

Sharing **OUR** Recovery

A quarterly newsletter designed to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

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ISSUE 9

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Winter Has Arrived!

This winter has not only just arrived but many of us have already dealt with early snow accumulations and treacherous road conditions. We hope that you continue to stay safe and extra cautious when venturing outdoors during the holidays and throughout this winter season.

As the year is quickly coming to an end, we are thinking about all of the crash survivors that are recovering and wish them continued strength and healing. Numerous crash survivors face tremendous losses as well as daily struggles so if your loved one or friend is recovering from a motor vehicle crash, please reach out to them or send them a cheerful card to let them know that you are thinking of them.

This past year, we have continued to connect with so many wonderful Organizations, Businesses and Individuals that support motor vehicle crash survivors and **we thank you!** We are excited for a New Year as it looks like 2020 may have a few new partnerships in the making and we can't wait!

We are excited to be celebrating our 2nd Anniversary of the *Sharing Our Recovery* Newsletter with you this month and we thank each of you for subscribing. In this Issue you will read how a motorcycle crash survivor with a Traumatic Brain Injury is blogging to helping others, a Realtor discusses barrier-free housing, a lawyer explains why it is important to have a Will & Power of Attorney and you will learn 15 Things Only a Crash Survivor Can Tell You.

We would like to thank our sponsor, [Iacobelli Law Firm](#) who has graciously sponsored all 4 (four) issues of *Sharing Our Recovery* for the second year in a row. We are so grateful as we could not have done it without their support! For those of you that continue to recover from a motor vehicle crash this winter, we are always here for you.

Happy Holidays!





Motorcycle Crash Survivor, Rod Rawls courageously shares his story with us. Just under three years ago, I was exercising my right to ride my Harley-Davidson with no helmet when the unthinkable happened. I have absolutely no memory of

the event, but it happened at an intersection that I used daily – sometimes several times in a day. At the time of the accident there was no traffic camera, so there is no way to be certain of what actually happened. The net result was that someone drove up, saw me lying next to my bike in the intersection and called 911. The people who found me thought I was already dead; once the police arrived, they found a faint, erratic pulse and called for an ambulance.

The event occurred less than a mile from the hospital, so the ambulance ride was short. Once my family and my girlfriend arrived at the hospital, they were told that I had been diagnosed as brain dead, and that I would be kept on life support for up to 24 hours to see if there were any changes, but that chances of my survival were minimal. After about three and a half hours, changes did happen. I regained consciousness long enough to move my hand in what the medical team interpreted as an attempt to remove my breathing tubes. Most importantly, it established that there was again brain activity. I then dropped into a comatose state, so they moved me to the ICU but the prognosis still wasn't positive. I was awake the following day.

I Had to Re-Learn Names

My memory, or lack thereof, is the biggest challenge I deal with since being a motorcycle crash survivor. More than 90% of my long-term memory is gone – I remember little of my previous life. I remember a handful of highly emotional events from my childhood, and a scattering of events from my adulthood. Initially, I could only remember the most significant people from before the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) – my mother, my son, my girlfriend, and a few others. Regarding coworkers from my job of 15 years, I had to re-learn names and redefine relationships with everyone. Names still go missing more often than I would prefer.

Left Facing Numerous Physical Challenges

My balance while standing or walking became a special challenge. While an area of numbness in my left foot may have something to

do with this, the physical therapist team at the TBI clinic explained to me that my visual processing had been impacted by the injury. I also fractured bones in my right hand, the brace that prevented it from moving while major brain repair was happening has made me fairly ambidextrous now with a tendency to gravitate to my left hand.

Traumatic Brain Fatigue

Another of my biggest challenges was post TBI brain fatigue, and while it is still an issue now, it doesn't currently impact me to the same degree it did early on. I credit my improvements to both the therapy I went through and my daily meditation practice.

The only serious subsequent medical complication was two TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack) events, also called a mini-stroke. One of these left me with double vision for a period of time, the second one happened about a year later and caused a loss of about 25% of my field of vision for a short time.

Other major changes include my inability to read well now or to perform simple math mentally, and true difficulty in completing tasks and projects. These are all likely related to the inability to maintain a specific train of thought for more than a few moments without my thoughts being derailed and losing track of where I was and what I was even thinking about. Both family and personal relationships were impacted in several ways. Initially it was more of a detachment from everyone and everything. Once I started trying to repair the damage I had caused, I was given a clear understanding that not remembering today about plans you made yesterday with your girlfriend can result in hurt feelings, even when she understands why it happened.

My Life Has Changed in Every Way

Life has changed for me on every level, from how I think to how I talk, from how I walk to how I eat, sleep and how I dress, from things that have become easy to things that are difficult or even impossible now. Relationships – some saved and some lost, but every one forever changed. My professional life hangs in the balance of how I compensate for an extremely dysfunctional memory, inability to focus and emotions that are all too often at the very edge. Without the therapy I received as a motorcycle crash survivor, the resources and tools I've been introduced to, and most importantly, the support of a small family circle and one very special woman who continues to love me through it all... not sure where I'd be by now.

Rod is a traumatic brain injury survivor and caregiver for his mother with moderately severe dementia; he now writes a blog with the goal of helping both brain injury survivors and caregivers to find helpful information, resources and inspiration. For more information on his blog please visit: www.mytiblog.com.



Wills and Powers of Attorney

Submitted by Roy Hwang, Partner Epstein & Associates

Having Wills and Powers of Attorney are important. Nobody knows when an automobile accident will occur, and what effect this could have on a person's health and their family's well-being. Having a will and Power of Attorney can take away the uncertainty in determining an accident victim's wishes in the event of injury or death, and prevent familial conflict when one does not leave direction as to how they would like their property, and themselves to be looked after. Given the unpredictability involved in automobile accidents - and life in general - it is never too early to complete a will and Power of Attorney while you are healthy to ensure your wishes and preferences are respected.

A Will Gives you the Power to Decide

A will is an important estate planning tool for any individual who wants to decide how to divide their property. Without one, the laws of intestacy prevail and the distribution of your estate is determined by reference to the Succession Law Reform Act (more on that later). A will empowers people to name their own executor(s), name guardians for their children, create trusts for children or disabled family members, and even forgive certain debts.

What is a Power of Attorney?

There are two main types of Power of Attorney in Ontario: (1) Power of Attorney for Property; and (2) Powers of Attorney for Personal Care. There are two different types of Powers of Attorney for Property, being either a limited Power of Attorney for Property or a Continued Power of Attorney for Property. Both give authority to a person chosen by the grantor to act on their behalf. The difference is whether this power is limited to a specific transaction, time, or event, or whether it is a general ability to act for the signor that will persist beyond the point when the signor loses capacity. A Power of Attorney for Property can ensure that the property is maintained, and the bills are paid to safeguard the property.

A Power of Attorney for Personal Care takes effect only when the grantor loses capacity and ensures that a person of the grantor's choosing can make their important healthcare decisions. This can be everything from the place the grantor will be living, the food they will eat, to the healthcare treatments that will be administered.

Why do I need to worry about Wills and Powers of Attorney if I am young and healthy?

Waiting until later in life to create a will and Powers of Attorney can cause numerous problems. An unexpected accident could leave an individual incapacitated, after which point any Will or Power of Attorney they sign would be invalid.

Avoid Uncertainty and Family Conflict

Wills and Powers of Attorney can be an invaluable tool to make clear your wishes, and to avoid family conflict. When an intestate person dies or loses capacity, the family is often left in disagreement about what the person's wishes would have been if they had directed their own will and Powers of Attorney. The rules of intestacy may

dictate which family members get a percentage share of the total value of your estate, but it does not establish who should act as executor; nor does it deal with certain details: i.e. who gets specific personal belongings, who you wish to act as guardian for your children if your spouse is also predeceased, etc.

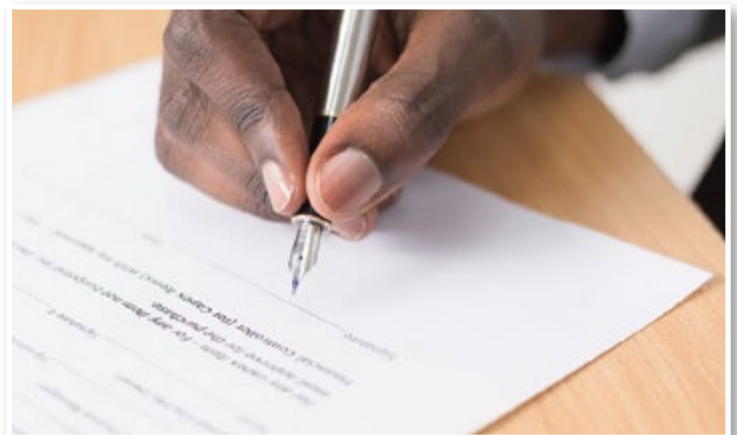
Having a will can reduce speculation and arguments between family members; something that can provide parties an invaluable peace of mind. This situation of family conflict and estate litigation is becoming more prevalent as divorces, blended families, and estranged family members becomes increasingly common.

What if I don't have a Will?

Without a will, the provincial laws of intestacy dictate how a deceased person's property is to be divided. In Ontario, the Succession Law Reform Act outlines the order of intestate succession. For example, where the deceased is survived by a spouse but no children, the spouse is entitled to the property absolutely. Where the deceased is survived by a spouse and children, the spouse receives the first \$200,000 of the deceased's estate with the remainder divided between the spouse and children in proportions set out in the Act depending on the number of children. If there is no surviving spouse or children, the estate passes to a deceased's parents, and if the parents are pre-deceased, to siblings. To avoid the state deciding how you should divide your property, draft a will when you are healthy and with capacity to make your own decision on how to distribute your estate.

Having a will drafted can be a much simpler process than you may expect. In many cases, it is not necessary for you to take inventory of all your assets and liabilities; aside from specific gifts to friends and relatives that you may want to set out, a will can distribute the entirety of your assets owned in proportions (whether equal or not) to your desired beneficiaries without having to list them out. In any case, having a conversation with a lawyer about your estate plan is a good starting point.

For more information please contact Epstein & Associates at:
www.epsteinlawyers.com.



Tips to Happily Survive the Holidays

Submitted by: Amy Mason, Founder of Fitness of the Mind



How are you surviving the holidays? Do you have a love-hate relationship with the holiday season? If so, you're not alone, and in fact if we are honest, most of us do. Even if we love 99 percent of the holiday season, that 1 percent brings stress with it. If we aren't careful, the stress of the season can take the joy out of the holidays. Instead of just surviving the holidays, try a few of these self-care tips to keep holiday stress under control and actually enjoy yourself.

Exercise

You may be tempted to let exercise slide when the holiday season gets busy, but don't as exercise can help you relax. It helps lower stress and improves your mood. For at least part of your exercise routine, remove your headphones and turn off your phone. Enjoy the experience, especially if you are exercising outdoors. Maintaining a healthy routine can be tough during the holidays. Why not give yourself a fitness tracker or smartwatch to help keep you on course? The newer-generation Apple smartwatches have motion-detecting hardware to help track your exercise routines. They also have improved capabilities for measuring your heart rate and pulse.

Eat Well

Don't use the holidays as an excuse to let good eating habits fade. You can still enjoy those special holiday treats, but you don't have to eat everything. Before you head out for an evening with friends, eat something small and healthy first. The rest of the time, try to eat healthy and don't skip meals. Use a nutrition app to help you stay the course as you will feel better and have more energy for surviving the holidays.

Sleep

As you recover, you need your sleep. Since many of us are sleep-deprived, don't add to the deficit. If you drink a lot of caffeine, try cutting back. The same goes for alcohol because both can disrupt your sleep patterns. If you are someone who likes a before-bed snack, stay away from holiday treats and leftovers. Rich foods are hard to digest and can keep you up at night.

Disconnect

Turn off your phone, computer, or other devices for an hour every day to let your mind rest. You may be surprised at what happens once you re-engage with the world. The holidays are full of sounds, smells, and other sensory stimulation. Taking the time to disconnect can help with sensory overload, and giving your mind a chance to rest can help bring things in focus.

Say "No"

Just as PsychCentral explains, you can say "no." Christmas cards, cookies, and decorations; the list is endless. Give yourself permission to stop because trying to be a superhero isn't worth the toll it takes on you. It only leaves you too worn out to enjoy the holidays. Instead, put that time and energy into your self-care.

Gratitude

Did you know that gratitude can help relieve stress and depression? Positive Psychology explains that just the idea of gratitude increases feel-good chemistry in the brain. Thinking about things you're thankful for builds stronger positive emotional pathways, so when you're feeling a little stressed, take a moment to list things you are grateful for.

Be Present

Practice mindfulness and meditation. Being present means experiencing the world around you in the moment. Notice the sounds, smells, and sights around you. The holidays are full of unique experiences, so take the time to enjoy them. Mindfulness techniques can be more than just silence.

The holidays can be tough, but with a little self-care, they don't need to drain your reserves. Ensure you follow these basic essentials to survive the holidays.

Amy is a survivor of a traumatic car crash that left her struggling with anxiety, depression and panic attacks. Amy is helping others in their own health journeys by creating a go-to resource including health and fitness tips for physical, mental, and emotional wellness. For more information please visit her website at: [Fitness of the Mind](https://www.fitnessofthemind.com)



Barrier-free Home

Submitted by Jeffrey Kerr, Broker & Barrier Free Real Estate Specialist

Business
Spotlight

What Is a Barrier-free Home and Where Do I Go?

Post Accident Housing Options

After a traumatic accident that has caused physical injury you have many decisions to make. Housing is one of them. If your pre-accident home can no longer meet your needs, you'll need to consider other options. I can help. For over 20 years I've been a REALTOR® with RE/MAX Unique Inc. in Toronto. During that time, I have developed a very specific real estate niche—helping people buy and sell barrier free, wheelchair accessible houses and condominiums.

Often, one of the first questions I get asked is how I got into this specialized market. Growing up, my mother was a Physiotherapist at Lyndhurst Hospital, now part of Toronto Rehab and my aunt had Multiple Sclerosis and used a wheelchair for mobility. Because of them, I learned about accessibility at a very young age. Fast forward to the mid 90's; I was building houses and got my real estate licence to sell the houses I built. Now I use my construction knowledge combined with my real estate expertise to help clients buy and sell barrier free homes.

Collaboration is the key.

I work closely with you and your family, along with the other members of your rehab team: Case Manager, Occupational Therapist (OT), Lawyer, and Home Modification Expert. The goal is to ensure that after you are discharged from the hospital or rehab centre, your home will be comfortable, within budget and meet all of your mobility needs. If you live outside of the Greater Toronto Area, I will find a Realtor in your location who we can work with.

What Is An Accessible, Barrier Free Home?

I use the terms accessible home and barrier free home interchangeably. There is no standard definition, I think it depends on you, your family and what your collective needs are. Most accessible homes (houses and condominiums) that I work with are modified for a specific person. And usually that person lives there for a long time. For that reason, accessible homes do not come on the market very often. The majority of my clients buy a home that can be modified to suit their specific needs.



Which Option Is Best For You?

House

If you have a large family that requires a lot of space, then buying a house might make sense. Single level bungalows are often ideal, but residential elevators and tele-cabs can make two story houses accessible for everyone. But remember that not all houses are suitable to modify. For example, side splits and back splits often have too many stairs and townhouses can be too narrow to install an elevator.

Condominium

There are many advantages to purchasing a condominium. For example, the maintenance of the building and grounds are included in condo fees and handled by outside contractors. Renovations, however, may not be as easy to make in a condo unit. Plumbing can be a particular challenge since toilet drains, and main water lines cannot be moved and this has to be factored into any renovations that are required. Accessibility throughout the whole building must also be considered. The entrance, parking area, and amenity areas all need to be looked at. Automatic door openers are also critical. And can the underground parking garage accommodate the height of your vehicle, provide transfer space and an accessible path to enter the building?

Rental

Over the past two years there have been a number of new rental buildings that have opened up in downtown Toronto. These new buildings have suites with larger washrooms with a 5' turning radius and wider doors but unfortunately, despite the demand, I haven't seen any that have been built with roll in showers. Finding a rental unit with a roll in shower is extremely rare.

Short Term Stay Accessible Hotel

Many newer hotels have one and two bedroom suites with roll in showers. While this can be a very good option in the short term, it can be very costly over the long term.

Quick Decision

Time is often limited to find suitable housing. Planning for your housing needs must begin as soon as possible after your accident. The good news is that there is an increased awareness about barrier free homes among new home and renovation companies. And with aging in place becoming more common among older adults, the demand for barrier free homes, and therefore the future re-sale value, is only going to increase in the years to come.

For more information on Barrier Free Real Estate please visit:
www.AccessibleHomeFinder.com



15 Things Only a Crash Survivor Can Tell You

There are things only a crash survivor can tell you. Let's face it. Trauma Doctors may have the medical knowledge to treat you immediately after your motor vehicle crash and although I was well looked after as a patient in a trauma hospital, what about all the repercussions in your life once you get home? Although none of us have a crystal ball to see what's on the horizon, every recovery from a motor vehicle crash is unique. Here at 15 things that only a crash survivor can tell you.

- **A Motor Vehicle Crash Doesn't Care** - It doesn't care if you were totally healthy before your crash. It doesn't care how old you are. It doesn't care if you are rich or poor. It doesn't matter if you were not doing anything wrong on the road. None of that matters. Anyone can be involved in a motor vehicle crash at any given time.
- **You No Longer Get A Good Night's Sleep** - Certain medications can greatly impact your ability to fall and stay asleep. You may be in pain and physically exhausted. Sleep deprivation in most people means grumpiness, brain fog and impaired motor function. It's a vicious cycle. The more you can't sleep, the more you worry about it and the worse it gets. Perhaps there is some comfort, however, in knowing that you are not alone.
- **You Find Out Who Your Real Friends Are** - Crash survivors lose a lot of friends. You will need to stay balanced. Pay close attention to the important things in your life. Always remember that we rarely lose friends, we just gradually figure out who our real ones are. You will train yourself to take nothing personally.
- **You Know Your Body Better Than Anyone Else** - We deserve acknowledgment that we know our bodies better than anyone and we deserve to be listened to. It is so important that you become your own advocate.
- **There Are Gut-Wrenching Side-Effects** - During recovery, you may feel so weak and powerless that sometimes there's nothing you can do but curl up in bed and cry. Stay connected. As a crash survivor it is easy to isolate yourself. Stay connected to those who support your emotional and physical health. Seek out a support group.
- **You Will Get Attached to Your Doctors and Nurses** - They become close friends, a second family. After all, they're working with you to try and put your body and mind back to the shape it was before your crash.
- **You Get "Crash Perks"** - Yes believe it or not there are crash perks. Starting with the magnificent "handicap parking pass" that most of us will request when we are not mobile enough to walk long distances as we arrive for our endless follow up appointments at hospitals and clinics. You will realize that to go through something this hard, this awful & this challenging, it will be this same obstacle that will actually

"It is so important that you become your own advocate."



push you in a positive direction. You will have more tolerance and empathy. You will say "yes" to what matters and "no" to what doesn't.

- **You Get To Be An Expert In Patience And Perseverance** - One of the things only a crash survivor can tell you is between all of the medical appointments and dealing with the insurance and legal issues, you manage to keep fighting because you have no choice. It will test your patience, don't let it win.
- **You Will Feel Losses** - You will miss opportunities. You will feel limited. You will feel stagnant and overwhelmed. You will miss out on things you want to do or people you may want to see. Just remember that it isn't your fault. Your life isn't over. It's just on hold. And while your life may never be the same again, you'll learn how to adjust to your "new normal." Things aren't over for you.
- **Absolutely Nothing Will Prepare You** - It's one the hardest journeys you will ever have to overcome. It will change your life physically and mentally. Stay positive - Never give up on your dreams and be kind to yourself. When no one is clapping for you, you must clap for yourself. You should always be your biggest fan.
- **You Will Have A Greater Appreciation for Life** - I believe the hardest part of healing is to recover the "you" that left with the crash. It's a long, tough, grueling journey, but the fight is worth every second. Think of it as two chapters. The first chapter was the loss and the second chapter will be the remaking of your life.
- **You Will Be Aware of Increased Strength** - Stay determined in this fight. The daily struggles are real but you must remain strong. When all is said and done, you will look back and thank yourself for never giving up.
- **You Will Find Joy in Music** - When you are a crash survivor recovering from this life-changing event, music is often a refuge. Melodies and lyrics have a way of calming us.

Whether it's to help us escape, feel understood or to relate through shared experiences, music is pure and it's real. It moves, it heals, it communicates and does so many incredible things for us. Talented young country singer-songwriter and award-winning recording artist, Lisa Mary who is also a crash survivor recently released her new song "Dive" with hopes of encouraging other crash survivors. Her song shares much needed positivity and encouragement that every crash survivor needs to hear.

- **You Will Start a Journal** - If you have never kept a journal before... you will now! You may choose to write about your emotional responses that you are experiencing or you may write about appointments that have happened throughout the day. Writing a journal can help you not only cope with the stress that you will be feeling but it is also a great way to process what you are feeling and perhaps even explore positive outcomes.
- **"You Look Fine"** - Unfortunately you will hear this time and time again throughout your recovery. Welcome to the "life goes on" chapter of your recovery. Your loved ones, friends and quite possibly even doctors may question the severity of your injuries because you look fine to them. Only "you"

will be aware of how you feel physically and mentally. I can't stress it enough that you need to become your own advocate and you should never feel rushed in recovering.

It can feel lonely during your recovery and at first you may wonder how you will cope. I know this transformation is painful but you are not alone and you can find strength in sharing feelings with others who understand what you're going through. We encourage you to join the [Crash Support Network Group](#) which is an online support group for survivors of motor vehicle crashes. Join over 700 members where we will not only support you but we will also inspire and motivate you through your daily struggles. Not looking for a group environment? That's okay! We recommend that you "follow us" on our [Crash Support Network Page](#) where you will find daily up-to-date articles that are informative and useful to crash survivors.

News
Piece

Crash Support Network – in the MEDIA



Dawne McKay was honoured to speak with Janet about the Crash Support Network and to be featured by RESILIENT PEOPLE.

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

Janet Fanaki tells stories of EXTRAordinary people who are admired for their resilience. Back in 2016, Janet's family was hit with devastating news when her husband Adam was diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive and terminal brain cancer. The website she created was born from her own story of resilience. Janet's goal is to show that it IS possible to bounce back from challenges, and not only survive but thrive. Interested in learning about more resilient people? You can visit Janet's website at:

www.resilientpeople.ca

HUSH Blankets offers discount to Crash Survivors for Weighted Blankets

Back in September, I purchased my very first weighted blanket from HUSH and shared my feedback and personal experience with the Crash Survivor Blog entitled, ["Why I Love My Weighted Blanket."](#)

HUSH realizes how difficult it is to not only recover from a motor vehicle crash but understands the financial hardships that we continuously face. The Crash Support Network contacted HUSH and they have agreed to offer



a discount of \$30.00 for all members of the Crash Support Network. *Thank you HUSH!*

If you are interested in taking HUSH up on their offer to purchase a weighted blanket, it's easy! Just click on this link: [HUSH Blankets](#), which will take you to their website, where you can shop for your blanket and your desired weight. When you reach the check out don't forget to enter your discount code which is: CSN30.



Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

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

Email us: info@crashsupportnetwork.com

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CRASHSUPPORTNETWORK

Our Mission is to provide online support, resources and to raise awareness for survivors that have been affected by a motor vehicle crash.



CrashSupportNetwork.com

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