

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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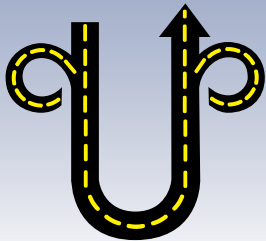
ISSUE 2

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Picking up Pieces



Greetings!

from Sharing Our Recovery

This past winter, we have received records amounts of snow and unfortunately that made for treacherous road conditions. We hope everyone has been safe! For those of us that suffer from chronic pain from a collision, the cold weather does nothing to help. Winter comes with an increased rate of chronic pain flare-ups, debilitating pain and discomfort. Cold weather and chronic pain just isn't a good mix for us.

Many of us are sensitive when it comes to weather changes and some people find that a positive attitude can significantly boost their ability to cope with pain. Try not to give in to pain and find ways to keep your mind off it. Try to do the things you enjoy – like a hobby or spending time with family and friends. Being alone and isolating yourself will give you a negative attitude and can increase your perception of your pain. Keep track of your daily pain level and activities in a handwritten journal or online log. Bring the notes to your next visit with your health care provider as it will give your provider a better understanding of how you are living with your pain.

Our first issue of Sharing Our Recovery was published this past December and we are pleased to announce that numerous people have subscribed. The response has been gratifying and we are really looking forward to supporting you.

We are also continuing to work on some very informative articles that are being posted on our website. Are you aware that you can also sign up to receive our Monthly News Bulletin so you don't miss out? It's free! Sign up here: [News Bulletin](#)

We are excited about our Spring Issue as we continue to connect with some wonderful Organizations. Many thanks to our 2018 Sponsor: [Iacobelli Law Firm](#) and our Spring Issue Sponsor: [Allevio Pain Management](#). We couldn't have done it without your support!

Wishing all of you a safe and pain free spring.



When you have light sensitivity, driving at night can be a serious challenge. Headlights from oncoming traffic, flashing brake lights or turn signals and light/dark contrast are often reported as triggers. They can leave you struggling to keep your eyes on the road--or worse, result in a migraine attack, headache or other health related problem. When the sun goes down, extra dangers arise on the road. From compromised visibility to impaired drivers and/or distracted drivers, there are plenty of hazards to watch out for.

The following tips can make a big difference in your ability to successfully get behind the wheel:

- 1. Keep your car clean.** Your windshield and mirrors will distribute light better if they are clean and free of dirt and smudges. Take the time to clean your windows. Be careful to wipe away post-wash streaks—especially as they may not be as visible during the day—so that they won't interfere with your vision or create further glare.
- 2. Add anti-reflective coating to your glasses.** This thin coating can help protect your eyes from reflections and make it easier to see what's happening on the road. Talk with your eye doctor to determine whether or not this is a reasonable solution for you.
- 3. Swap to the night setting.** Have you ever been blinded suddenly by a car coming up behind you? You may be surprised to learn that you can minimize the impact of this by using the night setting on your rear view mirror. Look for the little switch below or beside your mirror and flip it to the "night" setting at night. Make sure you know where that setting is so that you can change it quickly if needed.
- 4. Dim the interior lights of your vehicle.** Sometimes the stark contrast of dark and light alone can make things seem brighter than they are and ultimately bring on episodes of light sensitivity and photophobia. Luckily, many cars offer dimming capabilities for interior and dashboard lights to help reduce this effect. Consult your manual to determine how you can activate this feature in your vehicle.
- 5. Check the windshield wipers.** Not only should you keep these clean and remove any debris (foliage, grime, etc.), but you should also make sure they are functioning properly. If left unattended, these wipers can be a prime culprit for leaving streaks and other marks that worsen glare and light reflection especially in bad weather.

“Texting and driving is the most dangerous of these acts, as it causes all three types of distractions—visual, cognitive, and physical.”

6. Be kind on the road. It is never a good idea to follow too closely as you may make the other driver nervous, which makes him or her more likely to react badly to something in the road and cause a collision. Also, the closer your headlights are, the brighter they can seem and more distracting they can be. Again, this makes the driver ahead of you nervous and can also limit his or her visibility and end up causing problems.

7. Keep moving your eyes. It is easy to keep your eyes focused on a single fixed point, especially if you're taking a long trip or you're focused on your destination. Instead, try moving your eyes from side to side. Scan the sides of the road. It will keep you more aware of potential hazards like kids and animals, and it will also keep your eyes relaxed and adjusted to your surroundings.

8. Dodge those high beams. If an oncoming car clearly has their high beams on, it has been recommended to look down and to your right in an effort to avoid the direct hit of brightness. Keep your eyes on the painted marks of the road or lane lines. This will allow you to avoid being blinded by the bright light but still keep your car traveling smoothly and safely in the right direction.

9. Take regular breaks. If you have to take a long drive at night, make sure you swap drivers frequently or take plenty of breaks to relax your eyes. If you're going to be driving through the day and need to continue driving as night falls, take a break until your eyes adjust so that you'll be in a better position to drive effectively.

10. Watch out for Distracted Drivers.

Whether it's texting, eating, or fiddling with the radio, anything that removes your attention from the act of driving is considered a distraction. Texting and driving is the most dangerous of these acts, as it causes all three types of distractions—visual, cognitive, and physical. Taking your attention away from the road is dangerous at any time. Both hands should be on the steering wheel with your eyes on the road.

11. If you feel too anxious and uncomfortable driving - DONT drive! Ask a family member or friend to drive or take public transportation.

Preventing migraine attacks, headaches, and eye strain while driving at night can be a challenge, however, by following these tips, you can reduce the glare that you may have to deal with and make your drive smoother, easier and less stressful.



Family Members Have Legal Rights Against the At-Fault Driver

The effects of an auto collision often extend beyond the injured victim and have a significant emotional and financial impact on the victim's family. Those who have been seriously injured may lose their independence or might not be able to contribute to the family in the capacity they did prior to the collision. In addition, family members may need to take leave from work to provide care and assistance for a loved one.

Injured drivers and or passengers are not the only parties eligible to file Ontario auto accident lawsuits. Many people are not aware that family members of injured drivers and or passengers also have legal rights against the at-fault driver. They may recover financial losses related to care, guidance and companionship suffered as a result of the injured driver/passengers' injuries. Often, the injured person's spouse and family members' lives have completely changed as they support their injured family member through their recovery.

Under Ontario's Family Law Act, family members of persons injured due to the negligence of others can be reimbursed for some of the losses that they have incurred as a result of the serious injuries to their loved ones.

Who is eligible to make a claim?

If a person is injured or killed by the fault or negligence of another, their family members may make claims under the Family Law Act ("FLA"). It is important to note that these claims are only available to family: the victim's spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters as well as common law spouses.

What can be claimed?

FLA claims are meant to compensate family members for the impact of the collision on their lives. The Act recognizes

that in addition to the suffering of the victim, there are losses suffered by those required to care for that injured family member and those who depended on them for support.

Family members can claim:

- expenses reasonably incurred for the benefit of the person injured or killed;
- funeral expenses;
- travel expenses incurred in visiting the person during treatment or recovery;
- expenses relating to nursing, housekeeping or other services for the person;
- compensation for loss of income to provide services;
- an amount to compensate for the loss of guidance, care and companionship that the family member might reasonably have expected to receive from the person if the injury or death had not occurred.

It is most often the family members who step in to assist when a relative is injured. Often, their thoughts do not turn to the effect the incident has had upon their own lives until long after the incident occurred. Family members of injured victims should be aware of the possibility of recovering compensation for their monetary losses including the effect that the collision had on their relationship.

If you currently have legal representation, speak with them so they can review this with you in greater detail and ask if your injured family member qualifies for attendant care benefits. If you do not have a lawyer for your collision, most law firms will offer a free consultation.





Aquatic therapy is physical therapy that takes place in a pool or other aquatic environment under the supervision of a trained healthcare professional. Aquatic therapy is also known as water therapy, aquatic rehabilitation, aqua therapy, pool therapy or therapeutic aquatic exercise. After an auto collision, you may be recommended aqua therapy as it can be quite beneficial to your recovery.

Common goals of aqua therapy include:

- Improving flexibility;
- Improving balance and coordination;
- Building muscle strength and endurance;
- Enhancing aerobic capacity;
- Assisting with gait and locomotion;
- Reducing stress and promoting relaxation.

Aquatic therapy is different from aquatic exercise or aquatic fitness because it is a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialty that requires the involvement of a trained professional. It is usually covered by many insurance providers due to the personalized nature of the treatment.

Aquatic exercise does not need to be supervised by a trained professional. It is also not covered by insurance, and it often takes place in a group setting that includes multiple people with different levels of physical fitness.

Aquatic therapy should not be confused with adaptive aquatics, either. Adaptive aquatics is the process of teaching people with disabilities how to swim safely in the water. Aquatic therapy does not focus on teaching clients how to swim.

These are some of the ways that water's natural properties create an ideal therapeutic environment:

- Warm water provides a relaxing and soothing environment for aching joints and muscles.
- Water's natural viscosity or resistance can be used for muscle strengthening and increasing rehabilitation progressions.
- Buoyancy allows for flotation and reduces the effects of gravity on injured or aching joints and muscles.
- Hydrostatic pressure supports and stabilizes your body. This allows people with balance deficits to perform exercises without a fear of falling, decreasing pain and improving cardiovascular return.
- Turbulence and wave propagation lets the therapist gently manipulate you through the desired exercises.
- The respiratory muscles are forced to work harder in the water, allowing for a natural strengthening that benefits you long after the therapy session has ended.

Compared to other forms of physical therapy, aquatic therapy results in a higher compliance rate and less pain throughout the recovery process. Opportunities to significantly minimize the pain you experience should be taken seriously because with less pain, you can enjoy a higher quality of life.

Another important advantage of aquatic therapy is that it can often begin before land-based therapy. For an injured victim from an auto collision, this makes a water-based program the natural choice.



Traveling After a Collision

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

Survivor
Advice
Piece

March Break is approaching and those of us who are recovering from a collision are aware of the conflicting emotions when planning a trip or vacation. Your family wants to escape the winter, the kids are excited to see new places and have new experiences. We dread the thought of hotel mattresses, having to sit for long periods of time, not getting enough rest and dealing with the chronic pain we may be experiencing. Although difficult, travel may be possible and necessary.

Here are some tips to make travelling a little easier:

- Don't be caught without enough medications before you leave. If you need refills call your pharmacy 10 days before your trip. Pack your medications in your carry on as they could lose your luggage or you could miss your connecting flight. Keep a small, lightweight, hands-free bag with essentials handy which could include medications, topical relief, water and snacks.
- Speak to your doctor before you travel. Your doctor can help you determine whether it's safe to travel and what precautions you may need to implement on your trip.
- Carry your insurance cards and identification. Double check you have your passports, tickets, medication & house keys – anything essential for your trip.
- Stress & anxiety can cause tension in the body and amplify the pain signals sent to your brain so allow plenty of time to get to the airport, train station or packing the car.
- If possible, take your favourite blanket and/or pillows. Try to make your bed as close to your bed at home as possible.

- If you need a room on the main floor, a room with a bath tub or a room closer to the elevator ask for it! Don't be shy about asking for help or special accommodations. If you need a wheelchair, arrange to have one available.
- If you are doing a lot of travelling by car, bus, train or plane, you may be required to sit for extended periods of time. If you are driving try to stop every two hours for a 15 min stretch break. If you are on a plane, train or a bus, take a walk to the restroom. Try your best to keep moving.
- Travelling will tire even the healthiest person so when you have the chance to nap take it!
- Sore swollen feet will take the fun out of a trip fast! Dress for comfort in loose non-restrictive clothing and a pair of comfortable safe shoes.
- Pack for all temperatures and environmental fluctuations. Protect your health. Wearing a scarf when traveling can not only keep you warm but it also dubs as a mask to ward off germs that can circulate.
- Stay hydrated! Drink lots of water. Your immune system requires water to work at optimum levels. Having a healthy immune system will put less stress on the body and in turn may ease chronic pain.
- Know your obstacles. If you are having a flare up and not feeling up to participating in something that has been planned on your vacation, be honest with your family and friends. They will understand and should give you some time to relax and rest. Don't push yourself! You need to take care of yourself as it is your vacation too.
- If you are currently under legal representation for a personal injury claim, alert your lawyer that you are going out of town and stay off of social media. Does the world really need to know that your house is empty and available to be burglarized? Similarly, do not "check in" to locations far from home. Savvy insurance adjusters and defense lawyers can also use your social media posts to undermine your insurance claim or personal injury lawsuit. Anything you put out on social media is fair game when it comes to insurance companies.



Travel comes with challenges for everyone, but especially those of us who are recovering from a collision and living with conditions that cause chronic pain. But, if we respect our limitations and listen to what our body tells us, we can try to enjoy our time away from home.



FAIR (Fair Association of Victims for Accident Insurance Reform) is a grassroots not-for-profit organization of Ontario's car accident victims and their caregivers and supporters. Since 2011 FAIR has been a voice for those who have been injured in motor vehicle collisions and who have struggled with the current auto insurance claims system in Ontario.

Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about what might happen if they were involved in a car accident. We think about high premiums but not about what we will get for that money. When we get in a car accident it comes as a big surprise how complicated our insurance coverage is and that it isn't a system you can navigate when you are not at your best physically or mentally.

FAIR advocates for victims through the sharing of information, whether it is current court decisions, government introduced changes or even media articles. There are constant changes to coverage levels and access to that coverage so it's a continuous flow of information and our website puts all that information out to the thousands of people who visit our website every month and through social media.

The goal is that this sharing of information makes for a better educated accident victim and one who is less isolated from others going through the same dysfunctional and punishing claims system. In 2012 we started sending out a FAIR News email to our members and over the years it's grown into a daily email with a wide variety of articles that we hope will help our membership cope with a life-changing event when they find themselves in a broken and sometimes even fraudulent system.

Many Ontario car accident survivors would say that they're unpleasantly surprised at how the insurer they've paid treated them after a car accident and shocked to find that the insurer medical community will often work hard against their recovery by putting up obstacles to treatment. The truth is that the insurance we have is one that works toward denying injuries rather than addressing them and it simply makes people sicker. We have focused on this issue of the insurer medical exams as a core problem for Ontario accident survivors when the expert reports and testimony are used to deny injuries to save insurer dollars.

FAIR tries to fill that void of information about medical reports and testimony as well and we track and publish court decisions that chronicle the medical experts who harm

innocent accident victims for two reasons. One is to expose the damage done by insurers to their customers in the delay/deny system they've created and the second is to let the accident victims know they are not alone, their injuries are real and if they need treatment they may have to find a way on their own when the insurer goes into denial.

We've also created a stakeholder status with Ontario's government that gives victims a voice in consultations and discussions with various ministries and legislators. Having this status also opens the doors to individual and groups of car accident survivors to express their views to government in a more powerful way.

"The truth is that the insurance we have is one that works toward denying injuries rather than addressing them and it simply makes people sicker."

With the voices of over a thousand FAIR members and followers we've put auto insurance issues in the news with stories chronicling how innocent accident victims are being defrauded out of the coverage they've paid for at the hands of insurer paid doctors. Auto insurance is a legislated product and yet has little to no consumer protection so we are all looking to make this coming election a time to create the change consumers need. It is our voices as victims that will tell the story, our voices that will create the change, and our voices that will provide the support for other accident victims and create the accountability this industry is missing.

The vast majority of us will never even be in an accident but all of us take our chances on our roads and highways. And that's why it needs to be asked — in a province where consumer goods and services are constantly getting better, why is auto insurance one of the few products that seems to perpetually get worse? Why are we paying private insurers when the taxpayers are footing more and more of the costs? It's something the next premier, our new government — and everyone in Ontario — ought to be asking.

For more information or to take the FAIR claimant survey please see our website: <http://www.fairassociation.ca/>

Follow us on twitter: [@FAIRAssociation](https://twitter.com/FAIRAssociation)



Support for Brain Injury after a Collision

Submitted by: Robin Ly, Social Work Placement Student

Survivor
Support
Piece



The Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) is a community non-profit organization serving individuals living with the effects of acquired brain injury (ABI) and their families. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for people in the City of Toronto living with ABI through the pillars of advocacy, awareness, education and support.

At BIST, we try to maintain a barrier-free and inclusive environment so that access to our programs and services is as easy as possible. Our programs do not have a wait list and we do not require medical proof of ABI to join. As long as you identify as having a brain injury – or have a loved one who is living with ABI – we wholeheartedly welcome you. Visit <http://www.bist.ca/join/> to sign up or contact info@bist.ca or 647-990-1485 for more information.

BIST programs typically run on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the BIST Office (40 St. Clair Avenue East, Room #205). Program information is updated regularly and available online at: <http://www.bist.ca>

#BISTUESDAYS

- **ABI Survivor Support Group** – 1st Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8 p.m.
This support program is for ABI survivors aged 29 + and is a place you can connect and learn from others, as well as share your own personal lived experiences. This group has a virtual component so if you have difficulty attending in person, you can attend online. To register go to <http://www.bist.ca> and click on register for BIST monthly programs or call 647-990-1485.
- **Social Drop-In** – 2nd Tuesday of the month, 1-3 p.m.
This is a space where you can meet new people, relax, and have fun with others. No registration required.
- **Community outings** – 3rd Tuesday of the month, usually 1 – 4 p.m.
During this program, we explore and enjoy local Toronto attractions such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Hockey Hall of Fame or the cinema, BIST pays for the ticket and a cup of coffee or tea afterwards. To register go to <http://www.bist.ca> and click on register for BIST monthly programs or call 647-990-1485.

#BISTWEDNESDAYS

- **What's Up Wednesday Youth Drop-In** – 2nd Wednesday of the month, 1 – 3 p.m.
This drop-in is for young adult ABI survivors aged 17-29 and is a great place where you can socialize, play games, and learn from others your age who have ABI. No registration required.
- **Young Adult Support Program** – 3rd Wednesday of the month from 6:30-8 p.m.
This support program is for young adult ABI survivors aged 17-29 and is a place where you can meet with people your age who have ABI, build friendships, and learn new skills. No registration necessary – but if this is your first time coming, please contact BIST programs coordinator Julie Notto at 647-990-1485 or connections@bist.ca
- **Parent Support Group** – 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 6:30 – 8 p.m.
This group supports parents of children with ABI aged 12 and over (including adult children) and facilitates peer learning and education. No registration

required – but if this is your first time coming, please contact BIST programs coordinator Julie Notto at 647-990-1485 or connections@bist.ca

- **Community Meetings** – last Wednesday of the month, 6 – 8 p.m.
These meetings are facilitated by guest speakers on a variety of topics related to coping with life post brain injury, after there is a group discussion and a chance to socialize. No registration required.
- **Peer-Led Caregiver Support Group** – last Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
This group is for caregivers of individuals with ABI including adult siblings, adult children of a parent with an ABI, spouses / partners, and parents/grandparents of adult children with ABI. No registration necessary – but if this is your first time coming, please contact BIST programs coordinator Julie Notto at 647-990-1485 or connections@bist.ca

BIST also runs a peer support program, in conjunction with the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA), for people living with ABI and caregivers / family members of people living with ABI. The program connects an individual who has lived the experience and is trained in peer support with an individual who is in need of support. These individuals then communicate once a week over phone or email for a year. To access this program, please email BIST's Peer Support Program Coordinator, Carrie MacKinnon, at peersupport@bist.ca or call 416-830-1485.

If you are living with brain injury, or another cognitive impairment, and need help transitioning to financial assistance programs such as ODSP, BIST can help! Please contact our Transitional Support Worker, Laura Bellon, at lbellon@bist.ca or 647 271-7853. Among other things, Laura can help with application forms, making sure you acquire the medical documentation you need for your application, help obtaining any needed identification and more.

BIST runs a variety of free workshops throughout the year – coming up on April 26th, 4 – 8 p.m., is our Community Agency Fair and BIST Alive Expressive Arts Show at Christ Church Deer Park (1570 Yonge St, North of St. Clair) where we will showcase the art of people living with brain injury and give community agencies the opportunity to promote their services to the ABI community and beyond. Everyone is welcome! For more information go to: <http://www.bist.ca/community-fair/>

We know meeting new people and joining a new space can be difficult. BIST aims to maintain a safe and non-judgemental space, we start our programs with introductions of all the members and you maintain your right to pass or not share at any given moment. We have designated quiet spaces so that if you are feeling overwhelmed or need a breather, you have a space where you can do so safely.

Many people say coming to BIST programs is an opportunity to meet new friends and to feel accepted by others who 'get' brain injury. Our members are very welcoming to new faces, and we are always eager to expand our BIST Community – so if you are living with brain injury, please come by and say hi!

BIST regularly posts on social media, so if that's your thing, check us out!



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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