

# TBI TODAY

News, Ideas, and Resources from the Virginia TBI Model System

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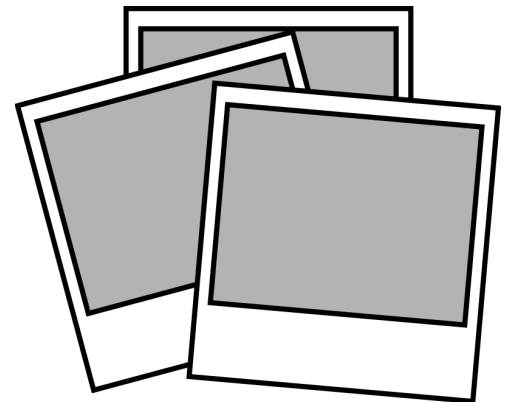
## Reminisce to Stimulate Your Memory

by Michael Cerreto

There's nothing like sitting down with good friends and family and telling your life stories. Reminiscing is not only fun and emotionally satisfying but it's good for your memory and self-esteem. Reminiscing about your life with others can help you feel more socially connected during a time when you may feel isolated after a traumatic brain injury.

When you reminisce with friends or family, you can use prompts to spark memories. Pull out old scrap books. Put on some old music. Open up that memory box. Dust off your photo albums. Pull out the old trophies. Get antiques and old toys from the attic. These objects can help surface small memories you have long forgotten, and make the story telling fun and hands-on for everyone.

Another form of reminiscing involves creating something with others using fragments of your life together. You can create a group quilt using fabric from clothing and objects that have important significance, and share your stories while sewing and stitching. You can make a theme collage with family members of photos from different times of your life together. You can make a compilation of important songs from each family member's life and post them online or burn them to a CD for everyone to enjoy and remember.



Ideas for reminiscing about your life are endless but they can all lead to the same place. Telling your life stories can spark memories, improve verbal expression and listening skills, enhance positive emotions, and increase intimacy. It can make you feel proud of the challenges you overcame and the life you created with others.

*Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia. He helps children, adolescents, and adults with a traumatic brain injury improve the quality of their lives. He is also the author of three books, Journey Back From Chemobrain, Mental Toughness In Athletes, and University of YOU, that are available on Amazon. If you have any ideas for a future article about cognitive rehabilitation, please contact Michael at [cerreto@atalentedmind.com](mailto:cerreto@atalentedmind.com).*

## The 2016 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference: Practical Solutions to Real World Problems

In May 2016, the Williamsburg Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference will celebrate its 40th consecutive year. The planning committee has assembled a group of nationally and internationally renowned speakers and faculty. Keynote presentations will focus on the neural network perspective of mild TBI, driving, sexuality and dating after TBI, and ethical issues related to brain injury rehabilitation. Other topics addressed in breakout sessions and oral presentations include adjustment to disability, concussion management, cognitive rehabilitation, advanced neuroimaging methods, TBI and epilepsy, executive dysfunction, aphasia, and counseling techniques.

The Williamsburg conference is designed primarily for multidisciplinary rehabilitation professionals and others who serve individuals with brain injuries and their families, including: case managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, neuro/psychologists, counselors, physicians, social workers, special education teachers, and more. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be available for a variety of disciplines.

The conference will take place May 5-6. There will also be a pre-conference day of workshops on Wednesday, May 4, each limited to 50 attendees. For more information on guest speakers, schedules, cost, and registration, please visit [www.williamsburgtbiconference.com](http://www.williamsburgtbiconference.com).



## Mark Your Calendar!



### Supportive Survivors

- **When:** Tuesdays 6-8pm
- **Location:** Usually at the Regency Mall Food Court (Richmond)
- **Contact:** Contact Ted Taylor at (804) 852-6644 or [taylorted58@yahoo.com](mailto:taylorted58@yahoo.com)

### Richmond Aphasia Support Group

- **Location:** 1st Thursday of every month from 6-7pm at First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1000 Blanton Ave, Richmond, VA 23221
- **Contact:** (804) 439-2657 or email at [ricaphasia@yahoo.com](mailto:ricaphasia@yahoo.com)

### Richmond Support Group for Adults with TBI, Family, Friends

- **Location:** 3rd Monday every month at 6:15pm, Children's Hospital Auditorium, 2924 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23220
- **Contact:** Liz Perry-Varner at 804-276-5761

### Camp Bruce McCoy 2016

- **Location:** Triple R Ranch in Chesapeake, VA
- **When:** May 22-28 and May 29-June 4
- **Contact:** Brain Injury Association of VA at 804-355-5748 for more information

### 2016 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference

- **Location:** Double Tree by Hilton Hotel in Williamsburg, VA
- **Contact:** For more information, please visit [www.williamsburgtbiconference.com](http://www.williamsburgtbiconference.com)

Looking for a support group in your area? Check out [www.biaav.net/virginia-support-groups.htm](http://www.biaav.net/virginia-support-groups.htm) for more support groups organized by region!

If you have an upcoming event of interest to the Brain Injury community in Virginia, we would be glad to consider including it here. Please call 828-3703 or email [melissa.jackson@vcuhealth.org](mailto:melissa.jackson@vcuhealth.org).

## Survivor Stories Wanted!

Recovering from a brain injury can be very difficult. Sometimes, one of the most helpful and inspiring things is simply hearing from other survivors who have gone through recovery and faced the same challenges. Are you a survivor with a story you'd like to share? If so, then we'd like to hear it, and it might get into a future issue of TBI Today!

Submit to: [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)

or

TBI Today, VCU P.O. Box 980542  
Richmond, VA 23298-0542



## New Years

K Q G I Z R G V L A I H U D U L Y V Q H  
 C O Z D I A A V H D T Y T C C X B C V S  
 K S U Z I E I W T N W V S O Y C T O X C  
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JUST FOR FUN!

**Happy New Year!** As we continue into 2016, see if you can find all the words and phrases hidden in the puzzle above. If you get stumped, answers are on page 7!

NEWYEARS DAY

NEWYEARSEVE

MIDNIGHT

FOOTBALL

PARTY

TIMESSQUARE

FIREWORKS

KISS

NOISEMAKER

TOAST

FRIENDS

COUNTDOWN

CONFETTI

BALLOONS

HAPPYNEWYEAR



## CHAT WITH PAT

***Pat answers your personal questions about brain injury with compassion and practical advice. However, advice from Pat's column should not be substituted for consultation with a doctor or rehabilitation specialist. The identity of individuals submitting questions to "Chat with Pat" is kept strictly confidential.***

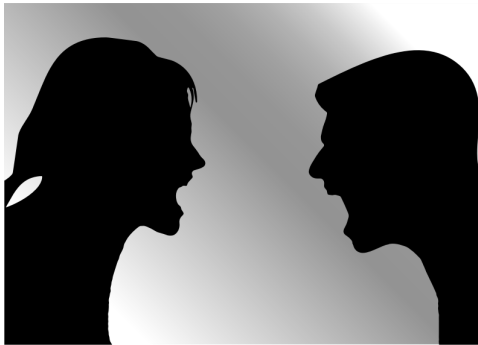
### DEAR PAT:

My girlfriend was hit by a car about nine months ago and got a brain injury. She was taking a walk around her neighborhood early in the morning when this car went through a stop sign and ran up the curb on the sidewalk. The driver apparently fell asleep behind the wheel and lost control of his car. Julie doesn't remember what happened to her. When I saw her in the hospital, she was hooked up to all kinds of machines and looked pretty bad. She was in the hospital for over a month. Julie had to learn to walk and talk all over again. She did many different therapies. I must say that I'm very proud of her because she worked really hard while she was in the hospital. She proved a lot of people wrong by getting stronger and making progress fast.

Julie moved in with me after she got out of the hospital because her family lives very far away. We had talked about living together before this accident anyway. Well, I don't think I knew what it would be like to take care

of someone with a brain injury. It's definitely much harder than I had expected. It's like having a full-time job! I think I was fooled by her progress at the hospital. I thought she would be healed quickly and wouldn't need to depend on me all the time. I'm not saying that she needs me around all the time. Physically, she does fine. She can feed herself, go to the bathroom, and do whatever she needs to do for herself. It's her mind that's different.

I don't want to sound ungrateful



because she is alive and doing well. But, I am having a hard time with all the changes since the accident. Julie is the same person, and not the same person at the same time. Julie had ADD before the accident and now the problem is worse. She doesn't know how to organize, and her stuff is everywhere. Then she gets frustrated because she can't find anything. We get into arguments a lot because she gets irritated over such little things. I'm trying to be patient but I'm getting tired and worn out from dealing with this every day.

Pat, I'm worried that Julie will stay like this forever. I'm not sure what I'll do if she stays this way. I would like the old Julie back, but I know that won't hap-

pen. I understand she has a brain injury but it doesn't make it easier to deal with when sometimes I feel like my girlfriend is a child. I need help to deal with the changes.

### Discouraged Boyfriend

#### Dear Discouraged Boyfriend,

It is obvious that you care greatly about Julie to take over her care after her discharge from the hospital. Your dedication to making sure that she receives the help she needs is commendable.

One of the most distressing problems reported by loved ones following brain injury is personality change. The change could be the direct result of the head trauma. The area of the brain that controls emotions and planning/organization may have been damaged during Julie's accident. The change could also be the result of Julie trying to adjust and cope with the consequences from the head trauma. Changes cause anxiety and distress. Julie might benefit from seeing a mental health professional who has experience working with patients with TBI to develop coping skills.

It will be important for you develop some skills to cope with the changes as well. Here are some ideas to consider:

- ☐ Be hopeful and say positive things.
- ☐ Avoid thinking about making comparisons to how things were.
- ☐ Remain active and try to do things you enjoy.

*(contd on page 7)*

## JUST THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



**Q:** How do I take care of myself while taking care of my adult son who has a brain injury? The amount of stress I am under is overwhelming! Yet, I feel guilty for thinking about myself.

**A:** It is understandable for the caregiver to feel stressed and overwhelmed following a traumatic event that affects the entire family. The changes in your son as well as to your life could be difficult to deal with. It is important to take care of yourself during this period to avoid caregiver burnout.

Here are some suggestions to help you cope with stress:

- ☐ Be patient with yourself. Recovery is a long process and solving big problems takes time.
- ☐ Focus on accomplishments and progress instead of failures.
- ☐ Set reasonable goals by reviewing your son's recent progress.
- ☐ Think positive thoughts and try to keep a good sense of humor.
- ☐ Avoid comparing your son's behavior with functioning before the injury.
- ☐ Avoid putting yourself down or pushing yourself too hard.
- ☐ Seek support and help from trusted friends and family members. Ask them for feedback about how you are handling stress.
- ☐ Share the burden of caregiving with trusted family and friends, and consider respite care services.
- ☐ Keep up a healthy lifestyle by exercising, eating right, and avoid caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.
- ☐ Breathe slowly and deeply.
- ☐ Take time for yourself and do something enjoyable...listen to soothing music, take a long bath, go for a walk, or read a book.
- ☐ Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a pleasant situation.



Remember! You will run the risk of emotional collapse and health problems if you do not take breaks.

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE FAQ IS INTENDED TO FAMILIARIZE THE PUBLIC WITH ISSUES RELATED TO TBI. NO INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AS THERAPEUTIC ADVICE OR AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONSULTATION WITH A COMPETENT MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.



*Questions for Pat or the FAQ column are welcomed.*  
 Send them to: "ASK PAT" OR "FAQ"  
 P.O. BOX 980542. RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542  
 or e-mail: [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)



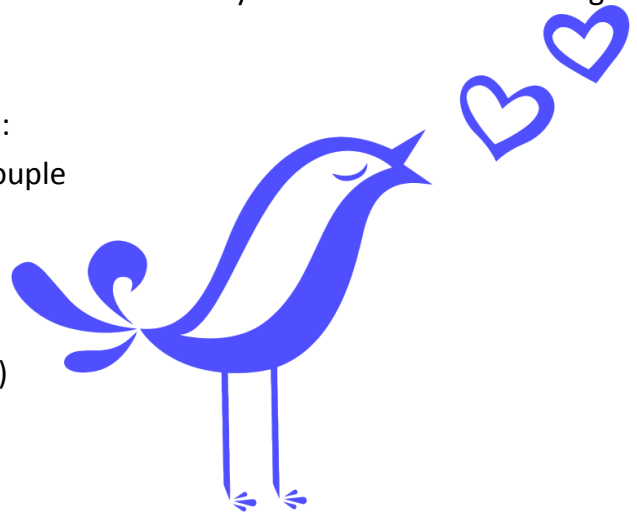
## **SKILL-BUILDING, SUPPORTIVE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR COUPLES AFTER BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!**

**Are you in a relationship? Have you or your partner had a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?  
You May Qualify for an Ongoing Research Study!**

Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with traumatic brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help couples adjust to brain injury. Qualified volunteers will participate in five to six support and education sessions. Study volunteers will be given information on brain injury, local resources, skills development, and positive coping strategies. Volunteers will also be asked to complete several questionnaires. Participants must be at least 18 years old. There is no charge for services and volunteers are compensated for their time.

During the sessions, the following topics will be discussed:

- Effects of brain injury on the survivor, partner, and couple
- Healthy communication and managing stress
- Setting goals and solving problems
- Rebuilding intimacy
- New challenges and strategies to parenting (optional)
- Strategies for optimal recovery



**If you are interested in participating, please call Jenny Marwitz at 804-828-3704  
or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)**

Melissa Jackson, B.S., B.A. works as a Research Specialist in Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She primarily works with patients for recruitment, data collection, and follow-up interviews for research purposes on behalf of the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems (TBIMS) Project at VCU. An ongoing study for more than 20 years, the TBIMS Project provides crucial information to help better understand brain injury and recovery. Jackson has also taken over as editor for TBI Today, and assists with website content.



**HAVE YOU  
MET MELISSA  
JACKSON, B.S.?**

She completed undergraduate work in 2008 with degrees in Psychology and Religious Studies and has completed graduate coursework in Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies. Outside of work, she loves to cook, read, and will drive any distance for a good concert. She hopes to attend graduate school in Fall 2016 and pursue a Master's in Social Work.

*(Chat, contd)*

- ❑ Get to know this “different” person. Try to do fun things together.
- ❑ Talk to and spend time with people who care about you.
- ❑ Give yourself breaks and learn when and how to ask for help.

Caregivers of brain injury survivors are often overlooked after the injury since the focus tends to be on the person with the injuries. Consequently, the caregivers become overwhelmed with all the responsibilities of taking care of their loved ones, while neglecting themselves. It sounds like this is what is happening with you. Therefore, it is important that you make sure to take care of yourself. Take a break from caregiving!

If you wish to get involved with your local support group to share your experience, the Brain Injury Association of American has a list of support groups you and your girlfriend may attend. To contact BIAA, you may call their family helpline (1-800-444-6443) or send them an e-mail at [familyhelpline@biausa.org](mailto:familyhelpline@biausa.org). The website for BIAA ([www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)) provides links to state chapters and additional brain injury resources.

Most states have their own Brain Injury Association chapter. Virginia residents can contact the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) by visiting [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net) for a list of regionally organized support groups and other resources. You can also call them at (804) 355-5748.

## Resource to the Rescue!

The internet is a great tool for finding more information and resources about TBI. Here are some websites you might not have known about:

[www.tbimsktc.org/tbi](http://www.tbimsktc.org/tbi): Resource for people post-TBI.

[www.brainline.org](http://www.brainline.org): BrainLine.org is a multimedia project that seeks to provide a sense of community around TBI. They have webcasts, newsletters, and articles that introduce the topic well for people newly affected by TBI.

[tbisurvivorsnetwork.ning.com](http://tbisurvivorsnetwork.ning.com): The TBI Survivor's Network is a collection of blog groups connected by brain injury, organized by topic.

**CDC Heads Up Brain Injury Awareness**: The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has a section of their website dedicated to TBI at [www.cdc.gov/headsup](http://www.cdc.gov/headsup), as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts you can follow on social media.

Here are the answers to the word find on page 3. How did you do?

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| H | D | V | A | L | U | D | U | H | I | A | L | V | G | R | Z | I | G | D | K |



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**VCU, PM&R**

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY MODEL SYSTEM**

**P.O. BOX 980542**

**RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542**

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Founded in 1983 by families and concerned professionals, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia is the only statewide non-profit organization in Virginia exclusively devoted to serving individuals with brain injury, their families, and those that care for and about them. Over 10,000 people find help from BIAV each year.

BIAV is a chartered state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America and exists to be the voice of brain injury through help, hope and healing for Virginians with brain injury and their families. We educate human service professionals and the community on the risks and impact of brain injury and advocate for improved medical and community-based services. Many of our staff members are Certified Brain Injury Specialists (CBIS Certified).

To find out more information about BIAV, contact us at 1-800-444-6443 or 804-355-5748. Or visit our website at [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net).



The Voice of Brain Injury: *Help, Hope & Healing*