

Sharing OUR Recovery

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

FALL EDITION 2020

ISSUE 12

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Connecting Crash Survivors
One Step at a Time

Autumn is My Favourite Colour

The last few months have been a whirlwind for everyone to say the least. Every summer has its own story and although we are all trying to reach a destination in our recovery, we must never forget that it's about the journey and that you are not alone. Although it feels like summer just started, the change of seasons is quickly approaching. Just the thought of fall makes me want to feel the cooler air and the crunch of walking through falling leaves. Think of this as a positive change to go outside more and to enjoy the beauty that fall has to offer.

We are continuing to connect with so many wonderful individuals who are helping others and most recently, we celebrated our one-year anniversary of our launch of the Crash Support Network website with a cake and Survivor Davis couldn't wait to blow out the candle! We are looking forward to another year filled with continuous support, ongoing networking and some exciting projects in the making!

In this issue, a cancer survivor explains the similarities of healing from cancer, how having a meaningful life post injury is important, you will also learn tools and techniques to overcoming mental challenges after a concussion, what a personal injury lawyer does on your behalf and you will hear how a survivor of a horrific motor vehicle crash started a Podcast that created a network for people to support, motivate and inspire one another.

Lastly, we are thinking of every survivor of a motor vehicle crash. Whether you are recovering in the hospital, a rehabilitation centre or at home, we wish you continued healing. Always remember it's not about perfect. It's about effort. When you bring the effort that's where the transformation happens and we are always clapping for you!

As we enjoy the last warm days of the season, we hope everyone remains safe and healthy.

Thank you to our 2020 Sponsor, [Iacobelli Law Firm](#). We couldn't have done it without you!





And then it hit me, my life as I knew it was turned upside down in a blink of an eye. November 3, 2015 started out just like any other day in my life. I worked as an Accounting Associate full-time and at the time I was studying for my Chartered Professional Accountant designation. Balancing my

work and schooling was very hectic. I would often end the day exhausted. After staying late at work one night, I headed home. Only this drive home didn't end the same. I was hit head on by a vehicle while simultaneously being rear ended at the same time. I have no recollection of the accident from that night. The last thing I remember was turning right onto the road, and then waking up from a medically induced coma two weeks later.

It Was a Miracle That I Survived

I remember waking up and freaking out because I was hooked up to ventilators and tubes. I was later told that the kids who hit me were racing another vehicle at 150km/hr in an 80km/hr zone. They said it was a miracle I survived as I had flat lined a few times. They had only given me a 5-10 % chance of survival. It took the firefighters an 1.5hrs to get me out of the vehicle with the jaws of life.

Afterwards I was airlifted to the hospital. I underwent four major surgeries varying from 8-15 hours each. The surgeon later told me I was humpty dumpty and he had to literally put me back together again. I suffered from 26 injuries some of which include a deflated lung, ruptured diaphragm, broken right tibia and fibula, broken left femur, broken arm and a traumatic brain injury. I have a rod permanently in my right tibia and my left femur. The doctors never thought I'd be able to walk again especially without a walking aid. When they told me this, I knew that this was not an option for me. I was determined to prove them wrong. I spent a month at St. Michaels Hospital in Toronto, from there I was sent to Toronto Rehabilitation for three months and then finally went home. I was non-weight bearing on three limbs and had to relearn everything from rolling over, to sitting

up, to eventually being able to take a few steps with the help of the Physiotherapist and walking aids.

Some Days are Harder Than Others

Today I still suffer from chronic pain, a bad limp that worsens by the amount of activity I do. Some days are harder than others both emotionally and physically. I have had so many medical professionals work with me over the years, some of which I didn't even know was a job before my accident. I have gone from using a wheelchair to a walker to cane and crutches. Not only did they tell me I wouldn't walk again, but also that school was not a good idea as I'd "likely fail", and that I would not be able to have a baby. Against all the odds, I proved them wrong. I have since returned and graduated from school as an OTA/PTA. Most recently I had a baby boy.

My recovery has been the hardest challenge of my life. I have been through hell and back, and have shed many tears along the way. I wanted to know "why" this happened to me. I thought I had my life all figured out and was doing what we are supposed to do. Through all this I have learned my "why", I was given this second chance at life to help people, giveback and for me to finally be happy! I am still learning to accept my new "norm" and that I have a disability. I like to call it "Lindsay 2.0".

One thing I saw that was lacking during my recovery was a proper support group for people like me. I started [And Then It Hit Me](#), a podcast and page in hopes of creating a network for people to support, motivate and inspire one another. Giving the perspectives of trauma survivors, caregivers and medical professionals. I hit rock

"I was later told that the kids who hit me were racing another vehicle at 150km/hr in an 80km/hr zone. They said it was a miracle I survived as I had flat lined a few times."

bottom after my accident, I felt like everyone in my life was moving forward where mine was at a great pause and it wasn't even because of my own doing. I want to share my story to help show the power of resilience, determination and what a lot of blood sweat and tears can do for you! I am still on my road to recovery, constantly reflecting on how far I've come over the past five years: it has really made me realize how true the saying is, "you don't know what you've got until its gone" and I've learned not to take things for granted because you never know what's going to hit you next!

We thank Lindsay for sharing her inspirational story with us and are grateful for her support to crash survivors. Lindsay started a podcast ["And Then It Hit Me"](#) in hopes of connecting a network to support one another and to share her story to help show the power of determination. You can follow Lindsay on Instagram: [And Then it Hit Me](#) or Facebook!



What Does a Personal Injury Lawyer Do?

Submitted by Andrew Iacobelli

When you are seriously injured in a motor vehicle collision, you need a personal injury lawyer to handle your claim but you may not even know what a personal injury lawyer does. If you are hurt in a serious collision, a personal injury lawyer can help you get compensation for your injuries. If you are in a motor vehicle accident, or you have been denied an insurance claim or Long-Term Disability, a personal injury lawyer can help. As you focus on your medical treatment, surgical interventions and therapeutic treatments, a lawyer focuses on protecting your legal rights.



Your lawyer will also represent you at every stage of the claim. This may include involvement in settlement discussions, depositions or examinations for discovery, document productions, mediation, the preparing and filing legal pleadings and motions with court, and any appearances at court or trial. When an agreement is reached outside of court, your personal injury lawyer will review settlement documents and releases to ensure that you are protected.

If you were involved in a collision, the investigating police officer will want answers and if you are injured, your insurance company may need your statement or other information. While you might be able to handle these issues on your own, there may be too much at stake to handle it alone. During the confusing post-accident days, your lawyer intervenes on your behalf. As a legal representative, they will force those people to deal with their team instead of bothering you. A lawyer remains vigilant from the moment you decide you want their representation and a personal injury lawyer protects your legal rights.

If someone else has injured you, you may be entitled to collect compensation for your injuries and losses. A personal injury lawyer can advise you about what steps you need to take to negotiate a settlement. If the insurance company refuses to come to a fair and reasonable settlement, a personal injury lawyer should be ready to take your case to court. Your version of the accident becomes the road map that your lawyer will follow as they protect your legal interests. When your lawyer discusses your case with you, they listen for facts and information that require additional clarification and follow up. They ask relevant questions about your accident circumstances, your injuries, pain, recovery, disabilities, insurance and other key information.

If you were injured in an auto collision, your legal representative will want to know about lights, traffic signals, speed limits, weather or traffic signs. Part of preparing for settlement is doing an investigation of the case and a personal injury lawyer will investigate your case which may involve hiring expert witnesses as well as gathering evidence available as a result of your accident.

If you are in an auto accident, both your auto insurance carrier and the other driver's auto insurance carrier will want to talk to you. To prevent them from contacting you, your personal injury lawyer advises all relevant parties that you are legally represented. They notify each person or entity that all future contacts or inquiries must come through their office. This allows a personal injury lawyer to keep track of insurance communications and insurance claim statuses, injury prognosis, medical treatment and other information critical to your case so you can focus on your recovery.

Important Things to Remember When You Are A Client

Once represented, your lawyer will instruct you on a variety of things you can do (or avoid doing) to help protect your personal injury case. Here are six important things to remember:

1. Do not sign any document relative to your case without discussing it with your lawyer first. Use the rule: "Better Safe Than Sorry".
2. Keep copies of all bills you incur relative to the accident, even if your own insurance company is paying them. Do not throw any documents away pertaining to your case as your lawyer may need them in the future.
3. Notify your lawyer immediately when your doctor has released you from further care and if and when you may decide to return to work. Keep the lines of communication open with your personal injury lawyer when it comes to any type of change in your recovery. Even if you may think the information may be minor, it could be major to your personal injury lawyer.
4. Notify your lawyer immediately if you have a change of address or phone number and alert them if you are going out of town even if it is just for short period of time.
5. Do not change doctors without advising your personal injury lawyer.
6. Be honest with your lawyer at all times. Always remember that your personal injury lawyer is working on your behalf and they have the final say when it comes to any information that may or may not be relevant to your case.

Catastrophic and serious injuries often lead to complex diagnoses, treatment, prognoses and disabilities that can have a profound effect on your life. It is important to seek legal representation right away when you are seriously injured as there are important deadlines involved and most offer free consultations.

For more information on Iacobelli Law Firm, please visit their website at: www.iacobellilaw.com.



Healing from Cancer or After a Crash Can Be Similar

Submitted by Marina Gee

Mental Wellness is critical for any recovery and I've never been in a motorized vehicle collision, but I know you have. But I've always known I'm at high risk for breast cancer. Like a car crash, cancer may very well be just around the corner for any of us. At age 44, I have a 21% chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer (compared to 2.1% for the average woman my age) and my lifetime risk is estimated at 66% (10% for the average woman).

These numbers have been looming over my life for almost two decades now and have caused impact on a myriad of levels. I have been in and out of examination rooms, ultrasounds, MRIs, 3D mammograms, biopsies, and surgery for as long as I can remember -- well before the age doctors recommend you start getting regular check ups. Mostly, this verdict has impacted my mental health. If you put the impending doom of cancer and insufficient mental health management, you end up with a cocktail of dread, solitude and social anxiety, isolation, frequent panic attacks, a vague sense of not belonging, and an overall feeling of being completely alienated from happy times and genuine laughter and banter.

Let me walk you through a "normal" week in my life, back when anxiety reigned, without strictures. Right around the time I was supposed to have a medical check up, I would start having trouble sleeping. I would wake up in the middle of the night, sweating, trembling, nauseous, about to throw up. I'd run to the bathroom mirror and obsessively self-examine my chest for the ninth time, only to find yet another deadly lump, the one that was for sure going to do it for me. If I were able to go back to sleep, I'd wake up to a long day of intrusive thoughts and obsessive-compulsive behaviors; I would feel nausea invading my whole body. If I were hungry, I couldn't eat, I wasn't thirsty but my mouth was dry, I was tired but I couldn't close my eyes, lest I'd see my worst enemy, He Who Must Not Be Named, also known as breast cancer. None of this could I control. In fact, I wasn't even aware that there was any controlling to be done. I thought this behavior was valid and rational, just normal.

Five and a half years ago, I entered my psychiatrist's practice for the first time. By then, the image I had of myself was that I was an amalgam of confusion, dread, panic, misinformation and sickness. The anxiety and panic disorder had gotten so bad that, when I showered, I couldn't touch my chest. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror, and I loathed my breasts because they were the source of so much pain. I wanted to rip them out with my own hands and I couldn't understand why others thought so highly of these appendices in a woman's chest.

It was at that point that I heard about the three-legged stool approach: therapy (mine was Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, usually referred to as CBT), medication, and self-care. Over the course of the last five years, I opened up to the concepts of self-love, self-care and self-loving compassion. These, once abstract, became a strong part of my routine and, now, I can't imagine a life where I don't

prioritize my needs, goals and aspirations. That's when the podcast Mind Bloom became a reality. It was, at first, a means to express my experience and it became, over the last few months, a platform for helping others going through similar challenges.

I have never been in a motorized vehicle crash, like I know you have. But I know mental health is not a given. Like the healing of our own bodies, after an accident or cancer, mental wellness requires time, patience, gentleness, and a huge daily dose of self-compassion. Five years were needed for me to claim and accept a part of my body as it truly is, with its high density, abundant cysts and microcalcifications, and high propensity for breast cancer. Give yourself the gift of self-love and practice self-care with the same diligence you practice physical therapy. Be curious and listen to your needs the same way you would be attentive to chronic pain. Make room in your path to recovery from trauma and distress for mental health. And make sure you're being screened for breast cancer at least once a year. Know the first symptoms and learn how to self-check your chest area. Early detection is key. And so is giving your physical and mental health a big daily hug.

Marina Gee is the host of the podcast Mind Bloom on mental health and breast cancer awareness. She is originally from Lisbon, Portugal, and she immigrated to New York City in 2013, while pursuing a career in linguistic and cultural awareness.

We thank Marina for sharing her inspirational story with us and are grateful for her support. For more information on Mind Bloom including the podcast and blog, please visit her website at: www.mindbloomyou.com.



Happy 1st Anniversary!

Survivor
Davis
Spotlight

We recently celebrated our 1st Anniversary with a cake and Davis couldn't wait to blow out the candle & dig in!



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Tools & Techniques for Overcoming Mental Challenges After a Concussion

Submitted by Ethan O'Brien

Our online concussion course is beneficial to anyone that has suffered a concussion. After experiencing 10+ concussions in my lifetime, I would argue that a concussion's physical pain is just the tip of the iceberg. In my experience, learning to manage and overcome the mental and psychological challenges of returning to your everyday life is a substantial mountain to climb. In this article, we'll discuss tips and tools for overcoming common mental and psychological challenges that you are likely to encounter after a severe concussion.

My History of 10+ Concussions

As a young Canadian boy, I loved hockey. However, little did I know that my love of the sport would result in life-altering injuries that would plague me for decades to come. I experienced my first concussion at age 11. Over the next decade, I experienced more than 10 concussions.

After each significant concussion, I experienced a drop in my cognitive abilities. There were definitive points in my life where I could intuitively feel something wasn't right with my brain's functioning. Since I was in school and being tested regularly, I could see on my test results that my brain was not performing as well as it was before the brain injury.

Sometimes this mental 'fog' would last for 3-6 weeks; however, more often, it would last for months. Over the years, I sought solutions from all kinds of doctors and specialists. Yet, no one could help with the mental & learning challenges I was facing. At this point, I accepted that these challenges are a recurring problem that I would need to learn how to overcome whenever I have a concussion.

If you have been involved in a car crash and sustained a brain injury, then you may be experiencing some of these challenges:

Common Mental Challenges

- Trouble remembering facts, figures, or names
- Difficulty concentrating & focusing
- Difficulty holding conversations

Common Psychological Challenges

- Feeling sluggish or low-energy
- Feelings of depression or anxiety
- Feelings of hopelessness

Unfortunately, many people get stuck in this rut and never discover the tools and techniques to progress forward.

There are too many tools and techniques to list in this short article, but I'll give you three that have been effective for me:

1. **Use the Pomodoro Technique** - This method involves working on one task for a set period of time (often 25 minutes) with frequent breaks between each work set (5-10 minutes). The brain's ability to focus drops significantly after 25 minutes of continuous work. However, studies have shown that if work

or studying is interrupted with a rest break for a short time, then the brain's ability to focus on and retain new information is reset.

2. **Breathing Exercises** - Learning to utilize deep breathing exercises to enter a deeply relaxed meditative state is an incredible tool for quickly reducing your symptoms and changing the way you feel. Did you know that many pains and symptoms around the head, neck, and shoulders may be caused in part by inefficient breathing and a lack of oxygen in your brain tissue? Practicing deep breathing exercises can be a great relief and pairs well with the rest breaks in the Pomodoro Technique.
3. **Creating Your Own Notes** - In University, I had to refine my note-taking techniques to adjust with the sheer volume of information I needed to know to pass my classes. I would start by highlighting all information that seemed relevant or that may be on the test. Then, I'd review all the highlighted information and create a 1 or 2-page note sheet of the most relevant information from my highlighted notes. Using this strategy, I could distill all the chapters of information down to one or two pages of the most critical 20% of information that was very likely to be on the test.

Lastly, on the topic of psychological challenges, I have found that the key to overcoming this is to define a compelling vision of the future that you are working towards. Then, whenever you feel depressed, hopeless, or feel any other psychological issues related to post-concussion symptoms, read or visualize your compelling vision for the future. Those are my suggestions on overcoming the psychological and mental challenges that frequently appear after a head injury.

For anyone suffering from post-concussion symptoms, my partner Dr. B & I have spent the last year developing an online concussion

course, the hidden reasons for long-term symptoms, and many natural ways to heal and mitigate symptoms.

With concussions, no drug or doctor is going to solve all your problems. We show you the do-it-yourself solutions in our online concussion course to get your life back. These simple habit changes, exercises, tips, and techniques can create a substantial shift in the way you feel.

We thank Ethan for sharing his tools & techniques for overcoming mental challenges after a concussion and for his support for crash survivors.



If you would like to contact Ethan to discuss more solutions or for personal coaching, please send an email to hello@concussionrecoverykit.com and mention this article or you can visit their website at Concussion Recovery Kit.



10 Tips for a Meaningful Life Post Injury

Submitted by Anna Leggett

Survivor
Advice



Having a meaningful life post injury is important. My name is Anna Leggett and I live in East Anglia in the UK. In November 2016 I was involved in a rear-end collision when my car was hit by a large SUV. I sustained a mild brain injury and a musculoskeletal injury to my head, neck, shoulder and back. I have made a good recovery but I do still have daily neurological and pain symptoms which I've thankfully learnt to manage and minimize for the most part.

I believe there are so many things we can do to help us heal and live a meaningful life post injury. In my article I would like to share 10 tips for survivors of auto crashes.

- Obtain the healthcare assistance you need as quickly as possible. The sooner you get the right help, the better your recovery will be. This refers to not only physical and brain injuries but also psychological injuries. Choose healthcare providers wisely and find the best people for you. Consider not just mainstream options but also alternative therapies that resonate with you.
- Empower yourself on your recovery journey. Educate yourself as much as you can about your particular injuries and healing treatments for them. You know your symptoms and challenges better than anyone else. Question things. If something isn't working or you don't find the healthcare provider sympathetic or understanding, then go elsewhere. Take charge of your own health and healing journey.
- Emotions such as grief, guilt, sadness and anger are understandable after a traumatic and life-changing event. Emotional healing is a process and takes a different length of time for each individual. If you find yourself stuck and unable to move on, then do see a counselor or therapist. You can't go back and change what happened but you can use what has happened to you to shape a meaningful and fulfilling future. Those feelings do become less intense over time and they may pass altogether. Acknowledge them when they arise but then choose to make the most of the rest of your life.

- Believe that you can heal and improve every day. You are not stuck where you are. Harness the power of neuroplasticity for your mindset and recovery and create positive neural pathways in your brain. Build mental as well as physical strength.
- Be inspired. Seek out inspiring and positive stories of others who have overcome difficulties. Read books about inspiring people. Focus on what you can do and not on what you can't. Find motivational quotes and put them up around you in the house or write them down.
- Hire the best specialist lawyer for your particular injuries that you can. Don't underestimate how stressful the legal process can be and how that can impact you. Having a good lawyer will minimize this stress. Compartmentalize your legal case and don't let it spill into your everyday life. When you're not having to deal with it then mentally file it away so that you can focus on other aspects of your life.
- Don't be too proud to ask for help. Reach out to friends, family, neighbors, counselors, healthcare providers and helplines. Join a local support group or social media groups for your particular issues. Be honest about your struggles and the things you need help with. Don't try to do everything yourself and don't hide away. Research shows that loneliness is more harmful than smoking.
- Make self-care a priority and put yourself first. Develop healthy lifestyle practices such as healthy eating, regular exercise, getting outdoors, journaling and doing new things. Be gentle and kind with yourself. Do things that make you happy. Spend time with the people you love and who care about you and minimize time spent with people who don't understand you and drain you. You need all the energy reserves you have for your recovery.
- Learn and practice mindfulness and breathing techniques. You can try breathing in for a count of 6 and out for 10 a few times. Become more self-aware and notice how you are feeling. Notice your surroundings and try and bring yourself into the present. This will all help you to reduce anxiety.
- When you are ready, reach out to others and share your experiences post injury. This could be through local support groups, charities, with a blog or via social media. Research shows that helping others not only has obvious benefits for the recipients but has health benefits for you. It will also help to build your confidence and self-esteem. Your story and experiences can help others. Remember, we're stronger together.

In early 2020, Anna created a website lovebrainreset.com to share her experiences and helpful resources with others who have sustained similar injuries. We thank Anna for sharing her inspirational story with us and are grateful for her support to crash survivors.

For more information about Love Brain Reset please visit: lovebrainreset.com



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



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