

Sharing OUR Recovery

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

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ISSUE 32

PIECES IN THIS ISSUE:

- * **The Road Through Fall: A Season of Healing** 1
- * **From Collision to Comeback: My Journey Through Brain Injury Recovery** 2-3
- * **8 Secrets to a Better IME**..... 4-5
- * **Cruisin for the Cause with Centurions MC North Toronto**..... 7
- * **Welcome the New You**..... 8
- * **Back to School Road Safety Tips: Keeping Everyone Safe This Season** 9-10
- * **Digital Bonds to Real-Life Smiles** 12-13

Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Supporting Crash Survivors
One Step at a Time

The Road Through Fall: A Season of Healing



As the vibrant colors of fall begin to emerge and the season shifts around us, we're reminded that change though often difficult can also bring growth, healing, and hope. Whether you're newly navigating life after being injured in a motor vehicle crash or you've been down this road for some time, we understand that recovery is deeply personal and often unpredictable, filled with ups and downs, twists and turns. Fall symbolizes more than a change in weather. It's a season to pause, reflect, and re-center.

We want to acknowledge the unique challenges many face as the days grow shorter and the world feels colder. Isolation and frustration can creep in, but remember: this community is here to remind you that you are seen, heard, and valued. Our shared experiences continue to build a foundation of compassion and understanding so that none of us need to face this journey alone.

This summer, we've engaged in countless heartfelt conversations with people at various stages of their healing journey. Some reached out simply needing a safe space and a compassionate ear. Others were seeking clarity, direction, and guidance as they navigated the emotional and legal aftermath of motor vehicle crash. Every call is a reminder that even small acts of support can have a lasting impact, and we're honoured to walk alongside so many resilient individuals as they move toward healing.

Last month, we had the honor of attending *Cruisin for the Cause*, hosted by the Centurions MC North Toronto, as a shared vendor and what an incredible experience it was. The ride was held in honor of Sick Kids, and the event offered us a meaningful space to share our story, raise awareness and connect with individuals impacted by crashes including first responders, who often carry emotional challenges long after the scene is cleared.

In This Issue: Discover *8 Secrets to a Better Independent Medical Exam (IME)* with insights from Dr. Brad Burke, and meet Cynthia Aguiar of *Moms with Concussions* as she shares her powerful journey from collision to comeback. We also offer a practical back-to-school guide with essential tips on road safety and advice on recovering from a motor vehicle injury while managing school. Don't miss *A Note to Our Loved Ones and Caregivers*, a deeply heartfelt piece from our collaboration with Katy Parker that honors the vital role of support and compassion in healing. Alongside this, explore uplifting community highlights that remind us how important it is to raise awareness and support those affected in person.

As the season shifts, let it inspire you to nurture your growth. Always embrace the small wins and reach out when you need support. And remember, just like the vibrant colors of fall, your story is beautiful, powerful, and unfolding in its own time. Together, we continue to heal, hope, and move forward.

With care and compassion,

- Dawne

From Collision to Comeback: My Journey Through Brain Injury Recovery

Submitted by Cynthia Aguiar

In 2021, my life changed in a split second. A car accident left me with a concussion and a new reality I never saw coming.

At the beginning, even the simplest tasks felt impossible. I was a single mom who could not figure out how to make my kids' lunches. Their beautiful little voices, once my favourite sounds, felt like too much for my injured brain to process. As a professional dancer, I had to relearn how to walk on a straight line without losing my balance. Every part of my life felt foreign. I was a high school teacher, a choreographer, and someone who had always thrived on being able to do it all. Suddenly, I could not remember what I had just said. I could not handle noise, bright light, or busy spaces. And worst of all, I felt like the "me" I had always known had disappeared.

The Turning Point

For years, I fought against my new limits. I pushed myself to "get back" to who I was before, but the harder I pushed, the worse my symptoms became. The real shift came when I stopped fighting and began to surrender. Not in the sense of giving up, but in choosing to stop forcing my recovery to look a certain way. I gave myself permission to rest without guilt, to say no without apology, and to rebuild my life slowly, even if it did not match my old pace.

From that place of surrender came a new sense of clarity. If the answers were not coming from one place, I would piece them together myself. I became my own advocate and started exploring every nervous system regulation tool I could find, from evidence-based therapies to holistic and body-based practices.

It was in this search that I discovered one of the most powerful tools of my recovery — EFT Tapping.

How EFT Tapping Helped Me Heal

EFT combines gentle fingertip tapping on specific acupuncture points with focused attention on the problem you are experiencing, whether that is pain, fear, overwhelm, or a triggering memory. This process sends calming signals to the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for the stress response, helping shift the body from fight or flight into a state where healing can occur.

For me, EFT became a lifeline.

- It helped reduce the crushing headaches and muscle tension I carried daily.
- It eased my sensitivity to noise so I could be more present with my children again.



- It was my go-to tool when feeling overwhelmed.
- It gave me an immediate, portable tool I could use anywhere, no special equipment required.

Research has shown that EFT can significantly reduce pain, lower cortisol (the body's primary stress hormone), and improve physical symptoms for people recovering from injury or trauma. For brain injury survivors, that means more than just feeling calmer, it means creating the conditions where your brain and body can truly repair.

Building My Recovery Framework

EFT became one part of a larger recovery framework I built over time, which I now teach in my upcoming book *Moms with Concussions* and through my free online community events. Every other month, I host *Moms with Concussions Live*, a free gathering for caregivers and brain injury survivors to connect, learn tools for nervous system safety, and remember they are not alone.

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Here are the other practices that were essential for me:

1. Nervous System Regulation Beyond EFT

I combined tapping with slow breathwork, grounding exercises, and micro-breaks throughout the day to signal safety to my body.

2. Gentle, Somatic Movement

As a dancer, movement was my language, but I had to rebuild it. I started with small, intentional movements that retrained my balance and coordination, helping my brain re-establish trust in my body.

3. Mindset Shifts

I let go of the idea that recovery meant “getting back to the old me.” Instead, I focused on creating a new, stronger version of myself, one who set boundaries, asked for help, and celebrated small wins. I let it lead to a new purpose and became a certified trauma-informed life-coach and speaker.

What I Want Every Survivor to Know

You are not broken. Your symptoms are your body’s way of protecting you.

Recovery is not linear. You will have days that feel like breakthroughs and days that feel like setbacks. Both are part of the process.

It is okay to grieve what you have lost. And it is okay to dream about a life that, in ways you cannot yet see, could be even more aligned than before.

If You Are Just Starting Out

- Start with one nervous system tool you can use daily. EFT tapping is a great place to begin, even two minutes can make a difference.
- Track your patterns so you can make choices that support rather than deplete your energy.
- Reach out for support early. You do not have to do this alone.
- Celebrate the micro-wins. Walking a little farther, tolerating more noise, remembering a detail without writing it down, these moments matter.

A New Chapter

Today, I am back to performing, coaching, and raising my kids. I now get to use EFT tapping not only for my own health but to support other survivors, athletes, and high performers in releasing pain, reducing stress, and unlocking their fullest potential. If you are reading this in the early days of recovery, please know: there is hope. You can heal. And your story is far from over.

For more information on Moms with Concussions, please visit: www.cynthiacoaching.com/mwc



**DONATE AND
MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY**

We believe in the power of making a difference in crash survivor’s lives. But, to achieve our goals we need your support.

By donating, you will be supporting the continued efforts of our much-needed resources that we continue to offer to improve the lives of crash survivors.





If you've been in a serious car accident, there's a good chance you'll be asked to attend what's called an independent medical evaluation (IME). At first, this can feel confusing: "Why do I need another exam? Didn't my doctor already send in all the paperwork? And why is this important?"

Likely, your insurance company or a lawyer representing either side in the case has requested an independent examiner to evaluate your condition and offer an expert second opinion. If your lawyer requested it, they want to prove your disabilities. If it is your insurance company, it is to determine whether your condition is as serious as you say. One or more healthcare professionals might assess you. But this is not the normal physician-patient relationship you enjoy with your family doctor.

The examiner will not provide you with any medical treatment afterward. You might feel that your "IME destiny" is already sealed by some examiner you've never met—

someone with fixed opinions you can't possibly influence. But that's not entirely true. How you prepare and how you conduct yourself during the evaluation can make a real difference.

How to Avoid Two of the Biggest Mistakes

As a rehabilitation physician (physiatrist) who has performed hundreds of independent medical evaluations for both lawyers and insurance companies, I've seen genuinely injured people receive unfair reports—not because they weren't truly disabled, but because they came in unprepared or behaved in ways that raised doubts. The good news is that you can avoid these pitfalls. In my booklet, *8 Secrets to a Better Independent Medical Evaluation*, I go into detail about strategies that can help. But here are two of the biggest mistakes I see, and how you can avoid them:



Mistake #1: Disorganization

Many people arrive at their IME completely unprepared. Some show up late, go to the wrong office, or forget to bring basic information like their medication list. Others stumble when asked simple questions such as, “Where did the accident occur?” or “What hospital or walk-in clinic did you go to?”

Yes, the examiner will usually have some of your medical records. But those records may be incomplete or inaccurate. By coming prepared—with a clear list of your accident details, injuries, past medical history, medications, employment history, and treatment timeline—you make the process smoother and increase the likelihood of an accurate report.

And if you’re asked a question you don’t know, don’t guess. Simply say, “I don’t remember” or “I’m not sure.” If you’ve had a brain injury and struggle with memory or concentration, ask if a trusted family member or friend can accompany you. Their input can help fill in the gaps and provide the examiner with a fuller picture, especially if you lack some insight into your condition.

Mistake #2: Exaggeration

Some crash survivors think they need to exaggerate their pain or limitations to be believed. In fact, the opposite is true. Examiners have often conducted hundreds, even thousands, of these assessments and will realize that your groans or howls are fake or exaggerated if you are not suffering from intense pain. They will be very suspicious if you rate your current pain 10/10 when you appear to be comfortable and carrying on a normal conversation. They are trained to spot inconsistencies and will note phrases in their report like “cannot rule out malingering” (faking it), or “symptom magnification present” or “inconsistencies noted throughout assessment” if they suspect exaggeration. That kind of language can seriously damage your credibility.

The best approach is simple: be honest. If something doesn’t hurt, say so. This is not the time to try out your acting talents. If a movement does hurt, describe it clearly: “That hurts a little in my neck when you do that,” or “That really hurts my low back,” or “That causes numbness in my arm.” If you are asked to move a painful joint, do so until you cannot go any further or it is just too painful to do more. Always give your best effort. Exaggerating or faking symptoms will almost always backfire.

The Bottom Line

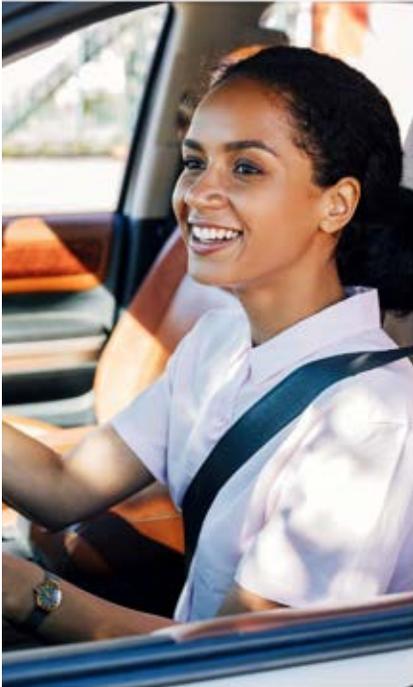
Your IME matters—it can mean the difference between full compensation and no compensation at all. While you can’t

control every factor, you can control your preparation and your honesty. Show up on time, organized, and ready to answer questions truthfully and give a good effort on the examination. It may sound simple, but these two steps alone can significantly improve your chances of receiving a fair evaluation.

If you have followed these and other expert tips, whatever the outcome may be, you can be satisfied knowing that you did your best.

For more information on the Better IME and the book, “8 Secrets to a Better Independent Medical Examination, please visit: betterime.com.

(Material adapted from the booklet, 8 Secrets to a Better Independent Medical Evaluation.” © 2017 by The Reader’s Ace, LLC)



Take our Reck Pledge!

Let’s make the roads safer for everyone. Show your commitment to safe driving practices and take our pledge today.

We are Driving Towards Safety One Pledge at a Time!

Join us in making a difference.

TAKE OUR PLEDGE



Cruisin for the Cause with Centurions MC North Toronto

Last month, The Crash Support Network partnered as a vendor for the event, Cruisin for the Cause, hosted by the Centurions MC North Toronto and what an incredible experience it was.

This dedicated group of motorcycle enthusiasts is made up of former first responders and military members who have never stopped serving their community. Their mission? Supporting SickKids and making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families who need it most.

This event provided a valuable platform to share our story, raise awareness, and connect with individuals impacted by crashes which also included first responders, who often face their own emotional challenges in the aftermath. The day was filled with positive energy, community spirit and a family-friendly atmosphere. The event was a huge success, with over 200 motorcycles rolling in to show their support. The atmosphere was electric, filled with great vendors, a delicious lunch, and an undeniable sense of community.

One of the highlights of the day was seeing members from their American home chapter in Philadelphia join in. Their presence reinforced just how strong the Centurions



brotherhood is—united across borders by a shared commitment to service and giving back. We are incredibly grateful to all first responders, past and present, for the work they do and the sacrifices they've made. We were proud to

stand alongside such genuine, passionate individuals. Their continued commitment to giving back is both inspiring and deeply impactful.

We're thrilled to welcome the Centurions MC North Chapter as a valued supporter of The Crash Support Network. Their annual event offers a great mix of purpose and fun. They make a true genuine impact, and we are already looking forward to participating next year.

The Centurions, the oldest law enforcement motorcycle club in North America, was founded by a group of Camden City New Jersey police officers in 1973. Since then, it has expanded and currently operates chapters in 9 states and Canada.

For more information please visit: [Centurions MC - North Toronto](http://CenturionsMC-NorthToronto)



Welcome the New You

Submitted by S. Dawne McKay

Post
Crash
Tip

As you recover from a motor vehicle crash, your old routines might not feel right anymore. You may not be able to do what you once did, and that can feel frustrating but it's also a powerful invitation to create new habits that honor your current needs.

Recovery invites you to listen more closely to what your body and mind need today. Healing gives you the chance to rebuild your routines with care, presence, and purpose.

Let go of what no longer fits and give yourself permission to find what does. One gentle choice at a time.



FREE

CRASH TOOL KITS

We understand how overwhelming the recovery journey can feel after being injured in a motor vehicle crash. To help you navigate this challenging time, we've created a series of downloadable forms available on our website to help you manage.

Download our free, helpful crash toolkits for tips, checklists and information that will help you on your recovery journey.

CLICK HERE

Navigating life after a motor vehicle crash can feel isolating, but it doesn't have to be. If our paths have crossed and you've found a beacon of hope in our support and resources that we continue to offer, your feedback can illuminate the way for others in similar situations.

Sharing a review with us could be the guiding light for someone in the darkness of post-crash turmoil. Your feedback not only encourages us but also helps others discover the variety of helpful resources that we continue to offer our crash survivor community.

SHARE REVIEW



Back to School Road Safety Tips: Keeping Everyone Safe This Season

As the school year starts to kick off, families everywhere will be adjusting to new routines, packed schedules, and the increased traffic that comes with drop-offs, buses, and student drivers. While the excitement of a new academic year is high, it's also a time when road safety becomes especially critical. Whether you're a parent, a student, or a commuter, staying alert and practicing road safety is more important than ever.

Unfortunately, the back-to-school season often sees a spike in motor vehicle crashes. Whether it's distracted driving, rushed mornings, or unfamiliar traffic patterns. If you've recently been involved in a motor vehicle crash, this guide covers two essential topics: back-to-school road safety tips and how to recover—physically, emotionally, and legally after being injured in a motor vehicle crash.

Slow Down in School Zones

Speed limits in school zones are often reduced for good reason. Children can be unpredictable especially during morning drop-offs and afternoon pickups. Always pay

attention to the posted speed limit in school zones and watch for crossing guards or school buses.

Avoid Distractions

As the school year begins, drivers must stay alert and focused. Avoid distractions like texting, eating, or adjusting devices while driving—especially in school zones. Stay off your phone, watch for crossing students, and always obey speed limits.

Be Extra Cautious at Crosswalks

Many children walk or bike to school. Crosswalks can be busy, especially near elementary and middle schools. Always yield to pedestrians even if they're not using a marked crosswalk.

Watch for Buses

When a school bus stops and extends its stop sign, traffic in both directions must stop. Keep a safe distance from buses and never try to pass a school bus when it's stopped.

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Set Up a Morning Routine That Minimizes Rushing

Rushed mornings are a major contributor to distracted or aggressive driving during school commutes. Wake up 15–20 minutes earlier, prepare backpacks and lunches the night before, and check traffic before leaving.

Teach Teen Drivers the Risks

If your child is a new driver, the back-to-school season is a high-risk time for crashes due to increased traffic, early mornings, and peer distractions. It's important to go over safe driving habits regularly—like avoiding phones, obeying speed limits, and limiting passengers.

Stay Alert in Parking Lots

School parking lots and pickup zones can be chaotic. Watch for kids darting out between cars, and always back out slowly. If your school has a designated pick-up/drop-off protocol, follow it carefully to avoid confusion or collisions.

Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety: Teach Your Kids, Too

Back-to-school safety isn't just about drivers—children walking or biking to school need guidance, too. For Pedestrians: Teach children to always use sidewalks, obey crossing guards, and make eye contact with drivers before crossing. For Cyclists: Make sure helmets fit properly and that bikes have reflectors or lights. Practice the route together a few times before the school year starts.

Recovering from a Motor Vehicle Crash During the School Year

If you've recently been in a motor vehicle crash, the added pressure of the school year can make recovery feel overwhelming. **Here's how to navigate it step-by-step:**

Prioritize Medical Care

Even minor crashes can lead to lingering injuries. Don't delay a medical evaluation. Early treatment can prevent long-term complications.

Monitor Your Mental Health

Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and mood changes after a crash are real and common. Consider speaking with a therapist or counselor, especially

if the crash involved your child or happened during a school commute.

Keep a Paper Trail

Your motor vehicle crash might involve insurance claims or legal action, so it's important to keep all documentation: police reports, repair invoices, medical records, and photos of the damage. Create a dedicated folder—digital or physical—so you don't have to scramble for documents later.

Notify Your Child's Teachers If Needed

If the crash affects your child's transportation, attendance, or emotional well-being, communicate with their teachers or school counselor. Schools often offer resources or flexibility during times of crisis.

Consult a Legal Professional

A personal injury lawyer can help you understand your rights and guide you through every step of your claim. Many offer free consultations, so you can get the

legal advice you need without upfront costs.

Adjusting to New Routines

Back-to-school season should be filled with excitement and not stress from a motor vehicle crash. Whether you're working to keep your family safe on the road or navigating recovery after a collision, remember: you're not alone. Take the time to prepare, seek support when needed, and focus on what matters most.

A new school season should be filled with excitement, not danger. With increased traffic and activity, it's crucial for everyone to do their part in staying vigilant and following safety guidelines. We may be saying goodbye to beach days and backyard barbecues, but back-to-school season brings its own rhythm and excitement. As we all adjust to the new routines, let's do our part to keep our communities safe—especially for our youngest and most vulnerable road users.

Stay safe, drive smart and let's make this school year a safe one for everyone.

“It's important to go over safe driving habits regularly—like avoiding phones, obeying speed limits, and limiting passengers.”





In a world where mental health is too often misunderstood or ignored, our friend, Katy Parker has created a space for truth, connection, and healing. After walking her own path through trauma, she found strength not only in surviving, but in sharing. This past June for PTSD Awareness Month, Katy took it upon herself to uplift voices of healing, resilience, and support. Many thanks to Journeyofsmiley for featuring our “Note to Our Loved Ones and Caregivers” in their blog, “Heartfelt Messages for Loved Ones and Caregivers from Trauma Survivors. We’re honored to be part of this beautiful tribute.

[A Note to Our Loved Ones and Caregivers](#)

Surviving a motor vehicle crash changed everything. It was sudden, frightening, and life-altering in ways we are still trying to understand. But through the shock, the pain,

and the long process of recovery, one thing has remained steady—you.

Thank you for being there when we were at our most vulnerable. For sitting with us in silence, for listening when we needed to speak, and for understanding when we didn’t have the words. Your presence, your patience, and your care have helped us hold on to hope when everything felt broken. As we navigate the ups and downs of recovering from PTSD after the motor vehicle crash, your presence means more than we can express. We know this journey hasn’t been easy for any of us. There are days when we seem distant, overwhelmed, damaged or indifferent. That’s because we are. The trauma altered something inside us, and we’re still figuring out how to live with that change. But your steady support helps us find moments of safety, trust, and hope again.

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Healing from trauma is slow, messy, and nonlinear. But your belief in us and your support makes it possible to keep moving forward. Even when we're struggling, we see your efforts and we are so grateful. Our caregivers and loved ones are a vital part of our recovery. Your encouragement, your willingness to listen and your quiet presence all gives us strength when we need it most.

"Your encouragement, your willingness to listen and your quiet presence all gives us strength when we need it most."

To read more tributes please visit: PTSD: My Story Project - Katy Parker, [Journeyofsmiley](https://www.journeyofsmiley.com)

It's incredible meeting someone you've known virtually for years, and earlier this year, I had the pleasure of meeting Katy in person, all the way from England! Katy is the incredible woman behind Journey of Smiley. Both of us, as victims of motor vehicle crashes, are now on a mission to help others, and Katy's recent accomplishment of collaborating with 10 other authors to co-author a book, "Rising Above" is nothing short of amazing. It's incredible how life's challenges brought us together with a similar mission to support and uplift others.



ASK A PERSONAL INJURY LAWYER

After a motor vehicle crash, it's natural to feel unsure about speaking with a lawyer and it can feel both overwhelming and intimidating. That's why we created Ask a Personal Injury Lawyer to offer you a safe space to ask all your legal questions which is a simple and practical way for you to get the answers you need, stress-free. The Crash Support Network is here to support you and will help you can get the legal answers you need without any pressure.

[CLICK HERE](#) 

BEYOND THE CRASH, CONNECTION IS EVERYTHING



OUR PRIVATE DISCUSSION GROUP

If you're looking for understanding, resources, and a community that truly gets it, we are here for you. Together, we share experiences, encourage each other, and navigate recovery with strength and resilience. Don't go through it alone - join us and be part of a compassionate community on the road to recovery.

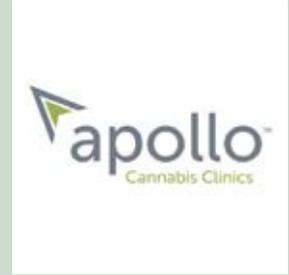


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Articles/Stories:

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

Email: info@crashsupportnetwork.com

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Information: [Crash Support Network Sponsorship](#)

Meet Dawne McKay – Founder



S. Dawne McKay is the Founder of the Crash Support Network and continues to donate countless hours to her crash survivor community by sharing resources, highly informative articles, a quarterly newsletter and a blog that allows her to share her own personal journey as a crash survivor. Dawne works hard at bringing awareness to crash survivors through CSN's social media platforms and the online support group by sharing inspirational posts with survivors from all across the world. Dawne is also the author of the book, "Talk Crash to Me - What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery" which is [available on Amazon](#).

Our mission is to raise awareness about the recovery journey that many people face after being affected by a motor vehicle crash and to provide a compassionate online community to help survivors rebuild their lives while actively promoting road safety.



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