

# Sharing OUR Recovery

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

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Connecting Crash Survivors  
One Step at a Time

## Warmer & Brighter Days are Coming!

March is a time of change, renewal and growth. It's a reminder of the light after the dark and new beginnings. It's also the month that spring makes its arrival and the one that brings us back that extra hour of sunshine that we have all been patiently anticipating!

As we welcomed the New Year, we have continued to connect with so many brave crash survivors and most recently, took the initiative to start a monthly Zoom chat. Setting aside an hour to host a well-needed "check in" with a handful of survivors sharing our hardest struggles has proven to be quite beneficial. Interested in joining us? We welcome you to send us an email at [info@crashsupportnetwork.com](mailto:info@crashsupportnetwork.com) and we will be happy to add you to our email list.

Last year, a member of the Crash Support Network Group reached out to me as she was interested in creating an online support group for women that sustained a pelvic fracture in a motor vehicle crash. "A safe space where women crash survivors could share their experiences in order to heal and help their fellow sisters." A group entitled, "[Pelvic Fracture Sisters](#)" was created and the members are so grateful to be able to share such personal struggles with each other. I am so proud of this courageous crash survivor for taking this initiative. Well done!

Next month is very special to me as we have lots to celebrate. Firstly, the [Crash Support Network Group](#) will be celebrating five years since it was first created and as I reflect back to that day, I will be forever grateful to all of the members that have joined our group as this online presence continues to help so many survivors in numerous ways. Secondly, the Crash Support Network Website will be celebrating two years since it was first launched and our audience has grown tremendously. Lastly, over the last year, I have been working extremely hard on accomplishing a goal that is so important to me. I am pleased to announce that I have written a book entitled "[Talk Crash to Me - What to Expect After Surviving a Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery](#)" which will be available soon... so stay tuned. April sure is shaping up to be a month full of celebrations for the Crash Support Network!

The Crash Support Network is so grateful to our sponsors for their continued support. By sponsoring our newsletter, you are supporting the continued growth of this valuable resource. Thank you!

In this issue, you will read how a courageous amputee found her true passion in helping others, a victim of a life-changing crash shares her struggles and praises her boss for being so understanding, you will also learn important tips for spotting an impaired driver, a personal injury lawyer discusses Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and you will learn the secret to recovering from a crash.

This past winter has been extremely hard on everyone especially with the pandemic and as we move forward into a new season, we are thinking of every crash survivor recovering and look forward to continuing to support you.

Wishing you continued healing,

- Dawne

# Crash Survivor Shares Her Struggles as a Victim of a Drunk Driver

Submitted by Shelly

As a victim of a drunk driver, Shelly was seeking support and joined our [online support group](#) two years ago. Shelly agreed to share part of her story with our readers as she understands that sharing her recovery may help other survivors move forward. Many supportive and inspirational conversations take place in the Crash Support Network Group on a daily basis with survivors of motor vehicle crashes and Shelly has been an active participant sharing not only her struggles but her victories as well.

## The Day I Want to Forget

My accident was October 17, 2018 around 9:30pm and I was a victim of a drunk driver. I was leaving work after a walk-in emergency and my shift was supposed to be over at 8pm. My dachshund "Widget" was in the car with me on my way home. We were going around a curve when we were hit head on by a drunk driver (I found out after that he was over two times the legal limit). After the impact I remember thinking "that did NOT just happen" then looked to my passenger seat where Widget had been. She wasn't there and suddenly realized that she was killed instantly. I got myself out of the car to try and see if the other driver was ok and realized quickly that I couldn't walk. I looked down and my right shoe was missing and my foot was covered in blood. I thought I should probably sit down and wait for help.

I laid in the grass thinking "I could go to sleep right now, and everything will be ok". The police came to the scene and I started screaming for someone to check my dog, as well as my husband's phone number. I've had over 13 surgeries for a fractured calcaneus and surrounding bones. They wanted to amputate my leg that night, but didn't because the Orthopedic Doctor wasn't in the hospital at that time. I was cut across my abdomen from the seatbelt from hip to hip, the skin and fat on my stomach were degloved from my body wall. I suffered several broken ribs and a severely bruised heart and lungs. The doctors told me the only thing that stopped my ribs from puncturing my heart was the fact that I have large breasts (apparently my big boobies helped). I was in the ICU for weeks and the total time in between the hospital and rehabilitation was a month. I have been diagnosed with anxiety, severe PTSD, and depression. I used to ride horses, motorcycles and hike all the time. I can't ride either horse or a motorcycle anymore.

## Painful Reminders

I'm now disabled due to a severe foot/ankle injury from my accident and for some reason random people come up to me and ask some variation of "What's wrong with your leg?".... What if I walked up to someone and said "What's wrong with your face?" Who does that? I answer honestly saying my foot was basically amputated in an accident as I was a victim of a drunk driver, oh and by the way my dog was killed in the accident" (but thanks for pointing out the one thing that I hate about myself most of all) I know today's society says "I'd rather you ask than stare" but when I'm out having a good day or trying to do my job I don't need a reminder of the worst day of my life. Thanks!

Between the high's and lows, Shelley has even shared some fun posts with the members of our group. She wrote: "What's the funniest thing that has happened to you BECAUSE of your accident? I'll start. At my last Physical Therapy appointment my husband came with me to "celebrate" and while he was talking to my Physiotherapist, I overheard them talking about my progress etc. Then I hear Chris (my husband) say "Hey, I'm good with where she is physically right now as she can't run away from me". I almost fell over laughing. My Physiotherapist, Paul just replied with "we aim to please". It definitely made and still makes me giggle! Let's all have a laugh at what otherwise is some shitty times. As always, I love all of you and you make my day brighter just for being here!"

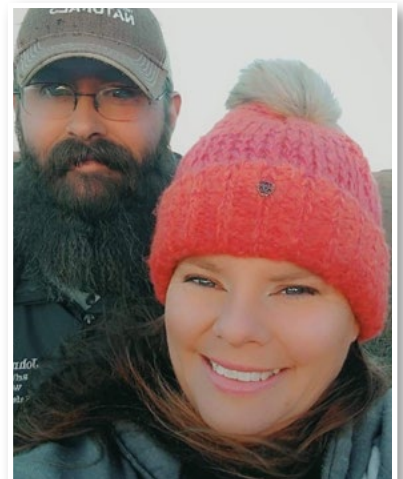
## I Praise My Boss for Being So Understanding

Before I was a victim of a drunk driver, I was an orthopedic surgery nurse at a very progressive animal hospital. I have multiple credentials and my job was my life. I am permanently disabled as a result of this crash caused by a drunk driver and I can no longer stand for the 3-4 hour surgical procedures. My boss/practice owner is more than amazing. He made a position in the hospital for me as a Pharmacy Technician. Recently an inventory management position opened up and he pushed me to take it. I turned it down many times thinking "If I take it, I'll never get back to surgery". I knew I couldn't do it anymore but didn't want to make it official. After many interviews, he approached me again, asking me to come up with MY terms for taking the job. And boy did I come up with terms! Which he accepted. Every. Single. One. Of them!

So long story short, after 20 years in the field I have a title, my name plate as well as my service dog's name plate on the door and a "Zen/Relax" area on my desk in my own office. While I do miss surgery, I'm so glad he valued me as an employee enough to put up with the "after accident me"!

Shelly spent a month in rehabilitation, has undergone over 13 surgeries to re-build her body and suffered tremendous loss. We are so thankful that Shelly found our online support group as sharing stories can be quite powerful. They move us, inspire us and motivate us. Shelly lives in New Jersey with her husband who has been her cheerleader throughout the entire process and her service dog, Aurora.

Drunk drivers are one of the most dangerous drivers on the road. It is so important that we, as drivers, look out for one another and if you spot an impaired driver, please call the police and report them.



# Amputee Finds Her True Passion By Helping Others

Submitted by Kayce

Survivor  
Spotlight

On Sunday, Dec. 1, 2013, Kayce Kerr was in a near fatal car accident along I-95 returning from Thanksgiving weekend in Maryland with her family. Rescue crews worked for over 2 hours in an attempt to extricate her from the vehicle. As a result of the crash, her right leg was trapped in between the steering wheel. Her right tibia was blown out, 4 inches of bone gone. Medic units contemplated amputating the leg on scene, but an educated medic observed her healthy leg tissue protruding from the wound and made every attempt to save the leg.

She was flown to Vidant Medical Center in Greenville, NC with life-threatening injuries. Kayce underwent 6 surgeries on her leg, foot and ankle within 3 months enduring unimaginable pain and suffering. She had over 15 plates and screws placed in her lower extremities. With each surgery came complications and setbacks, but Kayce never gave up.



5k followers on Instagram, with the majority of her followers being amputees or car accident survivors. She has three or four people reach out to her everyday with questions about amputation or how to handle their prosthetics, and this is her true passion in helping others now.

Her years of suffering left her wanting to help others. She has always been one to give back and put others first and founded Southern Maryland Survivors Network, a support group for accident victims and others who have endured trauma in their life. Unfortunately, SMS has been put on hold for a while due to COVID-19 but will hopefully be back up and running again soon.

Kayce is still not back to work full time, but she is in the process of getting certified in Personal Training and Nutrition so that she can continue to help support other amputees.

In 2018, Kayce got an infection 'Staphylococcus Aureus' and had emergency surgery. The infection resurfaced in 2019 and she was faced with a two-step surgery process or amputation. Kayce wanted to exhaust all options to keep her leg so she chose a procedure where doctors removed her mega-prosthesis and put in a concrete spacer (full of antibiotics), for 10 weeks to kill the infection until new mega-prosthesis was surgically placed which was ten weeks of no weight bearing, isolated at home relying on family for caretaking. Unfortunately, another infection resurfaced in February of 2020, the pain was so great, a 2-inch hole in her right leg had formed. It was at that moment, Kayce wanted to reclaim her life and be done with the pain, the agony of hospital stays, surgeries, etc. and ultimately made the decision to move forward with an above the knee (AKA) amputation.

On May 15, 2020, Kayce became a right leg amputee having her 19th surgery. Less than 24 hours after her surgery, she was up and walking around the hospital ward due to her strength and perseverance. Just six months after Kayce's amputation she had her running blade and was out practicing different drills with it and she is now waiting to get a knee to go with her blade so that she can be out, and start running long distance like she was prior to her accident. In the meantime, Kayce has now built up almost

We welcome you to follow Kayce's journey on Instagram [@kayceamputee](https://www.instagram.com/kayceamputee).

An advertisement for Warm Buddy products. It features a woman lying down on a bed, wearing a patterned top. The text reads: "CRASH NETWORK SPECIAL. We have heard your many stories and want to let you know that we can help. We want you to try our Microwavable Weighted WARMING BLANKET. Customers consider them to be their favorite product for providing COMFORT, PAIN RELIEF and STRESS REDUCTION. People LOVE the superior moist heat, providing them with many years of comfort. Cost is \$60. Order directly from our company at info@warmbuddy.com. Mention Crash Network and we will send to you with FREE SHIPPING. See our products at www.warmbuddy.com. You may want to add an AROMATHERAPY SLEEP MASK. Made in Canada www.WarmBuddy.com." The Warm Buddy logo is in the bottom left corner.

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Warm Buddy



As we are out driving, we always encounter reckless drivers. Most rant and rave when a driver cuts them off, forcing drivers to slam on their brakes, or when someone is so distracted that they cannot seem to stay within their own lane. Usually, most drivers react with annoyance, possibly making some gestures to let the driver know of their distaste in their driving skills before they continue on their way. I can't help but wonder how many times we may be ignoring drivers, excusing them when they may be driving while intoxicated.



road. To report a drunk driver, you need to call 911 as soon as possible by using your hands free. Let the operator know you want to report a suspected drunk driver. Give them the exact location of the vehicle and try to be as specific as possible. Your call to report a drunk driver could end up saving lives and preventing a serious crash.

**Here are seven things to keep in mind when you spot an impaired driver:**

- Stay far behind the suspected drunk driver.
- Get out of the way and expect the unexpected.
- Try to pay attention to the area where you are, direction of travel, description of their vehicle which could include the color and license plate.
- Do not try to pass the car.
- Do not try to stop the vehicle.
- Do not follow too closely. The car may stop abruptly.
- Do not try to detain or confront the driver. *Wait for the police!*

## Surviving a Crash Caused by an Impaired Driver

I have connected with so many crash survivors that are recovering from a crash caused by an impaired driver and I have also connected with many that have lost a loved one(s) due to an impaired driver. As a creator of an online support group for survivors of motor vehicle crashes - [Crash Support Network Group](#) as well as a [Fatal Crash Support Group](#), it is truly heartbreaking to read the struggles and frustrations that survivors are left to face during their recovery especially when they are recovering from a motor vehicle crash that was caused by an impaired driver. Time and time again, every time I turn on the news or scan social media, there are numerous drivers being charged with impaired driving. Most recently, "The Ontario Provincial Police laid 346 impaired driving charges during the holidays from Dec 20 to Jan 3." What could possibly be their excuse?

Drunk drivers are one of the most dangerous drivers on the road and unfortunately many people still choose to drink and drive. The tragedy in this is that serious life-altering injuries can take place as well as fatalities and those collisions could have been prevented if the driver had decided to refrain from driving. In the age of ride sharing options like Uber and Lyft, there is no excuse to get behind the wheel if you have had too much to drink.

## What if You Suspect a Drunk Driver on the Road?

If you suspect that a car on the road is being operated by a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the main objective is to keep yourself safe while finding a way to get them off the

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*"The tragedy in this is that serious life-altering injuries can take place as well as fatalities and those collisions could have been prevented if the driver had decided to refrain from driving."*

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## Drunk Drivers Are Not Just at Night

Although we imagine that most drunk driving cases happen late at night after consuming too many drinks at a bar or party, the reality is that a driver can be under the influence of alcohol at any time.

Years ago, I was lined up in a drive-through to pick up an early dinner and I noticed the woman in front of me was alone in her car and seemed to have having difficulty. At first, I thought she may have been having trouble deciding what to order as she was taking too long but the more I watched her, it was clear to me that she was impaired.

I remember looking at the clock in my car and thinking to myself "it is only 2 in the afternoon, how is it possible that this woman could be impaired"? I did not hesitate and took it upon myself to call the police and report her because even if she was not impaired, she could have been having a health issue and she was driving alone. I gave them the location where she was as well as the make of her car and license plate as she began

to swerve out of the parking lot. I think a lot of drivers need to understand that it only takes a few minutes of your time to report a suspected impaired driver and the police do in fact take your call very seriously as there is no excuse to drive impaired.



## There is No Excuse to Drive Impaired

continued from page 4

### Some of the signs to watch out for include:

- Drifting, weaving, or swerving on the road;
- Tailgating other vehicles;
- Driving in the middle or on the wrong side of the road;
- Failing to turn on headlights at night;
- Sudden unpredictable movements such as erratic braking;
- Reacting slowly to traffic signals;
- Accelerating or slowing down too quickly;
- Making a turn that is too wide;
- The driver appears to be drinking or positions their face close to the windshield, as if they can't see;
- Disobeying traffic laws (running a red light, failing to stop at a stop sign).

### Tips to Keep in Mind to Stop Impaired Driving

Stopping a friend or family member from driving while intoxicated may be one of the most important decisions you will ever make. If they are lucky, the friend or family member will listen to reason and do the safest thing. However, it is not always easy for an intoxicated person to understand the dangers that are involved to both themselves and drivers around them.

### Here are some tips to keep in mind to prevent friends, colleagues and family from driving impaired:

- Make a plan – take alternate transportation; uber, taxi, public transportation, a ride to and from a location.
- Remain calm and as non-confrontational as possible if a heated exchange occurs.

- Speak slowly to the intoxicated person so they can understand the dangers and try to rationalize with them.
- Suggest a sleep over.
- If possible, take their car keys - do not be afraid to take someone's keys.

Drunk drivers are a serious risk to everyone on our roads, including themselves and there is no excuse to drive impaired. Learning to spot and avoid a drunk driver is an important part of keeping yourself and your loved ones safe, and we all share a responsibility to report them to the police. Impaired driving means operating a vehicle (including cars, trucks, boats, snowmobiles and off-road vehicles) while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

It is so important that we, as drivers, look out for one another and if you spot an impaired driver, please call the police and report them. Ask any survivor of a motor vehicle crash caused by an impaired driver or someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one(s) due to a motor vehicle crash caused by an impaired driver and they will tell you that there is absolutely no excuse to drive impaired. Ask any parent that has lost a child to an impaired driver and they will tell you that it is gut-wrenching devastation so next time you may suspect an impaired driver on the road, please make the call as a family's life is depending on it.

*Is it your Crashiversary this month? Approaching this day is difficult for so many motor vehicle crash survivors but you must always remember on this day that you are healing and that's worth celebrating every year!* →

### Looking to connect with other Survivors of Motor Vehicle Crashes?

We welcome you to join our Facebook Family at [Crash Support Network Group](#)

Is your loved one, friend or colleague recovering from a motor vehicle crash or have you met another victim of a motor vehicle crash? Please ask them to [subscribe](#) to our informative newsletters and tell them about the [Crash Support Network](#).



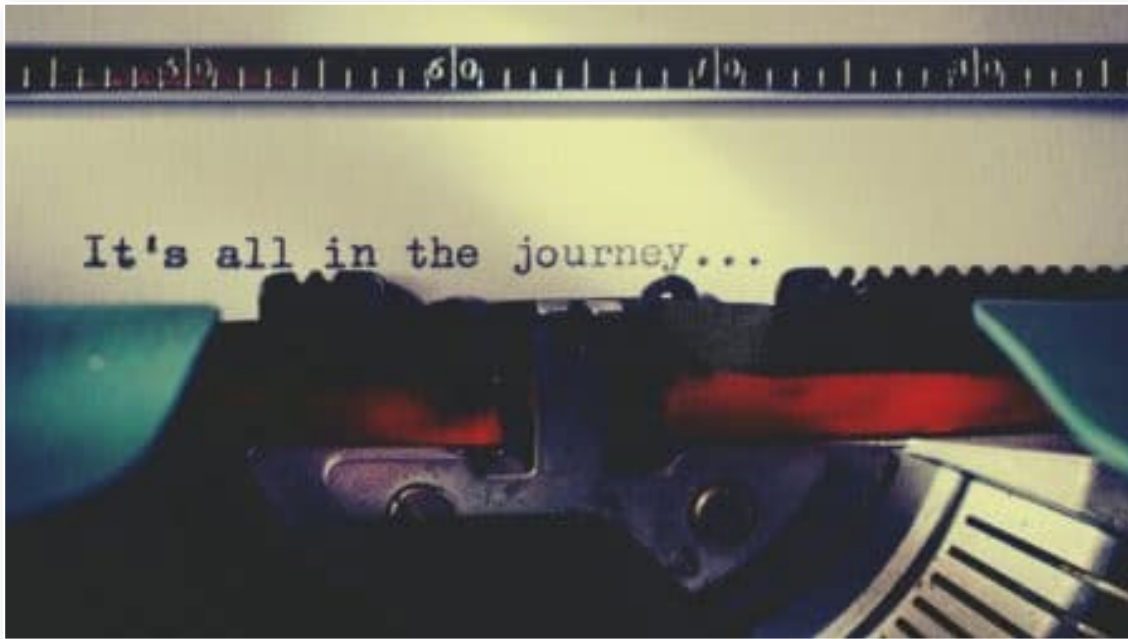
You are healing and that's worth celebrating every year!  
Take a moment and reflect at how far you have come today.

**Never lose hope. Be proud of yourself. You are amazing!**

You have survived a lot and we are thinking of you today.



# The Secret to Recovering from a Crash



The secret to recover from a crash is surviving it in any way you can. Now I know what you may be thinking, “Really? Is this the advice you’re giving me?” My answer is *yes!*

Here’s the thing, just like your motor vehicle crash itself, it’s unpredictable. It’s never just about recovering from your physical injuries as there is so much more to conquer on your journey. Countless medical appointments, legal battles and dealing with insurance issues never seem to end and it becomes your “new way of life”. You may feel okay one day but then you may feel so overwhelmed the next that you may not want to even get out of bed. You will wonder if it will ever let up. At best it can be described as a roller coaster ride you never wanted to go on and have no idea when and if it will ever end.

## Allow Yourself Enough Self Care

On the bad days, do whatever it takes to hang in there and keep fighting. To you this may mean that you allow yourself to stay in bed or binge watch Netflix until the good days arrive where you can try to get back to a normal life that you desperately want. To others it may mean eating chocolate cake for breakfast because you have already put on so much weight from being immobile that you find yourself saying “what’s an extra few pounds going to hurt?” For most crash survivors, it’s needing to keep saying, “Sorry, I am not able to come,” to their friends and loved ones. The problem that so many survivors face is that we feel defeated and do not allow ourselves enough self-care we need to make it through the worst of times. We start to believe that we are a bad mom or dad, wife or friend – and that we are lazy, or we are not trying hard enough. We are being told that we need to get over it.

## But Here’s the Thing -

These thoughts or comments are not doing you any good. They are making the battle you are already fighting that much worse and you still require the need to survive in any way you can. I can’t tell you how many countless days and sleepless nights I have spent feeling sorry for myself. I don’t remember the exact date when I realized I had to begin the process of acceptance. Neither I, nor you, chose this but it is what it is. These are the cards that we were dealt and you have to decide how to make the best hand of it and it’s not easy.

Although my roller coaster ride may have partially slowed down, I still fight the recovery battle every single day. I have to remind myself that while I cannot control how my injuries have affected my body, I can choose how it affects my mind. The difference between the “me now” and the “me at the start of my recovery” is that I am allowing myself to survive in any way I can and that is the secret to recover from a crash. I allow myself self care and compassion as well as love. I am doing my absolute best while I face such a challenging journey and I try to surround myself with people that understand.

Now you may be asking me “When will this happen”? You just do it. You force yourself to put one foot in front of the other. You refuse to let it get to you. Although no two recoveries are ever the same, I want you to know that I continue to live it everyday and it’s still a work in progress. Remember that the secret to recover from a crash is surviving it in any way you can. If I hadn’t continued to remain strong, I wouldn’t have met so many brave crash survivors in our [Online Support Group](#). Please be kind to yourself as you are doing the best you can.



# Learn about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Submitted by Andrew Iacobelli, Personal Injury Lawyer

We commonly associate post-traumatic stress disorder with people who undergo extreme stress, such as soldiers who have been in combat situations. However, PTSD can affect anyone who lives through something very traumatic such as a car accident.

Not everyone who goes through something so stressful and traumatic will suffer from PTSD—and you may or may not experience these symptoms. Some of the most common indicators of PTSD include:

- Frequently reliving the trauma, such as frequent flashbacks or recurring nightmares.
- Avoiding anything associated with the accident, such as driving, or talking about the accident with others.
- Reduced emotional contact with others.
- Exaggerated reactions. This can include startling easily, feeling exceptionally irritable, or being unable to sleep.

Children can experience PTSD differently than adults. Their symptoms could include some of the following:

- Refusing or being unable to speak
- Becoming exceptionally clingy
- Bedwetting after being toilet trained

There are a variety of treatments available for PTSD. Your mental health professional can recommend cognitive behavioral therapy or psychotherapy to help you manage your symptoms, among other things and can also teach you pain management techniques that may help.

## Learn How to Manage Anxiety

Whether or not you have PTSD, heightened anxiety after an accident is quite common. Recognize that anxiety is both normal and manageable. We recommend you try the following when you find yourself becoming anxious:

- Practice mindful breathing by taking slow, deep breaths.
- Focus on the world around you. Notice physical objects in the present moment instead of mentally reliving the accident.
- Learn and use muscle relaxation techniques.

A therapist or mental health professional also can help you learn anxiety-controlling techniques specific to your situation. Contact a mental health specialist if you feel unable to cope with anxiety and if anxiety interrupts your everyday life.

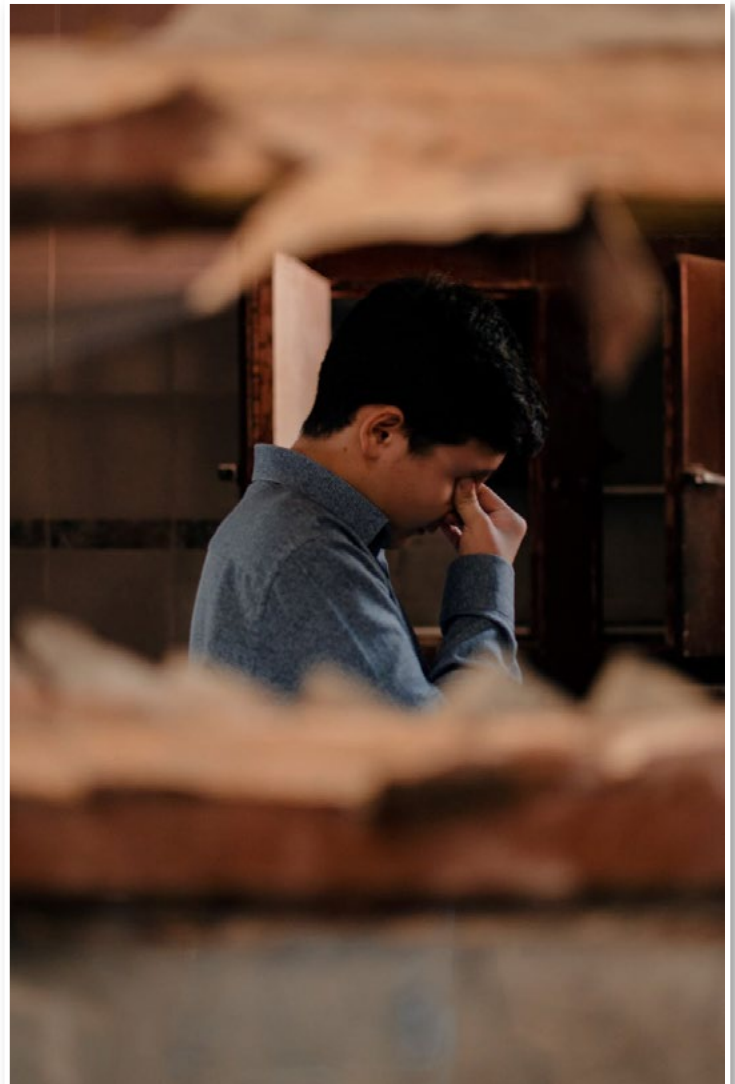
## Take Care of Yourself

You have just been through a very traumatic experience. It's okay to give yourself time to cope. Be patient with yourself; as with physical injuries, emotional scars take some time to heal.

Suffering silently can only add to your mental anguish and distress. Talk to a trusted friend or family member about your experience and how you are coping. Just make sure someone is available to help you process your anxiety and emotions. It can also be helpful to find a therapist who can help you work through your issues. They are qualified to give you advice on managing your stress and coping with your trauma.

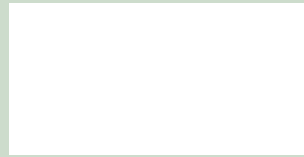
Similarly, you deserve to be compensated for all types of damages incurred. Talk to your personal injury lawyer about how the accident affected your mental health to make sure you receive the treatment you need and deserve.

For more information on Iacobelli Law Firm, please visit <https://www.iacobellilaw.com/>.



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### Articles/Stories:

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Want to share?

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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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### Meet Dawne McKay – Founder

Dawne McKay is a survivor of a horrific motor vehicle crash and is the creator and editor of *Sharing our Recovery* as well as the Founder of the **Crash Support Network**. Dawne is not shy about what happened to her because she has become an advocate for other crash survivors. She had to go through her own struggles to create a community of courageous survivors who continuously fight everyday. Dawne resides in Ontario, Canada and manages both the *Sharing our Recovery* Newsletter and the **Crash Support Network Group** virtually from her home. The Crash Support Network Group consists of members from all over the globe and her highly informative one-of-a-kind website is attracting thousands of visits a day.

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