

Sharing **OUR** Recovery

A quarterly newsletter dedicated 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

Stay Cozy This Winter

Winter weather has arrived and for those of us that live in colder temperatures, winter can wreak havoc as we recover not to mention the added stress of layering and lacing up when we have to venture out to an appointment. As we approach the holidays, we find ourselves distracted by an unexpected life change and the constant worry about our health and finances can linger in the background as we try our best to embrace the festive spirit.

It seems like everything sleeps in winter but it really is a time of renewal and reflection. As I reflect on the past year, I am truly grateful for the opportunity to connect with so many amazing and courageous crash survivors as well as numerous Organizations and individuals that continue to support the Crash Support Network. Just last month, I celebrated a Decade of Healing since I became a survivor of a crash and to my amazement, I still can't believe it has been 10 years.

We are so thankful for our continued support from our sponsors both with the *Sharing our Recovery Newsletter* and our [Website](#). Sponsors are not only helping survivors find their way as they recover from a motor vehicle crash, they are also allowing us to maintain our advocacy work and provide this valuable resource. *Thank you for believing in the Crash Support Network!*

In this Issue you will hear how tragedy and trauma inspired a strong and determined woman to open up her own law firm, you will also hear from a woman that became her husband's caregiver which led her to create a caregiver group to help herself and others, and our Guest Blogger, Andrew Lawlor who continues to share his catastrophic journey with us has decided it's time to start writing about life after trauma.

As always, we are thinking of every crash survivor that is recovering this holiday season and understand how overwhelming and challenging it will be. Always remember that it's important to take as many breaks as you need and to find a quiet space for you to practise self care.

Don't forget that flowers bounce back after a harsh winter and you will too!

Wishing you a safe holiday season,

- Dawne



A Decade of Healing

Submitted by Dawne McKay, Founder of The Crash Support Network

Last month, I celebrated my Crashiversary. It was a big one. 10 years ago I was driving alone when my life decided to come to an unexpected halt by no fault of my own. I was doing everything right that morning but sadly, the other driver was not. Rear ended at a high rate of speed and pushed into the path of a transport truck led me to be transported to a local hospital and then transferred to a trauma hospital. That is how I started my day on November 12, 2012.

“As I reflect on a decade of healing, I would like to add that it has also been a decade of learning.”

As I reflect on a decade of healing, I would like to add that it has also been a decade of learning.

Learning how critical it was to obtain a highly experienced and empathetic personal injury law firm to represent me in my claim and fight for the compensation I deserved after suffering multiple injuries including a traumatic brain injury.

Learning how important it was to have a rehabilitation team set in place to help me try to put my pieces of life back together to where I once was before the crash.

Learning who my real friendships were and who I could rely on the most.

Learning what it was like to not be able to work and to make financial sacrifices as I put my recovery first.

Learning that insurance companies take their time compensating you as they decide whether your multiple injuries are significant enough.

Learning how to live with chronic pain, sleep disturbances and cognitive issues.

Learning to practice self care and to take it one day at a time.

Learning that there wasn't much support available for someone like me and deciding to do something about it.

Learning that connecting and helping others is therapeutic and extremely beneficial.

Learning that I wasn't alone.

I know so much more than I did when I first started my recovery and I am still learning. For several years, I have always acknowledged by crashiversary with my online community by offering a give-away and a decade of healing was definitely worth celebrating. Last month, I decided to give away ten (10) signed copies of my book, *“Talk Crash to Me – What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Crash and How to Manage Your Recovery”* to members of the [Crash Support Network Group](#). The feedback I have received from the winners is overwhelming and I am so honoured to be in a position to be able to give a crash survivor a little bit of hope and direction as they face their road to recovery.

Supporting Others Has Become My Passion

After a decade, some days I still don't have it all figured out. I just wake up each morning ready to put in the work every single day as best as I can and it doesn't matter if I mess up because I will be back tomorrow to show up again. I am a strong voice and when I first created the [online support group](#), I remember thinking to myself, “If I only help one person from feeling alone” it will be worth it. Never did I think I would become an editor of a quarterly newsletter or a crash survivor blogger let alone a self-published author. To say my passion lies with the [Crash Support Network](#) is an understatement. I am so grateful to have founded a community of courageous

warriors who continue to fight everyday as well as a highly informative one-of-a-kind website for crash survivors across the globe.

As always, I look forward to seeing what's on the horizon for the Crash Support Network and the next decade!



Traumas and Healing Inspires Law Firm

Submitted by Shanna Hesketh, Personal Injury and Criminal Defense Attorney

Traumas and Healing. I've known that I wanted to be a lawyer ever since I was a little kid when my friend's dad told me that he was a lawyer and it meant that he made money by arguing with people. Sign me up, sir. As I grew up that decision was solidified with every episode of Law & Order I watched and every mock trial round I competed in. Very few things in my life remained constant, but my goal of being a prosecutor never changed.



Fast forward to 2011—I'm 21 years old, a nationally ranked mock trial competitor, and getting ready to start my internship at the District Attorney's Office before graduating college and heading off to law school. I had it all figured out, until we got the call that my younger brother had been shot and killed around the corner from our childhood home. In addition to the trauma of losing him, we were thrust into the legal system with a murder case that was being prosecuted by the same office I'd been set to intern with. My well-made plans fell apart. I delayed graduation to grieve, attend the murder trial, and figure out new internship options.

Trauma #2 Leads to Serious Spinal Injury

My college placed me for an internship at a law firm specializing in personal injury and workers compensation. To be honest, I hated it. Civil law felt incredibly boring and low stakes in comparison to the murder trial that I was living out and these injured people just complained too much for my liking. I did my time at this internship like a prison sentence until a few months in when Trauma # 2 hit—I was hit by a negligent driver and suffered a serious spinal injury. It's like God was showing me what those injured people were complaining about and growing my heart for a personal injury practice in a dramatically hands on kind of way.

After neck surgery, three rounds of steroid injections, and almost two years of physical therapy I finally started to get my life back. I put my new neck to use by training for a half marathon, jumping back into old hobbies, and generally just enjoying my life that was

no longer riddled with debilitating pain. Until Trauma # 3—another negligent driver. More pain, more spinal injections, more surgery.

Personal Injury Law Was Calling Me

By the time I healed from this injury I had graduated law school and was preparing for the bar exam. I felt more confident than ever that God had created me to

be a criminal defense and personal injury lawyer and was pushing me into it with murder trials and personal injuries that hit a little too close to home. As I passed the bar exam and began my lawyer life, I thought the traumatic growth experiences would stop as I was living out the calling that God had for me.

Key word: thought.

Trauma # 4—would you believe me if I told you I got hit by another negligent driver? Because my spine surgeon sure didn't. More injections. More surgery. More physical therapy. And a special little hell more commonly known as a traumatic brain injury. I spent six months at a brain injury rehabilitation facility learning how to walk and talk and see properly again—all so I could fight my way back into a courtroom to fight for my clients.

After two and a half years of recovery, I was ready to get back in the courtroom but I knew that I needed to do it my way. I needed the authority to control how best to take care of my clients and to determine how much support and what resources I got. I needed to start my own law firm. On July 1, 2022, I launched [Trauma Law California](#). A firm full of folks who understand that the legal system is traumatic and dealing with your lawyer doesn't have to be.

For more information and to follow Shanna's journey, please visit [Trauma Law California](#).



"And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,

The door in the mountainside shut fast. Did I say all? No!
One was lame and could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame his sadness, he was used to say

It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft of all the pleasant sights they see,

Which the Piper also promised me."



TBI – a loaded initialism. People react to the term Traumatic Brain Injury the way Harry Potter characters reacted to the name Voldemort. Once my body injuries were on the mend, it was time to return my focus to my brain. New brain, unfiltered. I forget things, simple things, recent things, dated things. I can remember who played bass for Streetheart, but I have no idea what time my wife said she would be home this evening... I remember having a mad crush on Lesley in grade 6, but I cannot remember marrying her. I remember the birth of one of our boys, not so much the other. It's like someone skewered my grey matter, poking holes in my archives.

When in control, I like my new brain. I enjoy wandering the corridors, opportunities behind every door. Behind each door is papers in piles, unopened envelopes, small boxes filled with trinkets and baubles. When my brain is not in control, the corridors are filled with shadows, locked doors, windows painted over and painted shut. Occasionally a door opens, leading to another door and another, and another, and another, and I wonder how I will find my way back. Then I don't find my way back.

Trapped in a Vicious Circle

Sometimes lucidity. Other times aberration. Most often monomania. One day I can write a whole chapter in an afternoon, the next

day it takes the whole afternoon just to write one email. Trapped. In a vicious circle. Like Groundhog Day. When it's mild, it's a weapon. When it's bad, it's crippling, unrelenting, like a hang nail, like an itch inside a cast.

I get picayunish, bent out of shape over the smallest things, the slightest slight. I fixate on something, talking ad nauseum with (omg how did she get so patient) Lesley. I can see it as it's happening. I can see it, and I cannot stop it. I can't get away from it. I've been tested and it appears that I am just as smart or stupid as I was before the catastrophe. Visual puzzles, word problems, math, language, all of it is just as it was before, for better or worse. However, two things seem to have changed.

- Executive functions, as I understand, include planning ahead, learning from the past, and managing time for the completion of a task. This is the first issue.
- I can complete every task, just not in a timely manner. It's as though I'm swimming in jello. All the effort is there but the results are... like when you run away from something in your dreams. Slow.

In my youth, around 10, 11, 12... I had a hockey coach who called me 'snowshoes'. This was his commentary on my speed and agility. He said it a lot, on the bench and in the dressing room—in front of teammates and parents. Times have changed. This probably wouldn't happen today, but I honestly didn't care at the time. I brought a couple of other skills to the arena (played a bit rough...), so I played at a fairly competitive level and got my fair share of ice-time. All that said, I was sloooow.

My Slowness Knew No Bounds

I was slow on the ice, I was slow on almost any field of play – rugby pitches, football fields, baseball diamonds... my slowness knew no bounds. I was slow, but relentless. In my 30's I ran 10K's, half-marathons, marathons, triathlons. Never won, not even close. But I finished them all. I was slow, but I didn't feel slow. I didn't know the difference. I did see the comparison to others, but...I didn't feel slow because I had never been fast. Ever.

The hardest part of learning to walk again, is that I remember how I used to walk.

The hardest part of learning to write again, is that I remember how I used to write.

The hardest part of learning how to eat, shave, dress myself, BBQ a steak...

And I took all of that in stride.

But the hardest part of learning to think again, is that I remember how I used to think.

And I am struggling to take that in stride.

I'm not claiming I was a genius, far from it.

But I liked my brain. I liked the way it worked.

I hear myself reach for words. I feel the grind. Like a train beginning a journey.



It's all there, it's just...I want to say rusted, but that implies it will get better.

I don't know if that is true. I hope it is true. I hope it is.

"Cause when that morning sun comes beating down
You're going to wake up in your town
But we'll be scheduled to appear
A thousand miles away from here"

The Load-Out by Jackson Browne. Perfect. Just so perfect.

I don't want to go, but like Jackson Browne sang, 'the band is on the bus'... and life goes on. Tomorrow I will rise, and I will still have only one leg, one eye, one normal hand... But I will still have a wonderful family. I will still have the most amazing partner. Strong, patient, loving. Inspiring. I will do my therapy, go to my

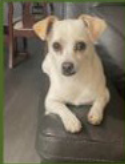
appointments, workout, walk... I will be fitter, stronger. I will walk, cycle, row. I will write. I will overcome. And I will be happy. And I will no longer write about what happened to me – enough of that.

Time to write about life after trauma, returning to sport, music, milestones and shortfalls. Enough of surviving, on to living.

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

Please join us in wishing our furry babies a Wonderful Holiday!

Thank you for taking such good care of us while we recover.

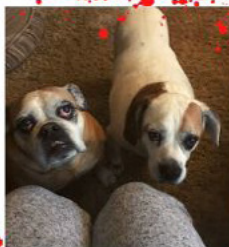
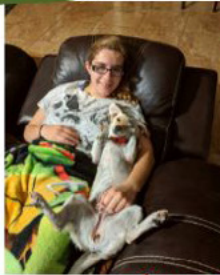


"This is Bella she was my wife's dog and now she is left with me to take care of her, she's a bra but she's funny and a great companion."

"Lou-Lou and Winnie missed me when I was hospitalized for 29 days, but I missed them more."



"Our fur baby Fredo! He was also a survivor in our crash. He brings comfort, joy, and serenity to our lives day in and day out. We are so thankful for him."



"This is Benny. He is named after one of the paramedics that saved my life on 5/9/2020. He is just over a year old. He has been just what my heart needed!"



"This is Cookie. She was a huge comfort to me after I lost my mother when she was hit by a car. Cookie is very affectionate, loving and sweet."



Woman Creates Caregiver Support Group to Help Others

Submitted by Laura Nordfelt

On August 15, 2011, Greg and I, along with our friend Jimmy, were riding our Harley Davidsons along the scenic section of highway 95, about 60 miles south of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Greg was feeling sick, probably from food poisoning contracted at a diner the night before but insisted that we continue on with our planned trip. I was driving my own motorcycle behind Greg when he passed out and crashed. It was traumatic to watch his impact into a bed of lava rocks and then running to his aid until the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) arrived.

I've had EMT training and my skills took over until the professionals arrived. He was transferred by life flight to the hospital in Coeur d'Alene. Even though Greg was wearing a helmet he suffered a severe brain injury, a crushed leg and had deep open wounds from the impact. We spent 2 weeks at the hospital in Coeur d'Alene until he was able to be flown to the Neuro Rehab at Intermountain Medical Center (IMC) in Murray, Utah, which was closer to home and family. He was there for a couple weeks before I became his fulltime caregiver.

He worked extremely hard to get back to work as a banker fulltime over the next 5 months (starting initially at only 2 hours a week). Greg's left side of his brain was damaged beyond repair and the surrounding right brain tissue had to take over functions like reading, writing, talking, walking, banking etc. This was difficult for both of us because it impacted his personality and how we related to each other. Greg read a book called [*My Stroke of Insight*](#) by Jill Taylor which explains in detail a neurologist's loss of her left side of the brain function during a stroke. She had to cope with a complete driven right brain for all her activities. This book had a tremendous impact on both of us.

I Was Not Prepared for the Change in Personality

Our marriage has been very different since the accident and not what I was prepared for. I've had to cope with his strange changes and sometimes I say to him, "Who are you and what have you done with my husband?" I wouldn't say I'm a patient person and our six children can probably attest to that, but I have been extremely fortunate to be able to take one day at a time. After all, isn't that what marriage is all about? Greg and I were very "fly by the seat of our pants" kind of people . . . always ready for the next adventure, whether it was motorcycles, riding our bicycles down hills at 60 mph, hiking where we maybe shouldn't be hiking, jumping off cliffs, extreme diving, etc. NOT so much now. We are discovering new adventures in less dangerous ways.

I was not prepared to be a caregiver for my husband. My EMT training seemed helped some, but as a mother, being a caregiver came naturally. However, the thought of taking care of an adult TBI survivor long term was extremely hard, especially when there

was no one taking care of me. Brain injury patients are constantly surrounded by doctors and therapists. They are initially monitored, recorded and any progress is celebrated.

"Even though Greg was wearing a helmet he suffered a severe brain injury, a crushed leg and had deep open wounds from the impact."

As a caregiver, I was left completely on my own to figure out my new life and how to make it work. I felt like I was set up to fail! There were no guidelines, no manuals and no pats on my back. I was also dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from the accident. I tried personal therapy a couple of times, but couldn't seem to find the right therapist for me. I looked for caregiver groups, but none were readily available. Within a year after Greg's accident I asked to join the board of directors at the Brain Injury Alliance of Utah (BIAU). It was my attempt at giving back to the TBI community.

Helping Other Caregivers Was Extremely Important

I was motivated specifically to start a "caregivers" support group that was not available to me during Greg's recovery. It was extremely important to me to help other caregivers that were lost like me. I also felt it would help my own healing while supporting the daily living issues of other caregivers. I felt that working together in groups would be therapeutic and healing for all of us.

A few years ago, I was fortunate enough to help found a brain injury resource group with Judy Gooch, a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Specialist, TyAnne Crook, caregiver and LCSW, Nancy Murray, caregiver and an Audiologist/Speech Language Pathologist has since joined. "[*Brainstorm for Brain Injury*](#)" was started with the idea in mind that there were not enough resources available for brain injury survivors and their loved ones. Judy felt that she had not seen significant advances in this area for 20 years. Our goal is to change that ideology through educating the brain injury community, ie, therapists and medical personnel, teachers and first responders. We also are very aggressive in our messaging through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where you can find us under the same name.

For more information please visit [*Brain Storm for Brain Injury*](#).



Holiday AFFIRMATIONS



Today I choose to practice self care



I have learnt to take it one day at a time



I exhale stress and inhale love and peace



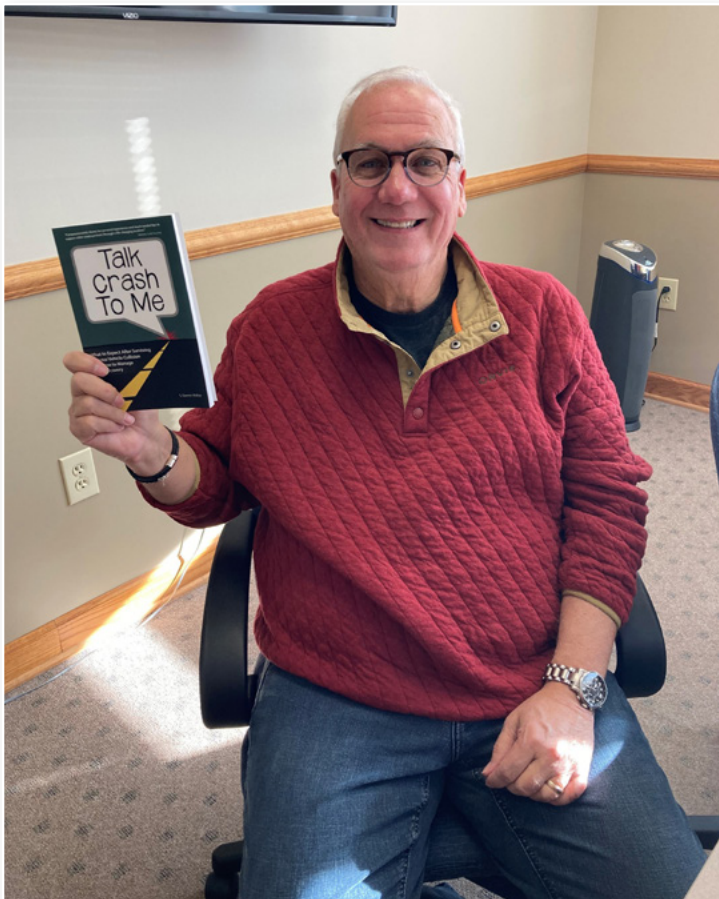
Every day I grow more courageous than yesterday



I may not be where I want to be but I am one step closer



I am grateful that I am not alone



Thank you!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Attorney David Craig, Managing Partner and one of the Founding Partners of the Law Firm of [Craig, Kelley & Faultless LLC](#) for purchasing a quantity order of my book, "Talk Crash to Me" and for his continued support as a sponsor of the Crash Support Network. David Craig understands how beneficial this book is to his clients as they start their recovery after surviving a motor vehicle wreck. "[Talk Crash to Me](#)" is available for purchase on Amazon and continues to receive positive feedback from so many crash survivors.



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Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

Articles/Stories:

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

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.

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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