can cause your tires to expand and contract leading to loss of tire pressure;
- Change to winter tires. The best time to install your winter tires is before the temperature drops below 7 C, or before the first snowfall. Many motorists install winter tires in

October to avoid the rush on service departments after the first snowfall. Try and make it an annual routine;

- Dress for warmth as cold temperatures can lead to frostbite and hypothermia. You never know if you may be delayed due to driving conditions;
- If you are a passenger in a vehicle, be honest and upfront with the driver on how you are feeling and explain to the driver that you may have limitations due to chronic pain, fatigue or sudden flashbacks;
- Keep your gas tank filled halfway to avoid emergencies in bad weather;
- Do not pass snow plows. The road is likely more treacherous in front on these trucks and you could run the risk of sliding as you accelerate to pass them. Do not follow too closely as you may end up with a cracked windshield from flying pebbles;
- Find your vehicle stuck on the ice? In a pinch, you can take the mats out of your car, place them next to your tires and slowly inch the car onto and across the mats.
- Give yourself plenty of room to come to a complete stop at intersections and when following other vehicles;
- Slow down when taking corners, especially on blind corners where you don't know what's ahead. TAKE YOUR TIME!

Emergencies on the road can be extra dangerous and stressful in winter weather. Preparing a winter safety kit could prove to be quite beneficial. Here's what to include in your winter safety kit:

- Cell phone along with car charger that is placed in the glove compartment while driving
- First Aid Kit including bandages, gauze pads and medical tape
- Flares: make sure they are kept dry and out of the reach of children. Also check the expiry date
- Water and nonperishable foods such as granola or protein bars
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Blanket
- Extra windshield fluid
- Snow brush and ice scraper



After a Motor Vehicle Accident

Submitted by: Andrew Iacobelli, Iacobelli Law Firm

Tis the season when family and friends get together to celebrate the holidays. When you least expect it, you may be involved in a motor vehicle accident. No matter how careful you are, accidents can happen. Knowing what you can do after a motor vehicle accident, can make the experience less stressful.

Some important steps you can take following a motor vehicle accident include:

- **Check for injuries** and call an ambulance
- **Call the police** even if it is minor. A police report can be invaluable in the claims process.
- **Gather information** from others involved in the accident.
 - Drivers and passengers: names and contact information
 - Vehicle descriptions (make, model, year)
 - Driver's license numbers
 - License plate numbers
 - Insurance companies and policy numbers
 - Eyewitnesses: names and contact information
 - Accident scene location and/or address
 - Police officer's name and badge number
- **Take photos** of all vehicles involved and the accident scene, if it is safe to do so
- **Get Medical Attention.** Even if you think you will be fine in a few days, it is important to get checked out by a doctor. Serious injuries may not be immediately obvious, so it is important to see a medical doctor as soon as possible following an accident.
- **Call a dedicated car accident injury lawyer**

Following a car accident, one of the most important steps you can take for yourself and your family is to speak with an experienced car accident injury lawyer. Many lawyers who specialize in car accidents and personal injury matters offer free and confidential consultations. Take advantage of the opportunity to have your immediate questions answered by an experienced lawyer without being concerned about up-front legal expenses.

In addition to answering your questions following a serious accident, a lawyer can help ensure that you receive maximum benefits available. Usually, the first avenue of recourse for your lost income and medical/rehabilitation costs is with your own insurance provider. In addition to advancing the claims with your own insurance provider, a lawyer can also assess whether you should bring claims against the insurance

company for the vehicle that is at fault for the accident.

These claims seek compensation for losses, such as your past and future lost income, loss of enjoyment of life, and care costs (ie. health care expenses and housekeeping expenses).

Following a car accident, your lawyer will make submissions to the appropriate insurance companies on your behalf. This may include preparing a number of insurance forms, filing a lawsuit if necessary, as well as obtaining supporting documents and records from health care providers and employers to substantiate your injuries and your losses. In many instances, your lawyer will also obtain expert reports to support your claims for your losses.

In addition to handling all of the insurance and civil claims processes, an experienced injury lawyer can help coordinate services for your overall recovery and support. If you or a family member suffered serious or catastrophic injuries as a result of a car accident, your lawyer can identify additional resources for rehabilitation, support and health care. An experienced personal injury lawyer will often coordinate services such as case management, occupational therapy, speech language therapy, behavioral therapy, personal support, vocational rehabilitation, and other support or services as may be required.

If you have been injured in a car accident, you should have an experienced personal injury lawyer working for you. With the assistance of an experienced lawyer, you and your family can focus on your recovery and health. Your car accident lawyer and his team will take care of investigating your claim and dealing with the insurance companies. With an experienced car accident lawyer, you will have someone working for you so that you can make informed decisions for your future.

For more information contact www.iacobellilaw.com.





It's that dreaded time of year again. As if we don't already have enough going on with lack of sleep, chronic pain, financial strain, flashbacks and numerous doctor appointments the Flu Season has arrived.

Here are 7 tips to erase flu symptoms.

1. **Mind your Flu Manners.** Stay home, get plenty of rest and cancel any appointments you may have regarding your Motor Vehicle Collision. You're sick and very contagious! Take advantage of this down time and try your best to rest.
2. Constantly **wash your hands** and dispose of any used kleenex immediately to prevent further germs to accumulate. If possible, open up your bedroom window to let fresh air in to circulate.
3. **Drink plenty of fluids.** It doesn't have to be all water as fruit juices, sports drinks and chicken noodle soup also count. They keep your respiratory system hydrated and turn that nasty thick mucus into a thin liquid you can cough up and spit out. That's good because if it builds up in your lungs it could lead to infection.
4. **Treat aches and fever.** Although it may be difficult to determine if the aches are from your chronic pain or the flu, experience does show that motor vehicle collision survivors suffer worse than the average person with the flu. Mixing your daily chronic pain with flu like symptoms is not pleasant. Got a fever? Your body has turned up the heat to fight off the flu virus. Ask your doctor what medication will be right for you.
5. **Take care of your cough.** Gargling with salt water helps get rid of the thick mucus that can collect at the back of the throat, especially after you've been lying down. Try a lozenge. Sucking on a lozenge will moisten and coat a scratchy throat and it may quiet your cough too. Over the counter treatments can calm your hack but if your cough persists after a few days, always follow up with a medical professional.
6. **Breathe in steam.** Fill the bathroom sink with hot water. Add 1 teaspoon of an over the counter menthol rub and breathe in the steam for several minutes until you feel better or you can sit in a steamy bathroom. Sit in the bathroom with the door closed, let the shower run hot until the room fills up with moist steam.
7. **Run the humidifier.** If the air in your residence is dry, a mist humidifier or vaporizer can moisten it to ease congestion and coughs. Don't use a warm mist because it can promote the growth of bacteria and molds. Also make sure to keep the device clean to prevent mold development.



Rehabilitation & Auto Insurance

Submitted by: Dawne McKay, Founder of MVA Support & Recovery

A tip for all Ontario Drivers that are being provided rehabilitation treatments covered by your auto insurance.

Whether you are having rehabilitation treatment at home, a medical office or a medical clinic, every provider will ask you to sign an OCF-18 Form to which the medical provider will send into your auto insurance carrier on your behalf with the specified treatment plan outlined. Within a few weeks your auto insurance carrier will then send a copy of the treatment plan to you outlining whether the treatment plan submitted had been approved or declined along with an outline specifying how much of your rehabilitation coverage you have used to date and how much coverage you have left going forward.

Firstly, it is imperative that you always keep a copy of these documents for your records. Whether it be organized or just thrown into a box, every document is so important to keep for your records. Secondly, if you are receiving ongoing

treatment by a provider and treatment plans are being submitted and approved, don't be afraid to ask the provider for a statement of their services from time to time. Their statement should outline the date you received treatment, an outline of what treatment you received, the cost of the treatment and what is outstanding/owed to the provider. Given that the auto insurance coverage is approving your treatment plans and authorizing payment on your behalf, the outstanding balance owed to the provider should be "0" as providers should always be billing on a monthly basis. It does not hurt to ask for a copy of your statement periodically to ensure that there are no surprises if and when you choose to end your treatment or decide to change providers.

Lastly, always keep track of every single appointment you receive from a provider. When all is said and done, you may need to back track to cross reference your appointments vs. possible monies owed to the provider.



Sometimes the most amazing things come from tragedy. Just ask David A. Grant. November 11, 2010, was supposed to be a typical day for David. Late that afternoon, as he had done for years, David hopped on his bike for a daily ride.

His cycling style has always been conservative. Highly reflective clothes, hand signals at all intersections and a helmet covering his head, he expected the day's ride to be like any other.

A couple of miles from his home, at a familiar intersection, his life was about to change forever.

The car that t-boned Grant was driven by a newly licensed sixteen-year-old driver. After shattering the vehicle's windshield, Grant was thrown fifty feet down Main Street and knocked unconscious by the sheer force of the accident. His injuries were severe and life changing. Rushed by ambulance to the nearest trauma center, his "visible" injuries were easy to assess; a broken arm, multiple lacerations from the shattered windshield, and bruises that would take weeks to fade.

However, an injury was undiagnosed that night. Unknown by the attending staff at the trauma center, Grant also sustained a traumatic brain injury. It has now been seven years since that blustery New England November day. "The first couple of years were just horrible," says Grant, the founder of the TBI HOPE Network. "Learning to get my feet back under me after my TBI was the toughest thing I have ever done in my life," Grant continues.

Like many brain injury survivors, life changed dramatically for David and his wife, Sarah. Unable to work on a full-time basis, they struggled financially for many years. His brain injury symptoms included a dramatic change in his personality, constant vertigo, and significant cognitive challenges. Attending a face-to-face brain injury support group was the first breakthrough during the first year after his accident. "I was around people who faced the same challenges that I did," Grant shares. "Knowing that I was no longer alone in all this gave me hope for the first time in a long time."

As he continued to move forward as a brain injury survivor, Grant grew increasingly aware that there were many others like him, people who were trying to navigate life after brain injury. In 2013, he started what he expected to be a rather small Facebook community, TBI Hope & Inspiration. What he did not know was that there was a huge void within the brain injury support community. Survivors needed to

connect with other survivors. Many, like Grant, also lived with PTSD, making it a challenge to navigate today's busy world. While other survivors, many in rural areas, had no access to local support groups.

In the years since, the TBI Hope Facebook family has become one of the world's largest that supports brain injury survivors of all kinds. From victims of domestic trauma to survivors of motor vehicle accidents, from stroke survivors to many who have had falls, they come together online in the spirit of true community, supporting each other. Now numbering over 25,000 members, survivors worldwide have found the end of brain injury isolation.

But it didn't stop there!

"As long as there are survivors out there unaware of support resources, we have work to do."

"My wife Sarah and I ask ourselves regularly what we can do to help others who share our fate," Grant says. "As long as there are survivors out there unaware of support resources, we have work to do." In March of 2015, David and Sarah launched TBI HOPE Magazine, a monthly publication whose mission is to support and educate all affected by brain injury. Their monthly publication now has readers around with world in over forty

counties. The digital version of TBI HOPE Magazine is available at no cost. Also available in print on Amazon, Grant often compares it to the Reader's Digest of the brain injury community as it is full of personal stories of others who have had lives touched by brain injury.

Life has changed a lot over the last seven years for the Grants. David is slowing getting back to his passion for web design. Brain injury recovery is lifelong with Grant finding himself able to accomplish things at seven years out that would have been unthinkable early on after his accident.

"I know I'll never be the person I once was," he said. "But in many respects, my accident has been one of the biggest blessings in my life. So many others have found hope because of our advocacy work."

During the early years after his accident, Grant's wife Sarah had a mantra she would often share during the difficult times, "Someday the curse will become a blessing." Those whose lives have been made a bit easier because of the work of the TBI HOPE Network would surely agree.

For more information, please visit www.TBIHOPEandInspiration.com



From Car Accident Survivor to Support Group

Survivor
Story
Piece

Submitted by: Dawne McKay, Founder of MVA Support & Recovery



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. One week "to the day" I was involved in a horrific car accident.

I was on my way to work, stopped to make a left-hand turn, and I was rear-ended by an SUV clocked at 80 km/hr 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 multiple injuries including a head injury 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 pyjamas 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 it came to a screeching halt. Friends who I thought would be there weren't there and I suddenly found myself realizing who my real friends were.

As I had never been in a motor vehicle accident 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 everyday I try my best to be as positive as I can. In 2016 I 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. I have close to 200 members, 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 or legal advice is allowed in the group. As fellow victims we realize that it can be overwhelming and this group is for us to come together and be there for each other to share our journeys, positivity, advice, resources and daily inspirations.

In late 2016, I also created MVA Support & Recovery which is a page designed for survivors that want information and resources but who do not want the group environment. In the fall of 2017, I partnered with Picking Up Pieces to create the *Sharing Our Recovery* newsletter designed to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

As I look in my rear view mirror to that awful morning, I see fear that has turned into courage, I see helplessness that has turned into independence and I see weakness that has turned into strength. I see professional strangers both medically and legally that have turned into new friendships who will be in my life for many years to come. I see a kind and patient man that has been my rock and has been by my side every step of the way. I see an overwhelmed struggling victim seeking a support group that was unavailable create an online medium making support available to other victims.

I will continue advocating for motor vehicle accident survivors as no one should ever feel alone after such a life-changing event.



Would you like to be part of *Sharing Our Recovery*?
Would you like to see something written in *Sharing Our Recovery*?

We are always looking for articles or stories, and we would love to hear from you!

Email us: info@pickinguppieces.net

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