

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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Brought to you by:



Connecting Crash Survivors
One Step at a Time

Brighter Days Have Arrived!

Summer - Sunny days that seem to go on forever. Evenings that stay light until well into the night and mornings so bright they make you excited and motivated to get up. Over the last few months, we have continued to connect with so many brave crash survivors and the Crash Support Network is definitely getting noticed! The number of loyal subscribers to our Sharing our Recovery Newsletter has surpassed 1000 subscribers *thank you!*

One benefit of summer is that each day we have more light to read and it's the perfect time for crash survivors to read my new book, *Talk Crash to Me – What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery* which was released this past March. I am deeply touched and thankful at the outpouring of remarkable reviews of my book that I continue to receive and I am so thankful to the many crash survivors and organizations that have purchased “Talk Crash to Me” available for purchase on Amazon.

I am also thrilled to announce another collaboration with the Crash Support Network! Andrew Lawlor is a motorcycle crash survivor and knows everyone's journey is unique, and hopes that fellow survivors might find a new perspective, or encouragement in the stories he tells. We are thrilled to announce that Andrew will be sharing his journey through ongoing contributions to our Crash Survivor Blog as a Guest Blogger that you don't want to miss! Subscribe today to receive the Crash Survivor Blogs right in your “in box” by becoming a follower at:

<http://eepurl.com/gkTcvj>.

In this issue you will hear from a traffic safety advocate who has gained national recognition, a crash survivor shares her recovery journey after an impaired driver changed her life forever, you will hear how grief has empowered an attorney to understand his clients, you will also hear about a virtual wellbeing workshop series for concussion survivors and a brave gentleman shares his journey with us after being involved in a catastrophic motorcycle crash.

The Crash Support Network is so grateful to our sponsors and supporters for their continued support who make it possible to provide this valuable free resource for survivors of motor vehicle crashes. Thank you!

As always, we are thinking of every victim and survivor of a motor vehicle crash that is recovering this summer and realize that your journey is far from easy. You are not alone and we are always here for you.

Wishing you continued healing,

- Dawne

Crash Survivor Often Wonders How Things May Have Been Different

Submitted by Stephanie, North Carolina

Life-changing crash leaves survivor wondering if she could have had a normal life. September 29, 2018 started out as an ordinary day, but ended in a tragedy of twisted metal and pain. I met my boyfriend a few months earlier so the relationship was new; still in that exciting stage of discovery. I went to his house that night to eat dinner and watch a movie. I was on my way home just after eleven p.m. when a drunk driver crashed into me. In that instant, everything in my life changed. That impaired driver not only changed my life, but the lives of my children. The crash happened just three and a half minutes after I left his home. What if I had stayed three and a half minutes longer or left three and a half minutes earlier?

I've often thought about how things could be different; I could be living a pain-free life and have full range of motion of my body parts and working back at my job – I could have had a normal life.



Life-changing Crash Involved Tremendous Loss

It has been almost three years since I was cut out of my vehicle and airlifted to the ICU of a major trauma center. Since then, I have had countless surgeries, some I remember but most I do not. I have also lost several relationships, including my boyfriend and my parents, due to the stress and trauma of the impaired driver's selfish decision to drive drunk. I had been divorced for 12 years and my divorce attorney recommended a will and power of attorney. I had never imagined that it would be used. My parents and my sister were listed and my parents were in charge of making life and death decisions regarding my care. This time was very difficult for my family. My parents also went to court because my ex-husband filed a motion to suspend child support for our daughter which was very stressful for them.

I may appear like most women my age but the pain and difficulties from my injuries are always there. Due to the rate of speed and the type of impact my body will never be the same. The trauma surgeons saved my life that night by putting me back together with hardware in my neck, femur, tibia, foot, and ribs. The impact also caused one of my eyes to cross which left me with a visual impairment. Having worked as an optical technician for over 10 years this news was devastating for me, I still remember opening

my eyes and feeling utter panic. With limited range of motion in my neck driving would be challenging.

Lessons Learned with Tragedy

I've had to depend on lane assist in my new vehicle as well as special mirrors, I also suffer from PTSD from the crash which makes it difficult when I am riding in the passenger seat. I have learned from this tragedy that there are good people in life that want to help.

I found a bigger purpose by sharing my story with MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) to help other survivors and Law Enforcement. There's a great reward for making my pain into something that might help others.

Lastly, I have learned to be grateful for the good days and allow myself grace when my body is in severe pain and I can't do the things I want or need to do. I found we are all connected

through painful times and I've found ways to look for my blessings in this burden.

We encourage you to follow Stephanie on Instagram at:

[therapywithstephanie](https://www.instagram.com/therapywithstephanie) where she is sharing her recovery journey. She is a true inspiration!

CRASH NETWORK SPECIAL

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Grief Empowers Attorney to Understand his Clients

Submitted by Geoffrey A. Jones, Esq.



On August 7, 2008, a woman passed out at the wheel of an SUV. She crossed the center line, and struck a minivan driven by a 17-year-old girl. The woman had two prior impaired driving convictions. She was drunk and her blood tested positive for the presence of other drugs.

My mother Judy was killed in the wreck. My sister was traumatized, and many other lives were affected. At the time of the wreck, I was twenty years old and entering my final semester of college. Shortly after the loss, I went back to school and completed my degree. After finishing college, I returned home in preparation for law school. But home never felt the same after my mom died. I would never again be graced by my mother's smile, her baking, or her singing in the kitchen. My mother was a rock in my life and the rock for our family. Words cannot explain the sudden and profound change for our family.

I Sought to Escape My Pain

After my mother's death, I had difficulty sharing my story. I foolishly hid it away. Instead, I sought to escape my pain. Sometimes through all-nighters at the law library or working out. Other times I would seek refuge in bars or in unhealthy relationships. Most people my age had never experienced the loss of a parent. Sometimes, I would feel embarrassment or shame when my secret was discovered. And I never knew what to say or how to connect with others who had experienced it.

After law school, I applied to a job that was posted on my local bar association's website. I later found out that the firm represented individuals who have been injured in car wrecks. I got the job. But it was tough for me to deal with the subject matter. Cases with debilitating injuries triggered the pain that I had hidden away.

Other times, I had thoughts about my clients like, "they weren't hurt that bad." Or "they don't know what true trauma, grief, or loss is like." And you know what? Those thoughts limited me in my ability to represent these clients.

I Locked My Grief Away

Looking back, I realize that for years I did not open myself up to my grief. I sought to put it in a box and lock it away. I sought to escape my grief. But you can't escape grief. If you don't open yourself up to grief, it pours out of you in the form of resentment, guilt, and shame. I was hiding who I was, and that lack of authenticity held me back from who I needed to become.

Over time, I have opened my heart up to experience the totality of my feelings surrounding my loss. I no longer put my grief in a box and lock it away. I no longer feel the need to keep it private or to feel shame about it. I no longer deny myself grief. My story empowers me rather than holding me back. It connects me with my clients rather than creating a barrier between us. I empathize with them. I put myself into their shoes and get to know them. I do my best to find out what they desire, and why.

Now that I have opened myself up to grief, I am a better person and a better lawyer. Every day I strive to live wholeheartedly and to represent my clients wholeheartedly. If you have experienced trauma or loss, I encourage you to do the same. Sometimes it will be painful. And sometimes it will be overwhelming. But open your heart to live fully.

Attorney Geoff Jones is a personal injury attorney in Columbus, Ohio. He founded The Jones Firm, LLC in 2019 to provide a better experience for personal injury clients. Geoff represents individuals who have been seriously injured in motor vehicle collisions and lives in Columbus with his wife and two black labs.

For more information please visit: www.jonesfirmohio.com

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](#).



A Home for Your Complex Feelings During Recovery from a Traumatic Brain Injury

Submitted by Lina Maria Aristizabal



Learn to Thrive

WITH POST CONCUSSION SYNDROME

For many traumatic brain injury survivors, the world had stopped long before the planes were grounded and the restaurants were closed to curb the spread of Covid-19. In March 2020, we watched as everyone's plans, vacations, routines, movie nights, hobbies, and gatherings were cancelled indefinitely. We watched as our friends and family joined us in being stuck at home and unable to do all the things that we loved to do out there in the world.

For many of us dealing with a slow recovery from a traumatic brain injury, watching this all unfold was a very strange experience. And one that brought mixed emotions. I, like so many others, found myself feeling worried and scared at the start of this pandemic, but I have to also admit that it felt really good to take a break from the FOMO (fear of missing out) or more accurately SOMO (sadness of missing out) that had been a mainstay feeling since my TBI in November 2018. During the first year of the pandemic things were hard and my recovery was slow, but at least there wasn't anything to miss out on.

I Wasn't the Only One Feeling This Way

Emotions are complex. And the relief I felt from no longer feeling Sadness of Missing Out is something that most people wouldn't really understand. But I learned I wasn't the only one feeling this way. It's so absolutely isolating to feel like you're the only one- the only one with a complex feeling, the only one left out, the only one not well, the only one with your specific symptoms, the only one as sad or lonely or in as much pain as you are. And yet, we so rarely are the only ones.

Sure, at home, in our regular networks of friends and family, we can often feel like an outsider. Where the expression of the magnitude of our concerns or the complexity of our feelings fall on well-intentioned but not-quite supportive ears, if we're lucky. But we are not alone in this. Not far from each one of us there is someone else feeling the very same thing. And the best gift we can give ourselves is the gift of connecting: of reaching out to the community, the support group, the network of people who understand you and what you're going through, in all its complexity.

Many Will Still Have Some Complex Feelings

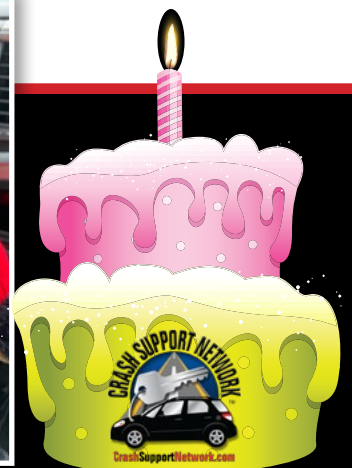
As parts of the world begin taking steps toward opening up again, and people celebrate their freedom to gather, take holidays and go back to their routines, many of us still recovering may have some complex feelings about that. There is no better home for complex feelings than in a community that understands. In our interconnected digital world of social media there are more opportunities than ever to find community and connection. Be sure you're giving yourself that gift so you don't have to feel like the only one, because you're not. None of us are.

Lina Maria Aristizabal is co-creator and co-facilitator of Learn to Thrive with Post-Concussion Syndrome, a virtual wellbeing workshop series and community for concussion survivors. Together with Occupational Therapist Arvinder Gaya from PiOT Inc., she supports concussion survivors to build resilience, find connection, improve relationships and boost happiness during recovery.

Lina Maria continues to deal with persistent concussion symptoms after her TBI in November 2018. She is also a wellbeing and resilience trainer and certified life coach. Learn more at <https://piot.ca/thrive>.

Our Mascot, Survivor Davis turned one last month and we celebrated with a cake and balloons. Thank you for all of your hard work Davis.

We appreciate
you!



Driving in the Real World: What the Motorist Handbooks Don't Tell You

Submitted by Mi Ae Lipe, Founder

People often ask me how I became a traffic safety advocate, and it's an unlikely story. I've adored cars since I was a child, when I dreamed of becoming an automotive designer. Like many teens, I couldn't wait to learn how to drive; after taking driver education in high school, I got my license at age 18 in California. Then I promptly got a job driving for a living, working for several Bay Area car rental companies that needed vehicles shuttled to various locations; at one point I was traveling about 100,000 miles annually.

Nothing Prepared Me to Witness Drivers Breaking the Rules

But absolutely nothing in high school driver's ed prepared me for the real world in terms of hazards, spatial fluency, and situational awareness. Rules of the road? Everyone seemed to be breaking them, so why obey them? Speed limits? Out the window. Like many teens, I learned by trial and error with close calls and minor fender-benders. Later I moved to different parts of the country. Each time I had to take a new written test to get a new driver's license, and I was always struck by the disconnect between what the state motorist handbooks extolled and what was really taking place on the street. I also continued to drive for personal reasons all over the US year-round. Along the way, I saw far too many crashes with heartbreaking glimpses of their aftermath—from neighborhood fatalities to children's toys flung along interstate center medians.

About ten years ago, I simply got tired of all the bad driving around me and decided to do something about it. It sounds ridiculous, as I didn't have a real plan, but I always knew I could do something. I decided to become a change agent and be open to whatever might organically happen to meet that goal. I started researching on my own, attending traffic safety conferences, taking extensive driver training (rally, racetrack, and intensive street courses), and conversing with people from different safety backgrounds.

Two Dedicated Citizens Strengthen Driver Training

Ultimately, I decided to focus on two different topics: exceptional street driving technique and cultural attitudes toward traffic safety. Along the way, I founded [Driving in the Real World](#), which features a blog with thought-provoking posts and fantastic guest experts, as well as carefully curated videos, books, and other safety resources.

Early on, I was incredibly fortunate to meet a like-minded citizen advocate named Mark Butcher, and together we worked for eight years to persuade two key Washington State government agencies to strengthen driver training, testing, and licensing standards for new drivers. This transformative experience demonstrated that even just two dedicated citizens could positively change something as daunting as state government policy.

National Recognition Well Deserved

In 2016, Mark and I co-organized and led a weeklong research trip to the UK to introduce government officials and driving-school owners to the British traffic safety ecosystem, widely considered

among the best in the world. For this work, Mark and I were recognized by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2017. Most importantly, I'm proud to say that the driver education curriculum in our state has changed because of our efforts!

I now write and consult for companies and organizations and am a regular columnist for Roundel, the magazine of the BMW Car Club of America. I also serve on the safety subcommittee of a government workgroup for autonomous vehicle strategy and policy in Washington State. A recent interest is educating the public about AVs and the advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) on our modern vehicles, as well as exploring our paradoxical attitudes toward both.

In my work, I try to get beyond tired, often-cited statistics and explore constructive alternatives to simple don't-do-this, don't-do-that answers. What's truly not working in the big picture? Why? How can we think about a problem differently, both on a macro- and microlevel? I'm especially fascinated by the intersection of social sciences and psychology in influencing what we do behind the wheel; after all, we drive exactly the way we are as people. What makes you a better driver makes you better at many other things in life—it's literally in how we navigate our world.

We Need to be Offering New Drivers Superior Education

Bad driving and human error are also frequently painted as character flaws to be penalized by threats and judgement. Yes, some reckless risktakers deliberately disregard and endanger others, but most crashes—even deadly ones—are the result of everyday people innocently making everyday mistakes because they never received proper training and they don't know what they don't know. That's usually not their fault. Instead of berating them and punishing their ignorance with ineffectual penalties, warnings, and messages, let's start with the root causes for their choices, decisions, and motivations—and offer them superior education, positive reinforcement, and lifelong learning.

The US ranks the worst of the top 20 developed nations for fatalities per million vehicle miles traveled, among other safety metrics. The reasons why are many, but the ranking essentially stems from two factors: We have not had the collective political will to make traffic safety the priority it should be, as have the other 19 countries, and our culture regards driving as a right, not a privilege. After all, the best way to not become a crash survivor is never to be in a collision in the first place.

For more information please visit drivingintherealworld.com and we encourage you to follow Mi Ae on twitter at [DrivingReal](#).



Motorcycle Rider Never Stood a Chance

Submitted by Andrew Lawlor

This Life

Husband, father, writer...

infrequent and at least 55% impaired.

*Impaired as in injured, damaged, diminished,
less than whole.*

Please be patient, I'm still getting used to my new brain.

I have no answers, no advice, no guidance.

All I have is a story.

*A story about the one reason I'm so damaged;
three why I'm still alive.*

A story of catastrophe, fear, love and Triumph.

Three acts, a thousand words at a time, a month at a time.

Oh, and there's a pretty girl and a dog, so read on...



I don't know who I am.

On the morning of July 28, 2018, I knew who I was. I began that day like any other, morning coffee with my wife Lesley. The house was quiet – teenage boys don't get up that early. Indie, a yellow lab and perhaps the sweetest dog ever, idled in the spot where the morning sun shone through our back window. 'Who I was' was a husband, father, friend – a writer by trade and by practice, a creative director in an agency, a spoken-word performer and an enthusiastic but mediocre beer-league athlete...

And I rode - 'who I was' included a motorcycle. Not just any motorcycle, my Triumph Bonneville... a contemporary café-racer in the style made world-famous by Steve McQueen, and famous to me by my cousin Peter.

Grumbly baritone voiced, beefed-up, blacked-out, and naked - she was beautiful.

This is the world Lesley and I... dur, I haven't really told you about Lesley. I've told you more about my bike than my wife of 27 years... If this story was a movie, I would not be the star of it. Lesley is my heroine, my alpha and omega. I was smitten with her at first sight, she had shiny hair and she smelled nice, which is high praise from a boy in grade six. Lesley has been the star of my story for three-quarters of my life, and never more than in the last few years. My role in this story was like Kevin Costner's in *The Big Chill* – present, credited, but... peripheral.

And she loves to dance.

Lesley loves to dance, and I do not. Now, I cannot. What I'd give...

It reminds me of the story behind a famous song by The Drifters, as I heard told by Lou Reed. The lyrics were written by Doc Pomus; he wrote them on his on his wedding day. Pomus, confined to a wheelchair by polio, married a beautiful Broadway actress who loved to dance. And he loved her, so...

"...don't forget who's taking you home, and in whose arms you're gonna be..."

Lesley, my darling, save the last dance for me.

The last thing I remember is kissing Lesley goodbye – I can't imagine how many times I told this lie. As the fog of delusion and paranoia lifted, it seems my brain manufactured memories to fill gaps – nature abhors a vacuum. Truth be told, I don't remember much from that summer, let alone that day.

I woke up in hospital, emerging from a three-week coma; escaping vivid, persistent and terrifying coma-dreams I wouldn't acknowledge for months.

I remember most of them; I've documented some of them.

I've considered including them in these articles but am wary of triggers – we'll see.

Newly awake in a hospital bed, I didn't question why I was there. Or how I got there.

Or why I was in such pain.

I didn't question the tubes, wires, the machines that go 'ping!'

I didn't question the casts, the erector-sets screwed into my pelvis, hips and arms.

Or the suspicious absence on one half of the bed.

I didn't ask... nor did I not know.

I didn't remember, but I knew. It's as though I knew before I knew. I knew I was catastrophic.

There was a constant stream of people in my room – I recognized some but didn't know who they were or why they were there. I didn't let on; I smiled, nodded... alone in a room full of people. There was one, though. She was there all the time. She had shiny hair and she smelled nice... and she put a hand-drawn sign on a drab, otherwise empty wall in my room.

continues on page 7



Motorcycle Rider Never Stood a Chance

continued from page 6

“The key is this: Meet today’s problems with today’s strength. Don’t start tackling tomorrow’s problems until tomorrow. You do not have tomorrow’s strength yet. You simply have enough for today.” (credit - Max Lucado)

The police call it car v motorcycle. Spoiler alert, the car wins. Every time. I set out to get an oil change, cruising on a surface road 60kmh throughout. Heading in the opposite direction was a jacked-up, dropped-down, loud-muffled, slick-tired idiot-mobile – a security cam captured video of it just meters before it spun out of control – it was travelling at 120kmh.

One-hundred-and-twenty. In a 60. Noon, on a Saturday. Too much speed, too little tire, too little ability, too little sense. Dreams of being Fast and Furious. The reality of being Dumb and Dangerous. I never had a chance. Couldn’t even react. The impact was so violent the motorcycle and car actually melded at points – embracing both myself and the bike in an ungainly, ruinous waltz, before launching both unexpected dance partners back into oncoming traffic.

The witnesses knew it was bad. The firefighters, then police, then EMT’s knew it was bad. Bad enough to close the road for investigation. As they do with all anticipated fatalities...

I was a seasoned rider, but no amount of experience or training could have prevented what happened. Just the year before, my friends pooled their pennies for a 50th birthday gift. Their directions were clear - I was to spend it all on a helmet - all of it. From then on, I rode with a helmet that was more expensive than my first car. Little did we know...

This is the first of three reasons why I am still alive.
And a reasonable place to pause.
Until next time.

Andrew Lawlor is a motorcycle crash survivor. Since July, 2018 he has drawn on the love and support of his family and his community, working to repair body, mind and soul. Andrew knows everyone’s journey is unique, and hopes that fellow survivors might find a new perspective, or encouragement in the stories he tells. The Crash Support Network is thrilled to announce a collaboration with Andrew as he shares his journey through ongoing contributions to our [Crash Survivor Blog](#).

For more information on Andrew’s journey please visit:
[The Catastrophic](#)



available at
amazon

“In my 25 years as an occupational therapist working with clients who have sustained complex injuries due to motor vehicle accidents, it inspires me when one of our clients make it their mission to help others by sharing their own difficult journey. This book is a must-read for all those who suffer from injuries and sequelae from a motor vehicle accident. Dawne beautifully describes her experience as a survivor and outlines the valuable insights, tips and strategies that she learned through her journey to recovery. I highly recommend “Talk Crash to Me” to all survivors and health care professionals.”

– Arvinder Gaya, Occupational Therapist & CEO, PiOT Inc.

“What an amazing book!! As a crash survivor myself, this book discusses everything you would need to know if you were in a collision. Crashes can happen so suddenly, and this book is what every person and family member needs to navigate a difficult situation. Not only does she share details about her story, she also wrote the book to help others! A true survivor! This book with always stay on my shelf; it’s a wealth of knowledge.”

5 stars!!!! Bravo! Excellent book!!!

– Susie M, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor

“Dawne did an amazing job writing in the clear language. It can give the reader insights to what a person will go through after the traumatic, life changing event of a motor vehicle accident. As a survivor myself, I wish I had this book as a “heads up” to the roller coaster ride I would be on for years. Recovery, adjusting, adapting, grieving and then living my best self.”

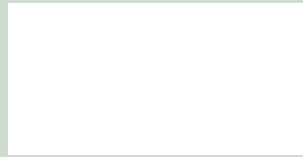
– Tammy Kirkwood, FAIR Association Vice-Chair

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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.



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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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