

MEET

*Courtney
Clark*

The World's Luckiest
Unlucky Person



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

PRESENTS

the **BRAIN CAVE**



**A discussion
group for
men on
life after
brain injury**

Men ages 18+ who have survived any type of brain injury are invited to join us for a special pilot of Brain Cave—a discussion group for men on life after brain injury.

This is a conversation-based group where your thoughts and interests are welcome. We will meet at Café Cultivate which will be open just for us at this time. Light snacks and refreshments will be served.

This group will meet the first Wednesday of the month from March- July from 6:00-7:30PM.

Café Cultivate is in the Ability 360 Center at 5025 East Washington Street in Phoenix.

JOIN FACILITATORS



JIM LEDGEWOOD—Jim is an architect for a Scottsdale firm. He has been a TBI survivor since he was shot in the head during a random act of violence. With the bullet still lodged in his brain, Jim began to rebuild his life, seeking both justice and looking to understand his new life as a brain injury survivor. Jim often shares his experience during keynotes and workshops to help others adjusting to their new normal.



STEVE NORTON—Steve is an acquired non-traumatic brain injury survivor after a stroke changed his life at the height of his globetrotting career in the culinary services industry. Steve has spent years as a coach, teacher, and mentor helping those living with disability thrive. He is an author and a staple in the Phoenix disability community.

ON the HORIZON

Dear Reader, Thanks for picking up the latest edition of BIAAZ's e-zine, *The Noggin*. You are currently holding a copy of the fourth volume, second issue, which, as you've hopefully come to expect by now, is full of amazing stories from the brain injury community. In what is commonly known on social media as a #humblebrag, I just have to say, it's an honor for me to meet and speak with so many incredible people who are willing to share their challenges and triumphs with the invisible disability of brain injury. In my time as a resource facilitation specialist and editor for *The Noggin*, there have been moments when I've foolishly thought, "well, by now, I've pretty much seen and heard it all." The reality is more like a #humilitycheck, because even though brain injury survivors may deal with similar symptoms, frustrations, and even miracles, the way they handle life post-injury is as unique as the individuals themselves.



It's these similarities and differences that we at *The Noggin* appreciate and strive to celebrate, which is why in this edition, you'll meet survivors like Courtney Clark, our 2019 Rays of Hope featured speaker. She'll be providing some teasers as to what to expect from her upcoming keynote address. Not to give away too many spoilers, but you can also look forward to meeting mother-daughter duo Kim and Erika Natori, brain injury advocates and owners of resale boutique Let's Begin Again, as well as learning about the cutting-edge neuro-wellness programs offered at NeuroHealth Solutions. There's also a great Q & A with inspirational

author, tennis player, and traumatic brain injury survivor Jason Hughes. If you've ever wondered what role yoga and meditation play in post-TBI recovery, survivor Beckett Johnson will be sharing his experiences with the non-profit TBI yoga program LoveYourBrain.

Besides highlighting the journeys of brain injury survivors and caregivers, *The Noggin* strives to keep you, the reader, informed about upcoming BIAAZ programs and events in your area, so check out the notices and adverts included throughout this edition. We are also pleased to announce a new section of our e-zine called "On the Horizon," a navigation tool to help you quickly find the information that matters most to you. For those of you who enjoy reading *The Noggin* cover-to-cover (always time well-spent), I say, keep on keeping on!

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to thank those who contribute to the continued success of *The Noggin*, including donors, our graphic designer, contributing writers, and of course, you, yes YOU, the person reading this editor's letter right now. Without a readership interested in brain injury news and awareness in Arizona, *The Noggin* would be a pointless enterprise. So, thank you for your interest and support; it means so much and we couldn't do it without you. If you'd like to invest your times and talents in the production of future editions of our e-zine, consider joining *The Noggin* Committee (<https://biaaz.org/programs/volunteer>). Often times, one person's voice is all it takes to give someone the confidence to find theirs.

Cheers,
Brittany Sweeney-Lawson
Brittany Sweeney-Lawson
The Noggin Editor-in-Chief

IN THIS ISSUE

COURTNEY CLARK, THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST UNLUCKY PERSON, to Give Keynote Address at the BIAAZ 2019 Rays of Hope Conference Page 4

READING BETWEEN THE DATA: Dr. Sean Southland Strives to Advance Patient Neuro Health and Wellness Page 8

LET'S BEGIN AGAIN Resale Boutique Provides Unique Wares and Acceptance for Brain Injury Survivors Page 13

QUESTION CORNER David G. Lamb, Ph.D., ABPP-CN Clinical Neuropsychologist Page 15

LUNA AZUL Providing a new model for independent living Page 16

BECKETT JOHNSON LOVES HIS BRAIN Yoga Enthusiast and TBI Survivor Page 18

Q&A with Author and TBI Survivor Jason Hughes Page 20

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR by Jarrod Flowers Page 23

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR A BETTER FUTURE at the 2018 NASHIA State of the States in Head Injury Annual Meeting Page 24

FACE IN THE MIRROR by Janine S. Kelly Page 26

Courtney Clark

The World's Luckiest
Unlucky Person

Courtney will be giving the Keynote
Address at the BIAAZ
2019 Rays of Hope Conference

BIAAZ Resource Facilitation Specialist and Noggin Editor Brittany Sweeney-Lawson had the chance to talk with Author and Resilience Speaker Courtney Clark about her experiences as a cancer and brain injury survivor and what she hopes will be the takeaway message from her Rays of Hope Keynote.

Being diagnosed with cancer isn't usually something people are grateful for, but Courtney Clark is. She'll even go as far as to credit cancer for saving her life.

Courtney was diagnosed for the first time at age 26. At 28, doctors found a stage zero melanoma, which fortunately, didn't reset her cancer-free clock to zero. If a person can go five years without any cancerous signs or symptoms, they are normally considered to be in remission. At 31, Courtney went in for her five-year checkup and told her doctor she'd like to have full body scans done, just to make sure the melanoma hadn't spread elsewhere. "The most likely place for cancer to metastasize is in the lymph nodes," Courtney explains. "The second most likely place is the lungs, and the brain is the third most likely." She didn't necessarily feel like anything was wrong when she made the request; she just wanted to have some baseline scans to compare with future tests. An abundance of caution, as it were.

When the scan results came back, Courtney's doctor broke the news: "You're not going to believe this, but you have an arteriovenous malformation in your brain." He was right; she couldn't

believe it. He also informed her the AVM probably even predated her melanoma and may have formed in utero.

An AVM is a specific type of aneurysm where abnormal blood vessels composed of arteries and veins become tangled. While AVMs can occur anywhere in the body, the danger of one located in the brain is that, if any of the vessels burst, this results in a hemorrhagic stroke, which can lead to serious impairments and even death. AVMs are fairly rare, occurring in less than one-percent of the population, and are more common in males than females, making Courtney's case all-the-more unusual, especially considering she'd been a-symptomatic, never having so much as a headache to give her a heads up about her condition.

Since she was already well-acustomed to the emotional roller coaster caused by the cancer, finding out about the AVM initially felt like just another card in the hand she'd been dealt. "I sprang into action and research mode," she recalls. "I was already used to [doing] all of it." After discussing things with her husband of only 10 months at the time, they decided to move from their Texas home out to New York, where she could be seen by a renowned neuro-surgeon and also stay with family members. "It wasn't un-

til I had all my ducks in a row that I let myself get really scared," Courtney discloses. "It took a good week for reality to settle in about how risky this was."

Adding to her stress was her concern for her husband and how he was dealing with the news. They hadn't been together when she received her initial cancer diagnosis, and she realized he hadn't had to face the physical and emotional turmoil she had already endured. However, Courtney felt confident she was with the right partner when her husband was not only able to handle the situation, but also provide her with the love and support that made the bad days easier to bear. Even so, Courtney couldn't help but dwell more on her mortality to some extent, wondering if her family even knew what her last wishes were. "Luckily, right around the time things felt overwhelming was when my neurosurgeon appointment was scheduled, so I got to go back to being tactical and problem-solving," she says. Overall, Courtney feels that mixing hope with practicality is what kept her sane, essentially allowing her to swing back and forth between states of emotional self-care and strategic planning.

The health ordeals Courtney experienced taught her a new way of looking at self-worth and person achievement. "Having a brain injury as a young adult when you're first coming into yourself, learning who you are, and becoming independent, only to become dependent again, can really do a number on you," she admits. "It's very humbling." She also realized she would have to redefine what success was to her. Sometimes, it meant simply being able to get up in the morning. Other times, checking off one or two items off a seemingly endless to-do list had to suffice. For Courtney, realizing success was more than a big paycheck and a corner office with a view helped her better put things in perspective.

Prior to her brain injury diagnosis, Courtney started out her career as a PR and fundraising professional, heavily involved in running a non-profit she'd started out of her home in Texas. To improve her knowledge of running a business and help her non-profit grow more quickly, she'd decided to go back to school to get her master's degree in philanthropy and development through a program located in Minnesota. Less than a month after getting accepted into the program, which was set to begin in July 2011, was when her aneurysm was discovered. In spite of the many challenges her condition presented, including brain surgery (one of three in total) the spring before her master's program was set to start, Courtney was determined to continue, and three years later, she was able to earn her degree.

While Courtney loved her work in the non-profit sector, she also knew as a general rule if the founder sticks around too long, the non-profit and founder can become intertwined to the point that it can be hard to separate the two and allow the non-profit to

move forward and grow. "I was so involved with my non-profit, I hadn't really thought about what I wanted to do next," she says. Fortunately, the answer would come to her soon enough. While working towards her master's degree, she developed a passion for research, particularly in self-help psychological concepts that hadn't yet become mainstream.

She found she was also skilled at explaining to people how these ideas could be put to use to improve their interactions, both in the business world and their personal lives.

These educational discussions almost always inevitably led to Courtney sharing how these ideas had affected her personally regarding her cancer and aneurysm diagnoses. The more she shared her story, the more she started noticing some common feedback: "Wow! You should be a motivational speaker!" The idea started to grow on Courtney, especially when she realized why her story struck a cord with so many people. "When people hear a story about something that could actually happen to them, it makes them pay attention," she explains. She also realized that putting a face to her experiences was helping dispel a commonly-believed myth that brain injury looks the same for everyone. "People are surprised because I've been lucky and didn't have a lot of lasting deficits," she shares. "They don't understand [the brain injury] was one of the darkest times of my life. While she's grateful to have lived to fight another day, she'll be the first to admit she still deals with the residual emotional scars that lie below the surface. "The knowledge of how fragile life can be has changed me forever."

Her desire to continue in a line of work that would allow her to meaningfully help others, coupled with her newfound storytelling talent, led Courtney to take the suggestion of becoming a motivational speaker seriously. Now, she's added the title of resilience speaker to her résumé and gives keynotes speeches across the country. She has also authored two books; her first, titled *The Giving Prescription*, describes using helping behaviors, such as donating, volunteering, and advocating, as healing techniques to dealing with life's traumatic experiences. Her second, *The Successful Struggle: Powerful Techniques to Achieve Accelerated Resilience*, looks at the various barriers that hold people back and how to overcome them.

The primary goal Courtney's speaking engagements and books share is making the overall message bigger than herself. "I want my story included, but I want to reach people who have different experiences as well," she reasons. For her, this means helping other people tell their stories, as she believes it can be a tremendous mechanism for personal healing. According to Courtney, a story's impact is greater than just sheer entertainment value, especially when considering its takeaway message. "What does [the story]



"The knowledge of how fragile life can be has changed me forever."

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illustrate; what does it show?" Courtney asks. For it to have the greatest impact, "you have to [tell] it in the right way, at the right time, at the right place," she advises.

One upcoming speaking engagement on Courtney's agenda this year where she's particularly excited to share her story is the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona's annual Rays of Hope Conference for survivors of brain injury and their families. Through a mutual contact, she had the chance to connect with Carrie Collins-Fadell, the executive director of BIAAZ, and share her journey of recovery and healing from both cancer and the aneurysm. "After we talked, we decided I would be a really good fit to come to the conference and work with the BIAAZ team," Courtney recalls.

As for those attending Rays of Hope, Courtney hopes that, if nothing else, they will come away from listening to her keynote with the knowledge that we are all united by a basic principle: we all face detours in life. "Some are bigger and scarier and throw us off our plans for a lot longer," she shares, "but each one ends up taking us exactly where we were supposed to go. Sometimes, the detour was the path all along."

BIAAZ's annual Rays of Hope Conference will take place on Friday, May 17, 2019 from 8:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Desert Will Conference Center in Phoenix. To register, visit <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/BrainInjuryAllianceArizona/ROH.html>, or call the BIAAZ office at 1-888-500-9165.



Brain Injury Alliance
ARIZONA

Join us for the annual educational conference for survivors of brain injury, family members, and caregivers.

ANNUAL
RAYS OF HOPE

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2019
8:15-9 a.m. Breakfast & Registration
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Program
Desert Willow Conference Center in Phoenix

FREE EVENT
REGISTRATION REQUIRED

FEATURING 22 EDUCATIONAL AND FUN BREAKOUT SESSIONS TO CHOOSE FROM!

This event is for survivors of brain injury, their family members and caregivers

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Courtney Clark

Courtney is the luckiest unlucky person in the world. At age 26, Courtney beat melanoma. But five years later, routine follow-up scans found an aneurysm in her brain that was close to hemorrhaging. Multiple brain surgeries later, she is a speaker and the author of two books on personal resilience.

Call The Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona at (602) 508-8024 to register or register online at BIAAZ.org.

5025 E. Washington Street, Suite 108 • Phoenix, Arizona 85034 • 602.508.8024 • BIAAZ.org



Brain Injury Alliance
ARIZONA

RAYS OF HOPE

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*Bill & Sandra Johnson
The Nielson Family*

READING BETWEEN THE DATA

Dr. Sean Southland Strives to Advance
Patient Neuro Health and Wellness

It's a story many brain injury survivors are all-too-familiar with— dealing with frequent pain and stress caused by post-injury symptoms, as well as scheduling appointments with a variety of doctors and specialists who more often than not don't understand brain injury or see it as a legitimate, treatable condition. Dr. Sean Southland, director of research and technology at NeuroHealth Solutions and a frequent concussion flier himself, thought there had to be a way to help these stories have better endings.

During his high school years, Sean was an avid athlete and participated in a variety of sports, including motocross racing, football, soccer, and martial arts. As a result, he experienced several concussions (also known as mild TBIs), which led to hearing loss in first his left, then his right ear. He also had numbness in his head that lasted for over eight years straight. Sean became frustrated that the medical answers to his ailments were usually a cocktail of medications, or some variation of “you look fine; nothing seems to be wrong with you.” His own lack of understanding of brain injury at the time, as well as that of the people tasked with treating him, created a spark in him to learn how to improve the brain and nervous system's functions.

An important step in Dr. Southland's brain injury education was realized when he completed pre-med rotations through the health professions program at ASU. He was fortunate enough to shadow clinicians in the fields of neurology, plastic & reconstructive surgery, emergency room trauma, forensics, and pathology. Also, during his time at the Maricopa Medical Examiner's Office, he was introduced to research involving shaken baby syndrome and sudden infant death syndrome. “This opened my eyes to the need for further research on the brain,” he shares. It occurred to him that it would be crucial to not just study data, but to see real patients and assess how the injury was affecting their everyday lives.



At NeuroHealth Solutions, Dr. Southland fills the roles of director of research and technology, as well as neuroplastician (a fancy, scientific word for a specialist who works with the brain's natural plasticity and capacity for healing).

By 2003, Dr. Southland completed the health professions pre-med/pre-law program at ASU and earned his first Ph.D. in biosciences with an emphasis in biological and physiological human performance, concentrating on neurophysiology. He soon began using his education and experience to work with athletes to optimize their brain and nervous system functions utilizing bioenergetics and thermogenics. His goal at the time was to help them enhance their performance without relying on steroids or other pharmacotherapeutics. In 2009, he began another graduate degree program at ASU that focused on physiology and human research, as well as how advances in neuroscience could be integrated primarily using simulator technology.

As fate would have it, around this time, Dr. Southland attended a charity event for an organization called Autism Speaks. To assist with their fundraising effort, he had brought a simulator for the attendees to test out. At the event, he was introduced to a child with autism and his parents. After a single-use of the simulator, the parents were impressed, as their child's level of response was higher than they'd ever seen from him before. From then on, in addition to athletes, Dr. Southland began working with people with autism, using the simulation therapy and technology to help improve their symptoms. "I felt like I had discovered something

with great potential and knew I was onto something," he recalls.

In 2012, Dr. Southland obtained his certifications in biofeedback and neurofeedback techniques used to train and control the body and brain's functions via electronically-provided feedback. He also became certified in qEEG (Quantitative Electroencephalography), and neuro-modulation therapies, which also involve training and strengthening the brain. Prior to his certification, the majority of Dr. Southland's focus had been on subjective qualitative studies, which are the end-results of how a patient feels from treatment. But he wanted to dig deeper; he wanted to know the how and why behind the patient's results, which essentially required learning to interpret the raw, objective, quantitative data provided by the EEGs and qEEGs. Quantitative information is as unique to each individual, and for Dr. Southland, helps provide the key to answering the mysteries of what the brain and body require in order to heal.

As his understanding of quantitative data and the technology he was utilizing and developing grew, Dr. Southland realized it could benefit people experiencing a variety of conditions—from addictions, phobias, and pain management, to TBI's, strokes, and other neurological and physiological disorders. Not one to

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NeuroHealth Solutions

ADVANCED SIMULATION THERAPY



PERFORMANCE
RECOVERY
MATRIX
RECOVERY

SOUTHLAND'S HIERARCHY OF NEUROOPTIMIZATION

PROGRESSION PROTOCOLS
ACUTE STRESS RESPONSE TRAINING
OPTIMIZATION
REORGANIZATION
NORMALIZATION

CHRONIC STRESS KILLS; ACUTE STRESS HEALS

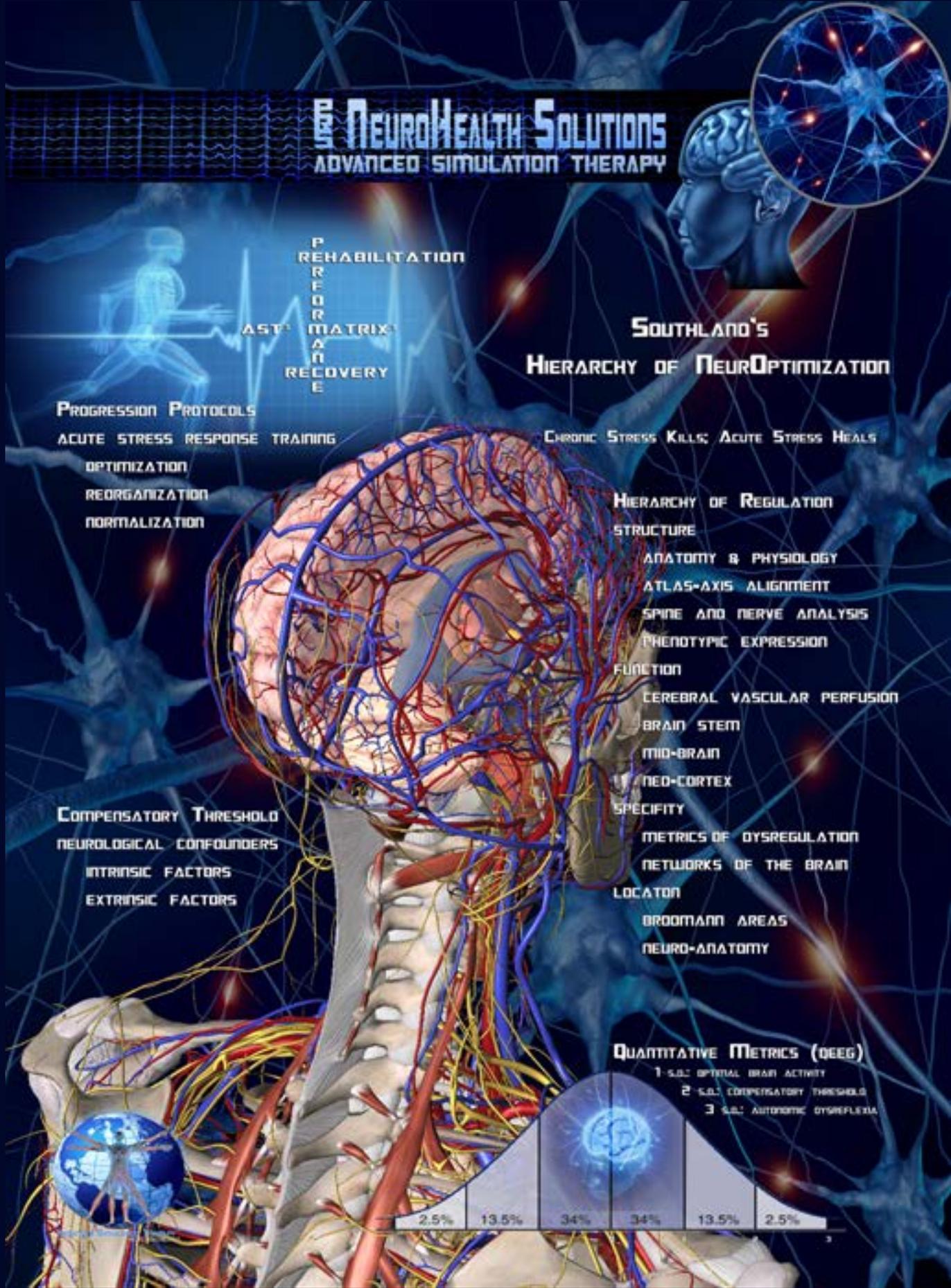
COMPENSATORY THRESHOLD
NEUROLOGICAL CONFOUNDERS
INTRINSIC FACTORS
EXTRINSIC FACTORS

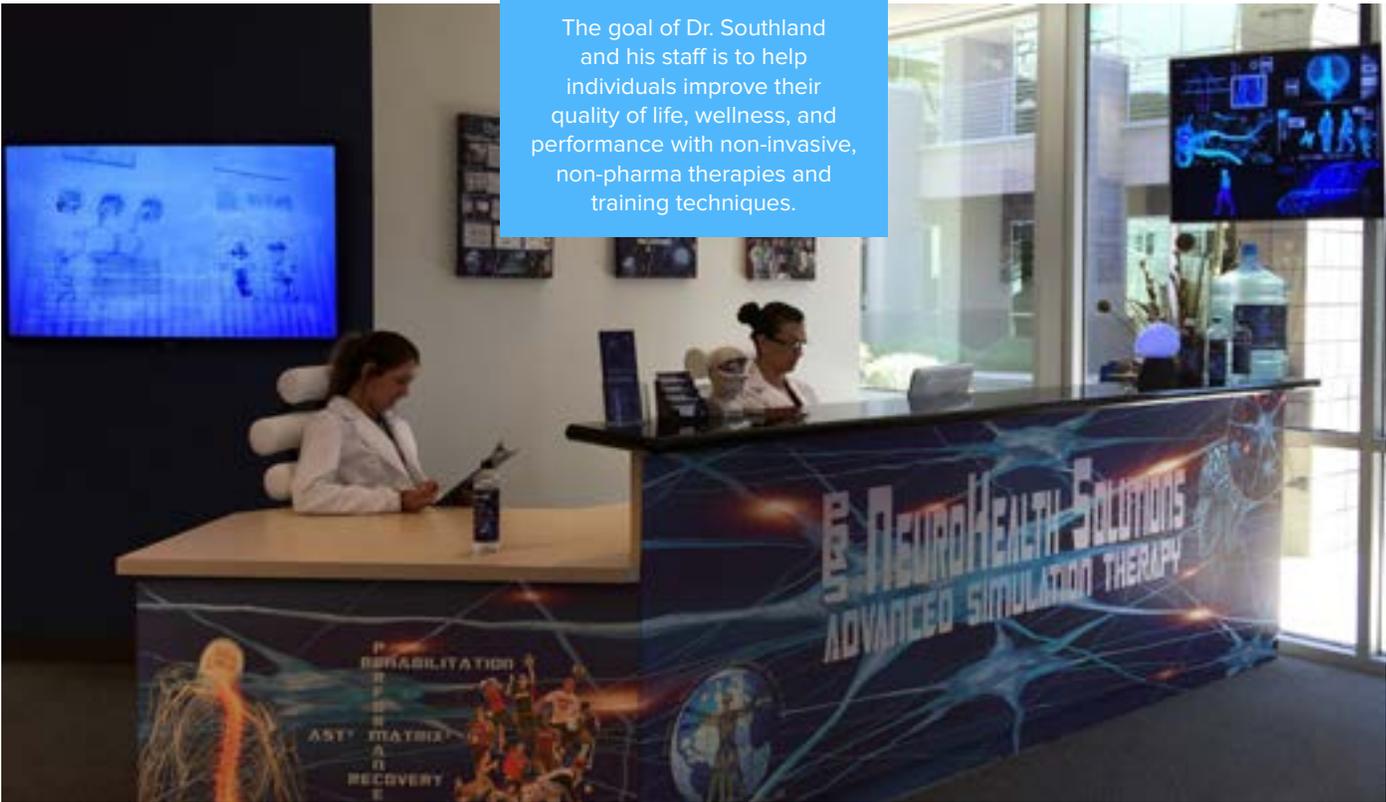
HIERARCHY OF REGULATION STRUCTURE

- ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY
- ATLAS-AXIS ALIGNMENT
- SPINE AND NERVE ANALYSIS
- PHENOTYPIC EXPRESSION
- FUNCTION
- CEREBRAL VASCULAR PERFUSION
- BRAIN STEM
- MID-BRAIN
- FRONT-CORTEX
- SPECIFICITY
- METRICS OF DYSREGULATION
- NETWORKS OF THE BRAIN
- LOCATION
- BRODMANN AREAS
- NEURO-ANATOMY

QUANTITATIVE METRICS (QEEG)

- 1 S.D. OPTIMAL BRAIN ACTIVITY
- 2 S.D. COMPENSATORY THRESHOLD
- 3 S.D. AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA





The goal of Dr. Southland and his staff is to help individuals improve their quality of life, wellness, and performance with non-invasive, non-pharma therapies and training techniques.

let an epiphany go to waste, he founded NeuroHealth Solutions (formerly Performance Research Sciences) in October 2014 to allow his research, knowledge, and therapies to accommodate a greater volume of patients.

At NeuroHealth Solutions, Dr. Southland fills the roles of director of research and technology, as well as neuroplastician (a fancy, scientific word for a specialist who works with the brain's natural plasticity and capacity for healing). Using data from the EEGs and qEEGs, he and his team of neurobiologists, sports medicine doctors, neuroplasticians, neuro-cognitive rehabilitation specialists, and psychologists develop an individualized treatment plan that addresses a patient's specific needs. From there, the specialists are able to communicate with each other and the patient about any adjustments to lifestyle, frequency of therapies, and other conditions involving the patient's rehabilitation and health.

While being able to interpret the quantitative data is a crucial part of NeuroHealth Solution's process, equally important is for the data to translate into results. By utilizing advanced simulation therapy (a multi-layered process involving advanced simulation equipment), and restorative cognitive rehabilitation, the goal of Dr. Southland and his staff is to help individuals improve their quality of life, wellness, and performance with non-invasive, non-pharma therapies and training techniques. "I don't believe in tricking [the] system," Dr. Southland says, "I want to understand and fix it." The NeuroHealth plans are designed to maintain and manage neurological issues, as well as lessen related symptoms. For Dr. Southland, helping people determine and successfully address their health concerns is the main part of what makes his job so fascinating and rewarding.

Although there are several success stories from his work with patients that have influenced and amazed him, Dr. Southland recalls one woman's experience that was especially poignant. She'd had coils put in her brain to help alleviate the pain from her post-traumatic headaches, but they weren't working. "She could barely keep the job she had cleaning houses and would be down for two-to-three days at a time," he recalls. The woman worked with Dr. Southland doing acute stress response training, which introduces the body to small amounts of acute stress, increasing the amount over time, in order to build resilience. "After six-to-eight weeks [of training], she was headache-free," he shares, which was all-the-more liberating, considering the three unsuccessful neuro surgeries she'd previously undergone to try to rid herself of them.

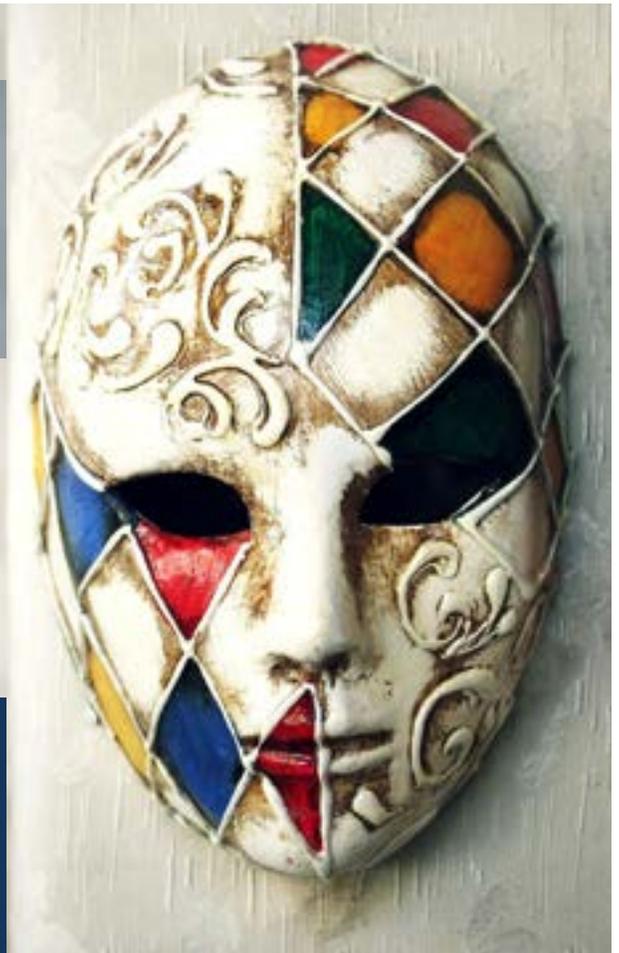
Due to the positive outcomes he's seen as a result of NeuroHealth Solutions' programs, Dr. Southland hopes to be able to expand and grow their services even more in the future and obtain the funding to open new locations in every major U.S. city. He is currently working with ASU to create a program where students interested in neuro research could intern at NeuroHealth Solutions. He'd also like to establish an institute to train integrative neuro-optimization therapists. As Dr. Southland is also a firm believer in the importance of brain injury educational training, programs, information, and resources, he decided to make NeuroHealth Solutions a sponsor of an organization providing these services—the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona. "I look forward to working with [BIAAZ] and providing essential services for the many people who could benefit from them," says Dr. Southland.



unmasking braininjury

JOIN THE MOVEMENT & SAVE THE DATE

The Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona (BIAAZ) invites survivors of brain injury and caregivers to participate in **Unmasking Brain Injury**, a visual art and education project to be displayed across Arizona in 2019!



Join us for a Scottsdale mask making event!

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019

11:00AM – 2:00PM

LOCATION

Encompass Health
Rehabilitation Hospital of Scottsdale
Conference Room 2
9630 E Shea Blvd | Scottsdale, AZ 85260

Please **RSVP to Danielle Lowell**
480-551-5479
danielle.lowell@encompasshealth.com



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

OBJECTIVE

To have each person living with a brain injury, create a mask that depicts the hidden feelings behind their brain injury in an effort to raise awareness in our communities and give survivors a VOICE! All masks will be displayed throughout Arizona in 2019-2020.

To learn more about the Unmasking Brain Injury project please contact:

Laura Johnson

UNMASKING BRAIN INJURY DIRECTOR
Unmasking@biaaz.org

CALL

888-500-9165

VISIT

biaaz.org/unmasking

Let's Begin Again

Resale Boutique Provides Unique Wares and Acceptance for Brain Injury Survivors



Kim & Erika Natori are the kind of people who refuse to settle for the way things are, especially if there's a better way for them to be. This mother-daughter duo discovered early on that if you have a brain injury, as Erika does, you're lucky if someone knows what that means, let alone what to do about it. To this day, no one is sure what caused Erika's low heart rate and brain injury-inducing oxygen deprivation when she was born, and initially, there didn't seem to be many noticeable issues. It wasn't until Erika started going to school that Kim realized her daughter was struggling with following instructions, reading comprehension, and forgetting to bring class assignments home.

Luckily, Erika and Kim not only share a familial bond, but tenacity and passion as well. Kim realized right away the importance of advocating for Erika at school and making sure to work closely with her teachers, so everyone was on the same page about how to best help Erika succeed. However, Erika never received any special education services. "There was no IEP or accommodations," Kim recalls, "I didn't have anyone to guide me." Having a personal understanding of her daughter's strengths and limitations helped Kim decide in the sixth grade to enroll Erika in co-op homeschooling, where she was able to do her work on a more flexible timeline and receive additional assistance.

For her part, Erika worked extremely hard to get good grades, and even played on the co-op's volleyball team. While she was pleased with the progress she'd made, she still wondered why it seemed harder for her to achieve certain academic milestones

than her peers. It wasn't until college that a knowledgeable school counselor suggested some of her memory and cognitive struggles could be a result of her at-birth oxygen deprivation.

Having a retrospective understanding of her hypoxic brain injury has allowed Erika to have more grace and acceptance with herself and others. "[It's important] to have patience with myself and be patient with my expectations of where I am and my image," Erika shares. "It's ok not to be a certain way, even though it can be hard not to compare yourself to others." She also says counseling and stress management have been gamechangers in helping her re-align her personal expectations and goals.

Once Kim and Erika became aware of the many causes and symptoms of brain injury, they started noting them more frequently in the people they interacted with. It occurred to them that, because brain injuries are invisible, they often aren't treated like other, more physical disabilities. "People tend to give more sympathy to those with obvious injuries," Erika observes. "If they understood what [someone with a brain injury] is going through, they wouldn't be judgmental; they'd want to help instead." Kim believes because her daughter looks normal on the outside and is so high-functioning, people, especially past employers, have assumed she could do any task given to her without help or accommodations. "We have to find more ways to help those with brain injuries acclimate to certain work environments," Kim says. "We need better, more structured training and for people to advocate

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for these changes.

Like most agents of change, Kim and Erika realized they would need to be the change they wished to see in the world of brain injury. Neither remembers exactly who had the idea for their resale boutique, aptly named Let's Begin Again, and for them, taking the credit isn't what matters. The primary goal for both women was to create a business they could do together that would help train Erika to eventually run her own business. They also wanted to provide an understanding workplace that would contribute to the traumatic brain injury (TBI) community. Initial ideas included a Pilates studio and even a cupcake shop, but since both Erika and Kim had prior experience in retail, they decided a non-profit resale boutique would be the best fit for them. In May 2018, Let's Begin Again opened its doors, and has continued to do so ever since.

At Let's Begin Again, shoppers have their pick of a variety of gently-used items, including clothing, jewelry, furniture, and home décor, but they are also just as likely to come away from the boutique learning something about brain injury they didn't before—which is exactly what Kim and Erika had in mind. On the wall behind the cash register is a large chalkboard sign stating that Let's Begin Again is a business dedicated to benefitting brain injury survivors. "We've had lots of conversations about TBI started based on that sign," Kim informs, "and we've been able to explain our mission to those who walk-in [the store]." There are also several survivors of TBI on staff; in fact, Kim and Erika have had the same crew working at the store since the beginning— five employees and 3 volunteers. According to both ladies, they are not only friendly and helpful but are also willing to act as brain injury advocates by answering customers' questions as well.

Besides spreading awareness of brain injury one customer at a time, Let's Begin Again's goals include thorough employee and volunteer training and creating an adaptive work environment. When they first began their recruitment process, Erika and Kim reached out to brain injury support groups and rehabilitation facilities such as Rehab Without Walls in order to find survivors who might be interested in working in a stable, low-stress envi-



Kim and Erika Natori are the kind of people who refuse to settle for the way things are.

ronment. One of their first employees, Michelle McKay, met Erika at a support group, and Kim asked her if she'd like to come aboard as a store employee. Michelle is now at Let's Begin Again every day it's open. Part of what keeps morale high for employees like Michelle is knowing her ideas and opinions matter. Many employee and volunteer ideas have already been implemented within the store, such as Michelle's brainchild, Second Saturdays, which, as the name implies, are held on the second Saturday of each month from 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. and feature low-cost art projects, such as tie-dye shirts, paintings, tote bags, etc., that participants can make and take home. "We let all employees contribute to how the store is run; it gives them more of a stake in it," Kim says.

For many brain injury survivors, including Erika, part of the appeal of a place like Let's Begin Again is that they can be themselves, no judgement. "There's such a vibe of creativity and positivity," Erika enthuses. "We understand we're all learning and growing on a daily basis." On Kim's end, she strives to ensure the position an employee or volunteer fills is a good fit for them. "We look for what skills they have that will suit what are mission is, not 'what list of qualifications do you meet?'" Kim explains. "We ask ourselves, 'what can we teach them? How do we build their confidence?'" So far, the answer has included teaching skills such as maintaining accurate financial records, working the register, stocking the shelves, and interacting positively with customers in a way and at a pace that is comfortable to the individual. "I want to make sure they have a clear training," Kim says. "I'm happy to help people going through what Erika went through."

Besides the obvious reasons for wanting a business to succeed, Erika and Kim know that if Let's Begin Again thrives, so will their employees, as well as their model for low-stress, personalized employee training. Once the shop becomes sustainable enough, Erika and Kim want to give back even further by donating part of their proceeds to the non-profits The Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona (BIAAZ) and brain injury socialization group We're MOVING Forward. Even before starting their re-sale boutique, when Erika and Kim came across a survivor of brain injury or their family members, they made sure to share with them the information for both non-profits. "I think they're instrumental organizations for survivors and are meaningful to us," Kim and Erika agree. "They keep people from floundering and let us ask the questions we need." In order to move their plan forward, Erika and Kim hope people will volunteer their time to the boutique, donate items that are in good condition, and above all, tell others about Let's Begin Again. "Word-of-mouth is so important," Kim reminds, "so spread the word!"



At Let's Begin Again, shoppers have their pick of a variety of gently-used items, including clothing, jewelry, furniture, and home décor.

Let's Begin Again is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. You can contact Kim about donating or volunteer opportunities at 602-237-5150 or message their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/letsbeginagainphx/>.

Question Corner

Hey there, Question Corner. This probably won't surprise you, but I have a question. My husband Evan was struck by a metal beam in the back of his head while at work about six months ago. Ever since then, life has become more and more stressful. Evan is often withdrawn and distant, not anything like the goofy, relaxed man I've been married to for over ten years. Sometimes he lashes out at me for what seems to be no reason. We have two daughters, and I can tell their dad's injury is affecting them too. While looking for suggestions online, I found the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona's website and was able to download a list of support groups. I was wondering if you could explain some of the benefits for both survivors and caregivers of attending such groups? I'm hoping at some point to convince Evan to attend one as well. Thanks for your help; your advice is appreciated.

— Linda B.

Linda:

Perhaps a metaphor will be helpful. You and your husband embarked on an extended backpacking trip. After an exciting start, you settled into a comfortable routine: after getting up, you each set about taking care of different aspects of breaking camp, and then it was on your way! You would stop and consult whenever you came to a split in the trail, together making the decision of where you were going next. Along the way, you enjoyed the beauty around you and when you reached the next camping spot, you easily flowed into your different responsibilities as you worked as a team to set up camp, prepare dinner, and then literally hit the sack. Sure, at times you hit a steep incline in the trail, but you checked with each other to adjust the pace, and when you were sitting around the campfire later that night, you both felt even closer for having helped each other overcome the adversity.

Then one day, disaster strikes. Evan has a serious fall. He survives, but he does sustain some significant injuries. As a consequence, some of the things he used to carry now must go into your pack. Of course, you are happy to help, but it does make for a harder day on the trail, which detracts from the journey. Also, you can tell Evan is embarrassed by being unable to carry more, but when you bring it up, he becomes upset. Likewise, when he is setting up the tent and has some difficulties, you try to help, only to have him become very angry. This is particularly hurtful, because you were only trying to help, and after all, you're also tried and frustrated from carrying an extra load all day on the trail. What should you say? What if he is setting up the tent in a way that risks it falling down in the middle of the night? What should you do then?

So. How can a support group help in such a situation? For many people, it is very helpful to simply know that someone else has

already traveled the same trail, or even is at a similar point on a similar trail. You are not alone. On a more practical level, many of your fellow travelers have figured out, or have otherwise heard of and tried, answers to the same questions you are asking. They can provide ideas and suggestions that may work for you, or that you might modify in some way to fit your particular situation. The benefits are much the same for survivors— not feeling like they are alone on the mountainside, as well as getting tried-and-proven solutions to some of the things that are making life more difficult for them after brain injury.

I would suggest to you, Linda, that you attend a support group whether or not Evan accepts your invitation to go. See if that particular group is helpful for you, and if you find one that is, whenever Evan seems to be in a receptive mood, simply mention how it has helped you. This will encourage him without pressuring him, which in my experience, will have a better chance for success.

Good luck!

David G. Lamb, Ph.D., ABPP-CN

Clinical Neuropsychologist



Dr. Lamb is a board-certified neuropsychologist and the clinical director of Arizona Neurorehabilitation. He is a member of the following professional organizations: the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology, the National Academy of Neuropsychology, and the International Neuropsychological Society.

The answers provided by The Question Corner are meant to be informative only; they are not intended as a replacement for medical, legal, or other specialist-based advice. You should always consult a professional regarding issues related to your health and the law. If you have an educational, informational, or resource-based question you would like answered by The Question Corner, please email it to resources@biaaz.org, or mail it c/o Brittany Sweeney-Lawson, 5025 E. Washington St., Ste. 108, Phoenix, Arizona 85034.

Luna Azul

PROVIDING A
NEW MODEL FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



Years ago, Mastercard's "Priceless" ad series offered one version that Lauren Schwartz Roth remembers fondly: it's the one with the elementary-aged boy, dancing like a robot, meeting up with a friend, and then another who, in their nerdiest attempt, robot together down the alley on their way to school. "Backpack - \$20.00. Being with people who understand you – priceless."

For Lauren, that commercial was particularly poignant as it touched on a family need: finding a community for her daughter who, with a disability, just wanted to be among people, particularly peers, who understood her.

So, problem-solvers that they are, Lauren and her husband Mark committed to creating that community for their daughter and others like her who live with a disability. And later this year, the Roth family will open Luna Azul, the nation's first for-sale community planned for adults with and without disabilities, providing unique peace of mind for residents and their families alike. Ownership distinguishes Luna Azul from any similarly-focused community in that it assures a permanent housing solution for the residents.

Located in Phoenix, Arizona, Luna Azul is comprised of 30 homes, a clubhouse, pool and greenspace to encourage social opportunities and connection among residents. Planned specifically for adults with all manner of disabilities or impairment, as a result of stroke or head injury or otherwise, Luna Azul provides a new concept for community, where residents can feel included and accepted.

AN ANSWER TO THE "CRISIS OF COMMUNITY"

Mark admits he and Lauren worried about their daughter's social life particularly. Driven more by caregivers' schedules than by genuine friendships and neighborly encounters, he cringed

seeing how often she was left out or left behind and how she was becoming increasingly isolated.

Indeed, available evidence suggests that up to half the people with a disability are chronically lonely, compared with around 15 to 30 percent of people in the general population. And this can be particularly challenging. With a social life that is often structured, roommates pre-determined and minimum wage caregivers who come and go, there may be little opportunity for people with disabilities to find spontaneous and meaningful human interaction. The cognitive, physical, and mental health problems already associated with living with a disability or chronic medical condition are likely to be compounded by this "crisis of community."

The Luna Azul model seeks to be the antidote. Each home's living area and front porch face a courtyard and shared greenspace facilitating frequent social engagement. Two- and three-bedroom floorplans allow for selective roommate relationships or even live-in caregiving, if needed. Luna Azul's community clubhouse, pool and staff will further encourage residents to take full advantage of opportunities for participation in the community as means of facilitating overall well-being.

FOR YOUNG ADULTS, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INDEPENDENCE

Lauren Schwartz Roth, a clinical rehabilitation psychologist specializing in the treatment of adults recovering from stroke or traumatic brain injury, sees Luna Azul's value to such survivors. "A common struggle is to find a community, a way for social connection for those recovering from head injuries," she says. "Finding opportunities to get involved with like-minded friends and support groups of others who share the experience is essential

Lauren and her husband Mark committed to creating a community for their daughter and others like her who live with a disability.

to a survivor's recovery and well-being. And it's often incredibly helpful to the families, as well" she said.

Luna Azul is particularly well-suited, she believes, to young adults who are coping with disability and challenges from stroke or head injury. "A younger person with brain injury will launch into adulthood differently than other young adults. While they may no longer be able to live without some type of support, that doesn't mean they want to remain at home with their parents," she explains, adding, "The very thing that might make them feel 'different' someplace else may actually help them fit in at Luna Azul."

STAFFED, SECURED AND SOCIAL

Through its home owners' association, Luna Azul will employ a full-time, onsite director and overnight staff to encourage resident engagement and community participation, and to help ensure overall safety and resident well-being.

The HOA will also organize and fund regular social and recreational activities, maintain the common areas and provide other services to meet shared needs of residents. Importantly, the HOA will not pre-determine activities for residents, but rather will create and adapt plans in collaboration with residents and their families.

Located near urban amenities and public transportation, Luna Azul also affords opportunity to conveniently connect "off campus." And, the community's secured entry, 24/7 staffing and traffic-free environment help assure safety and security for residents.

ROOMMATES: THE PERENNIAL PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Seattle's Partners4Housing is working with Luna Azul to provide roommate matching services. The organization, founded in 2014, just recently launched an online roommate matching platform in Phoenix to help Arizona-based families find compatible roommates

Partners4Housing services are particularly valuable for families who worry about loneliness and isolation and who want to share expenses related to housing and coordinated services. While Luna Azul provides community-wide staff, each family or resident will be responsible for securing any individualized support services needed.

"Roommates are a critical relationship for anyone," says Mark Roth "but for those living with a disability, that relationship is fraught with added stress and emotion." In many housing situations for adults with disabilities, roommates are often assigned. But, in bringing the Partners4Housing roommate matching plat-

form to Luna Azul, the developer hopes to forge relationships with attention to personality and lifestyle, not need and urgency. "It's an entirely different dynamic," he says.

A SOLUTION FOR PARENTS READY FOR THE EMPTY-NEST

Housing alternatives for adults with disabilities or those with impairment typically include rental units, group homes and Section 8 housing. But these are constrained by government or charitable funding, leaving family and residents unsure as to how long any solution remains intact.

Luna Azul endows residents and their families with the confidence that comes with ownership. Parents needn't worry about what happens to their child, especially after they're gone.

And, the community's location in Phoenix was intentional and with family resources in mind. For the past six years, Arizona has earned the top ranking by United Cerebral Palsy for providing the best Medicaid service system for individuals with disabilities.

Importantly, Luna Azul homes are also prewired for Z-Wave smart home technology so residents can implement the smart solutions they desire now, or in the future. For residents, and perhaps more for their distant parents or guardians, a smart home offers great reassurance. Consider a mother, making certain her daughter is safe, remotely locking the front door at night. The choices are extensive: automated drapes, cameras, security systems, smart and remote-controlled, programmable thermostats, lighting and door-locking mechanisms, to name a few.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Luna Azul, as a first-in-the-nation for-sale community for adults with disabilities, is forging a new housing model. The community expects to open its first home and community center this spring, with the remaining homes complete by year's end. For Mark and Lauren Roth, it will be an answer for their daughter's long-term security and social isolation. "We know we have created an environment where she can feel permanence, independence and enjoy self-determination," said Mark, adding, "We know she'll always be invited to the pool party."

Requests from other markets are frequent. To these, Mark replies, "We hope to participate in the development of many more similar communities throughout the United States and Canada." But, for now the Phoenix project is the family's exclusive focus.





YOGA ENTHUSIAST AND TBI SURVIVOR

Beckett Johnson Loves His Brain

BY WILL GROVE

Beckett Johnson's journey with traumatic brain injury began on April 20, 2014 when his best friend arrived to pick him up from his storage unit. The same moment Beckett jumped onto the rear bumper of his friend's truck was when she gunned the engine. The force propelled Beckett backward, causing him to land head-first on the pavement. He was rushed to the ER, and subsequently the ICU, with a basilar skull fracture and broken temporal bone. Like many survivors of brain injury, Beckett doesn't remember much from the accident.

Fortunately, he lived to tell the tale, which is especially miraculous, considering his attending physicians initially gave him a one-percent chance of survival. Unfortunately, he was released from the hospital prematurely due to his lack of insurance. Left with no guidance, no plan, and no follow-up care, Beckett looked for help and healing where any self-respecting millennial would—Google—and typed into the search bar “traumatic brain injury.”

The first listing that caught Beckett's eye was for an organization called LoveYourBrain, which he'd never heard of before. Seeing mostly information about yoga on their website, he was initially skeptical, but decided to at least call and find out more about them and see if they could help him. Beckett says, “this was one of the best decisions of [my] recovery.” He was told about LoveYourBrain's available education and outreach programs provided in addition to their TBI-friendly yoga classes. He was also invited to apply to attend one of the LYB retreats, which are held multiple times per year in different parts of the country, and was accepted into the program.

Beckett was nervous leading up to the retreat. In fact, he remembers feeling “super scared.” This apprehension, however, melted away upon his arrival. The feeling of acceptance and understanding he experienced was immediate. Beckett participated in the myriad of activities and workshops available to participants, which revolved around LYB's core pillars of community, mindfulness, movement, and nutrition. “The purpose of the retreat is really to create a space where TBI survivors and their caregivers can learn different tools to help navigate this new path of healing from a TBI,” Beckett says. He was able to focus his attention on learning new ways to rebuild and progress without feeling the need to repeatedly explain his injury or symptoms to others. He enjoyed a sense of community and created invaluable friendships that have lasted to this day.

After his experience at the retreat, Beckett became a fixture at LoveYourBrain events. He began attending the weekly yoga sessions held at Urban Wellness in Phoenix and says they, too, were a valuable part of his recovery. “I love being able to practice yoga together and then afterwards, sitting in a circle and sharing parts

of ourselves in different ways with each other,” Beckett says. “It really helps to create this level of understanding and connection between each other that is just special.” He also appreciated how sensitive and understanding the LYB staff was, especially his yoga instructor, Emily. “She had a soothing presence about her and was just a joy to be around,” he recalls.

LoveYourBrain staff also helped introduce Beckett to another invaluable resource for his recovery journey: the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona. He met BIAAZ Resource Facilitation Specialists Brittany Sweeney-Lawson and Will Grove at LYB's TBI yoga sessions, which they'd been invited to observe and experience. Brittany and Will were able to connect Beckett with brain injury-related resources and information tailored to his unique needs. For Beckett, it was both exciting and gratifying to have a whole new network of support and services so readily available to him.

For anyone thinking of trying out the LoveYourBrain yoga sessions, Beckett's advice is simple: have an open mind and be willing to experience new ways to heal. “I think remaining open and allowing yourself to just try what is being presented is a great blessing,” he explains. “You never know how something will really help you until you allow yourself to try it.” He also advises attending every class in the six-week series, since each week, a new concept or strategy is taught. “Plus, you get to come and have a community of support, which is so essential when dealing with a TBI,” he says.

Now, Beckett looks forward to using his knowledge and experience to benefit other brain injury survivors who feel the way he used to—alone and anxious, not knowing where to go or what to do. “I am very passionate about helping other TBI survivors and being there to share all I have learned on my journey,” he says. “I don't want anyone to have to struggle the way I did, so if I can help in any way, I will.”

This spring, he'll be traveling to Maine for what will be his fifth consecutive LoveYourBrain retreat and second year as an ambassador/mentor. Like the previous year, he'll be holding workshops and continuing in his burgeoning leadership role with LYB. Beckett is seeking to further expand this role by creating a full-fledged LoveYourBrain group in Arizona, complete with retreats. “It is in the beginning stages, but the idea is to bring the retreat to the community as best as we can,” he shares. “I wish everyone could experience the love and support and community that LYB has been able to create and cultivate.” For his part, he's doing all he can to make that wish a reality.



To find out if LoveYourBrain or other brain injury resources would be appropriate for you or a loved one, please contact the BIAAZ resource facilitation team at 1-888-500-9165 or resources@biaaz.org.

REGISTRATION is OPEN!



2nd Annual

RUN, WALK & ROLL

Saturday, March 30, 2019
Tempe Kiwanis Park

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REGISTER FOR A 10K, 5K OR 1-MILE FUN RUN/WALK

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EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION INCLUDES T-shirt and a medal for \$30

To learn more about affordable sponsor and vendor opportunities, contact carrie@biaaz.org.
For registration questions, contact operations@biaaz.org



2017 RUN, WALK & ROLL



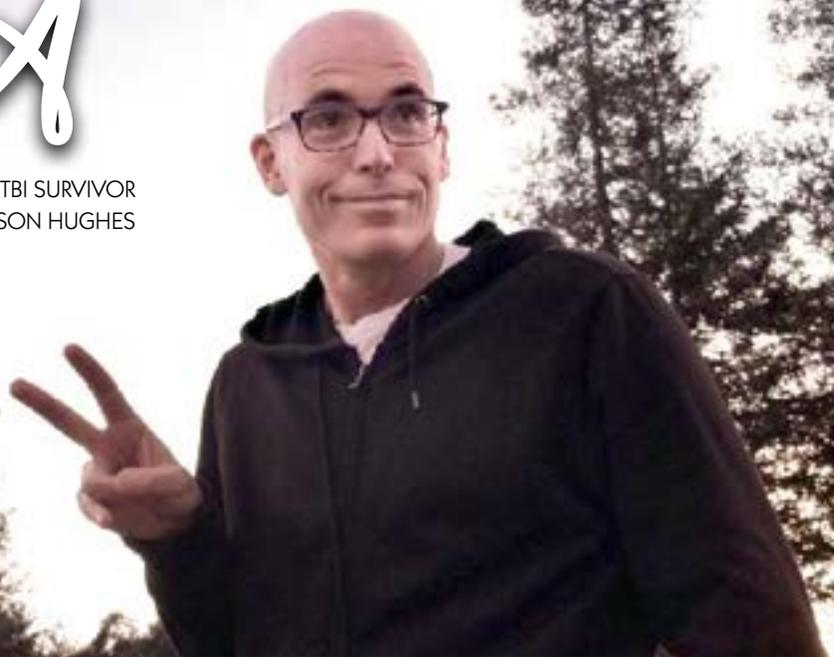
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Q&A

WITH AUTHOR AND TBI SURVIVOR
JASON HUGHES



Q What is the story behind your traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

My best friend Kubby and I got tickets to a Grateful Dead concert at the Oxford Speedway in Maine on July 2, 1988. I was 16 and Kubby was 19, so partying, drugs, and having a good time were top priority. Overall, we were good kids and fortunate to be raised by great parents in a beautiful area of the world. At the concert, though, we went way over-the-top, and were truly lucky to survive in order to head back home on July 3. On the way home, I drove for the first two-and-a-half hours. We switched driving duties after a brief visit to a used car lot to check out a car Kubby was interested in buying. I remember the last words I said to him like it was yesterday as he sped up and shifted through third gear— “take it easy!” I meant it jokingly, referring to my car, not as a way of saying goodbye.

I eventually fell asleep, as did the hitchhikers we’d picked up along the way. Tired from the concert, Kubby also fell asleep while at the wheel, but woke up suddenly when the car went off the road. Instinctively, he jerked the wheel the opposite direction the car was headed, which caused the car to flip and roll three times. Kubby and I were both ejected from the car, while the two hitchhikers remained inside it and fortunately ended up with only minor injuries. My best friend, however, was not so lucky. His chest was crushed, and he was pronounced dead before his parents got to the hospital. As for me, I went into a coma, was diagnosed with a traumatic injury, was paralyzed, and given a twenty-fiver percent chance of survival.

Q What were some of the physical, emotional, behavioral, or cognitive changes you noticed after your brain injury?

Two weeks post-accident, I started to regain consciousness and come out of the coma. Even though I was not totally aware of my condition for another month or so, I was completely immobile,

and I could not speak. Cognitively, I was immediately able to spell on a spelling board. Although I was a bit of a mess at times, emotionally, I felt all right. It was all a whole new world to me those first few weeks. At that time, I had not yet been told about my friend being killed. The doctors told my parents to wait until I asked about him. I remember thinking about him, but as I developed the sense that I was seriously injured, I remember thinking he wouldn’t want to see me that way. When I used my spelling board and asked my mom, “where is Kubby?” she told me. I could not fully grasp this loss or how it would end up impacting me in this new world of mine. I couldn’t move, talk, or even think much beyond what was happening to me, but powerful shifts were entering my consciousness. It’s challenging to convey, but it was as if I knew I would get better. I wasn’t scared or stressed/anxious. I didn’t fully know it at the time, but I later realized I had a new “voice” now living through me, and that it came from my near-death experience.

Q In your own words, what does it mean to have a near death experience (NDE)?

How did this experience affect your outlook on life?

For me, a near-death experience is not coming close to almost physically dying. Physically, I did almost die. It is more about a spiritual experience that wakes you up in more ways than one and shapes every aspect of your life from that day forward. At the time of the accident when the car started to crash, I woke up for the briefest of moments. I have a clear vision of putting out my arms to brace myself against the dashboard, preparing for impact, but instead,



I felt myself tumbling and floating and I did not feel any pain. I was also surrounded by a white light. It was the most peaceful, calm, loving, protecting, and transcending experiences of my life. This was my near-death experience and it continues to impact me every single day of my life.

As mentioned, I felt like I had a new “voice of love” living through me in my early days in the hospital. As I gained more clarity in the years to follow, I came to believe that while the accident was a tragic event that claimed a life, my personal experience was far different. I had a hard time figuring it all out, but once I did, I knew my life and everyone’s life could be an unfolding love story if we CHOOSE it to be. My outlook on life took on a whole new meaning. Since I felt so guided and protected after the accident and during my three-year physical recovery, (which included surgery to have ten feet of my small intestine removed), I went forward believing we are all guided and protected as we move through this life.

Q What are some lessons you’ve learned as a person who survived a TBI?

The biggest lesson I learned was not to unconsciously wait for something bad to happen in your life before you wake up to a life truly worth living. When we got into the car accident, I was only a kid, but I had been taking my life for granted in many ways. Although my biggest wake-up call came in the form of a near-death experience, these calls come every day in all of our lives in limitless ways. A little positive thought can wake us up and alter the trajectory of our lives.

Another one of the most valuable lessons I’ve learned is that we are here in this life to listen to our hearts and follow our dreams. I’ve learned these dreams would not be in our hearts if they were not meant to be fulfilled! I’ve learned that TODAY is always the best day of our lives, and there’s no other way it can be. Yesterday is gone, and we can hold onto the memories, but we’ve got to make the best of today. And tomorrow has not happened yet, so worrying or stressing about it does not make much sense.

Q What is something you wish other people understood about brain injury?

I wish other people would understand that most people with brain injuries may not be as lucky as I was to recover the way I did. I believe it is an injury that deserves more awareness, so that we may better understand what can happen to someone who is severely impacted. I know I was in the hospital with fellow TBI patients that did not know the year, their family members, or many pieces of basic information. So, I want those people to have all the help in the world to get better and to live the highest quality of life they may have.

Q You originally contacted the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona’s (BIAAZ) Executive Director Carrie Collins-Fadell. How did you learn about BIAAZ, and what made you want to connect with us?

I wanted to connect with BIAAZ and all TBI branches, so I could do my part in helping raise awareness. I wanted to share my story, because I believe my story is everyone’s story in one way or another. My goal in life has been to uplift and inspire as many people in different walks of life as possible, so I wanted to connect with [BIAAZ] to see if there are opportunities to do so.

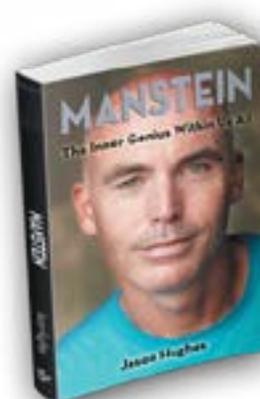
Q You got your master’s degree from Salve Regina University to become a holistic counselor. What does this type of job entail?

As a Holistic Life Coach with a master’s degree in holistic counseling, I work with clients on integrating mind, body, and spirit. These three aspects of our lives deserve equal attention. My work and focus is on guiding and facilitating a process of healing and growth around one’s whole life. This allows the client to have success in motivating themselves to constantly be conscious of moving through life in mind, body, and spirit in the healthiest ways possible. I help guide clients to gain and build on the tools needed to create peace, love, and happiness within and without their lives.

I may teach or practice meditation with a client. This is a process that revolves around what makes them feel good and what works for them. Only they know how to live effectively as they see fit, and I am just the nudge to help them get to where they want to be in mind, body, spirit, career, or in various relationships.

Q You’re the author of two books: One Man’s Love Story: A Near Death Experience, and Manstein: The Inner Genius Within Us All. What inspired you to write them?

My first book, One Man’s Love Story: A Near-Death Experience, was inspired by my spiritual near-death experience, recovery, and the powerful realizations I went through. Because I experienced the greatest love I have ever known during my NDE, I came to believe life is meant to be an unfolding love story in every way we choose it to be. It is a very spiritual thing for me, and because I firmly believe I was guided and protected to survive my TBI and all other injuries, this is very close to my heart. I am beyond grateful for this second chance I have at life, and I fully intend on feeling and doing what I love with the rest of my time here.



My second book came about while I was pondering Albert Einstein’s quote where he says, “great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.” A concept called “manstein” popped in my head, which is basically the idea that there’s an inner genius within us at all times as we journey through this lifetime. Of course, my inspiration [for my second book] also came from my NDE, the TBI, recovering, and especially the many more years of experiences I had

between writing my two books.

Q Do you have any upcoming goals/projects you’re currently working on?

I am currently focused on feeling good more than anything else! One of my biggest personal goals is to meditate every day, and I’ve been on quite the run for the past one-and-a-half years. I’ve also written an outline I created based on my first book that I shop around to be turned into a [movie] script. This is not easy to do but living in Los Angeles helps. Beyond that, I desire to get back into public speaking. If I am meant to uplift and inspire one client at a time on the tennis court or as a Holistic Health Coach,

continued next page



I am currently focused on feeling good more than anything else!

that is great. But I have always felt a calling to do more. On that note, my two books continue to sell, and I continue to dream about getting them into millions of more hearts.

For the most part, I've always lived my life believing I will always be in the right place at the right time. Again, my near-death experience allowed me to see life through a different lens than the one previous to my car accident. So, when it comes to dreams, goals, and fulfilling my destiny, I just try to stay out of my own way and allow the higher powers that be work their magic in my life.

Q What are some of your hobbies or things you do for fun?

My favorite thing to do for fun is to play tennis and to exercise. If I am not playing tennis, I am often at the gym. It is all very connected to my accident, TBI, and to living in gratitude for having a physical body that is strong enough to do physical sports. I clearly remember being paralyzed, in a coma, and not being

able to speak, so exercise actually really helped me get back into my life and heal. It just motivates me and allows me to feel good about everything I aim to create. I enjoy meditating, hiking, being outdoors, and spending time with my girlfriend and our puppy Jax. We absolutely love going for walks and playing with Jax!

Q Are there any final thoughts you'd like to share?

Finally, I always cherish the opportunity to thank any doctors, nurses, and therapists who help TBI patients get better. I know I wouldn't be living the way I do if it was not for all of the love, support, and medical attention I received at age 16 and the years that followed. I know I wouldn't even be alive if it wasn't for this care, prayers, and constant positive energy from so many medical staff, family, and friends, so I am eternally grateful.



An advertisement for Brain Injury Alliance Arizona. The background shows two cups of coffee on a wooden table. In the foreground, a hand holds a tablet displaying an advertisement. The text on the tablet reads: "ADVERTISE IN THE NOGGIN!" followed by a list of benefits: "Reach a targeted audience of over 9,000 brain injury survivors, caregivers and professionals", "Guaranteed ad placement", "Extremely competitive prices", and "Four sizes to choose from: full page, half page, two-inch banner and business card". At the bottom, it says "Call Carrie at (602) 508-8024 or email Carrie @biaaz.org for more information". The Brain Injury Alliance Arizona logo is visible in the top left corner of the advertisement.

A Day in the Life of a Brain Injury Survivor

By Jarrod Flowers

I am so glad that I pushed myself to get out of bed today.

I woke up today feeling like garbage. I had planned to go for a walk with some friends this morning, but I was not up for that at all. As I laid in bed, with terrible depressive thoughts running through my mind about how crappy life is with a brain injury, I thought about what I was going to do with my day. The last 2 days I had spent most of my time sleeping and in bed. I thought that I would get up, have a shower, hopefully feeling a little refreshed would give me some kind of energy kick to leave my room.



I got changed into some good clothes, grabbed my headphones, book and water bottle and was ready to go. In my head, I had no idea what I was going to do or where I was going to go. I did know

that I craved a coffee from Sleepless City Roasters - my favourite coffee that I used to get through my 8am lectures on a Tuesday mornings at Univeristy. I went and grabbed one and a bag of dark chocolate coated coffee beans, as it would be rude to walk into the shop and not purchase them.

As I jumped back in the car, I decided to go to Laurel Bank Park, as it is beautiful and a great place to enjoy a book. When I arrived, I put my headphones on and enjoyed some of my favourite tunes whilst walking through the park, taking in all of the beauty. Living with a mindful approach towards life helps me to appreciate so much more. As I'm walking, I'm touching and embracing every sensation that runs through my hands from the different plants. Some are soft, others spiky, some smooth, others rough. The scent

of different fragrances fill my nose as I walk through and paying special attention to every different smell that the gardens have to offer. I find myself enjoying these special moments - what I always took for granted, so much more enjoyable since my accident.

I found a nice shady spot to sit under a tree and spent the next few hours getting lost in my book. Every now and then, I would stop and focus on my posture and breathing and be with my thoughts to see where they were at. What I found was that I was generally feeling so much better than I had that morning and the past few days. It has shown me, that no matter how bad I feel, it's worth having a go at something rather than not trying anything at all. Some days I can't plan what's going to happen. I just need to trust my inner self and 'go with it'. I am so glad that I pushed myself to get out of bed today.

"I find myself enjoying these special moments — what I always took for granted, so much more enjoyable since my accident."



Questions about living life fully after brain injury?
Contact the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona
info@biaaz.org biaaz.org 602-508-8024

BUILDING BRIDGES

for a Better Future



AT THE 2018 NASHIA STATE OF THE STATES IN HEAD INJURY ANNUAL MEETING

By Malissa Mallet, LMSW & BIAAZ Program Director

This past September, the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona had the honor of attending and presenting at The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators' (NASHIA) 29th Annual State of the States in Head Injury meeting. The 2018 theme was Building Bridges for a Better Future and was held in Des Moines, Iowa. NASHIA's State of the States in Head Injury meeting, first held in 1990, has the distinction of being the only annual national conference designed to foster communication and professional development among state government brain injury program administrators.

NASHIA is also the only national organization representing and promoting states' interests and issues relating to the delivery of public services for individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their families by advocating for federal legislation and funding. They continuously promote states' priorities through collaboration with federal agencies and national organizations. Additionally, NASHIA works closely with the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, TBI stakeholders, and various disability, research, injury prevention, and rehabilitation coalitions.

Like NASHIA, the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona is dedicated to improving the quality of life of individuals living with brain injury and their families. BIAAZ often takes special interest in special populations and emerging issues in the brain injury community, such as veterans, Native Americans, domestic violence victims, and criminal justice reform. BIAAZ also brings awareness to the intersection of brain injury and mental health, the opioid epidemic, and among the homeless population.

Malissa Mallet, LMSW, and the BIAAZ program director, had the distinct honor of presenting at The NASHIA conference on the topic of the intersection of brain injury and the opioid epidemic. Malissa, along with Grant Baldwin, PhD, MPH, (director of the Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and Thom Campbell (director of the Office of Innovation, Collaboration, and Excellence within the Administration for Community Living), spoke during a general session titled The Opioid Epidemic – Expanding the Understanding of the Unique Needs of Persons Living with Brain Injury.

During this general session, the team of speakers provided an overview of the opioid epidemic in the United States and its intersection with traumatic brain injury. This information was presented through a first-person account, as well as a global response as provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and a closer look at the epidemic and the disability community provided by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Arizona's specific response to the opioid epidemic was also presented, along with the BIAAZ's outreach efforts within the opioid-use community and the community-at-large, to increase awareness of the need for brain injury education.

BIAAZ was honored to be a part of this crucial discussion as we continue to work toward a better understanding and awareness of the intersection of brain injury in special populations and how to best respond to their needs.



Think Ahead! Family Brain Injury Support Night



Brain Injury
Alliance
ARIZONA



This program is for youth with brain injuries, their caregivers, parents, and family.

April 25, 2019

5:30-6:00PM Registration, Conversation, & Dinner
6:00-8:00PM Program

MPS STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING
3rd Floor, 1025 North Country Club Drive, Mesa

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS:

Brain Injury 101: Getting to Know the Invisible Injury with Carrie Collins-Fadell, MPA

STUDENTS:

Structured activity time with Peer Solutions



REGISTRATION:
mesanights.eventbrite.com



A light dinner and dessert will be provided, including vegan and vegetarian. Those with other food preferences or restrictions are welcome to bring their own food and snacks.

QUESTIONS? Please contact the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona at 602-508-8024 or info@biaaz.org

FACE IN THE MIRROR

Before & After My Brain Injury

You tell your family
the invisible scar
dividing past
and present, heart
and brain
into hemispheres
tattoos the memory
of a journey
down the Amazon
where you met
a tribe of healers
whose ceremonies
and rites of passage
tested your courage,
teaching you a new language.

You face the dark
night of the soul,
blink at the white day
with its blind stars,
searching
for the hidden face of God
near the fabled healing rivers of love
whose Beatitudes
wash away anger, fear,
and despair, wash away
that once-upon-a-time
familiar face in the mirror.

You leave this rainforest
of suffering
naked, new-born
an explorer discovering
how to love this new way of being
how to map its scars into beauty
how to say:
Love me. Love me
today as I am.



Brain Injury
Alliance
ARIZONA

Janine S. Kelley

Brain Injury is the **leading cause of death & disability** in young children and adults.



1,700,000

This year, **1.7 million Americans** will sustain a traumatic brain injury.

Together we can make a difference in reducing brain injuries

A silhouette of a group of about ten people of various ages and heights standing on a hill with their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or celebration. The background is a light gradient.

Learn more at BIAAZ.org

The mission of the United States Brain Injury Alliance is to engage the community in preventing brain injury and improving lives.

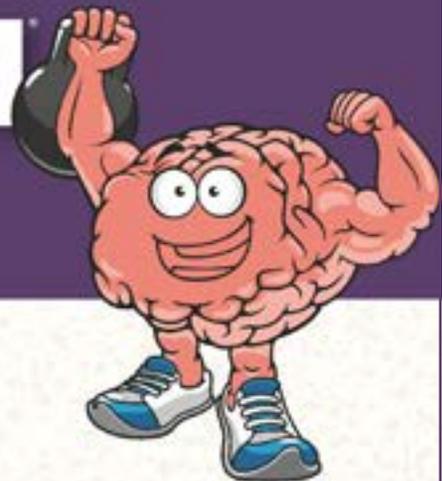
#mybraininjury  @biaaz1  @BIAarizona



Brain Injury Alliance
ARIZONA



BRAIN GYM[®] PHOENIX!



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

Get Your Brain In Shape!

Brain Gym[®] may help optimize brain performance

Brain Gym[®] is based on a series of 26 movements designed to promote a more efficient mind-body connection. Brain Gym[®] exercises have been effective in improving the following areas:

- Concentration and Focus
- Memory
- Academics: Reading, Writing, Math
- Physical Coordination
- Organization Skills
- Attitude

*Call Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona for more information,
(602) 508-8024. Individual results may vary.*

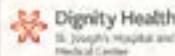
**Please join us for a class
and see what Brain Gym[®] can do for you!**

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center
5031 E. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85034

*All classes are held in the Group Fitness Room on 2nd Floor
YOU MUST BRING YOUR OWN WATER BOTTLE TO PARTICIPATE!*

2019 CLASS SCHEDULE

January 15	5:45 pm
February 6	1:00 pm
February 19	5:45 pm
March 6	1:00 pm
March 19	5:45 pm
April 3	1:00 pm
April 16	5:45 pm
May 1	1:00 pm
May 21	5:45 pm
June 5	1:00 pm
July 3	1:00 pm
September 4	1:00 pm
October 2	1:00 pm
October 15	5:45 pm
November 6	1:00 pm
November 19	5:45 pm
December 4	1:00 pm
December 17	5:45 pm



Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona • 5025 E. Washington Street • Phoenix, AZ 85034 • 602.508.8024 • BIAAZ.org



TOWN HALL MEETING

Opioid Use Disorder in the Disability Community

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 | 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Nina Pulliam Mason Conference Center
Ability 360 Campus
5025 East Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona

*Construction on Washington may cause delays.
Please plan accordingly.*

You are invited to a Town Hall on April 10th to learn about federal and state resources available to address the Opioid Epidemic in Arizona and in the disability community and to provide feedback on possible strategies by sharing your experience as a person with a disability or family member /care partner.

Due To Limited Seating

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/opioid-use-disorder-in-the-disability-community-town-hall-tickets-57540259465>

QUESTIONS? Call the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona at 602.508.8024



Brain Injury
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ARIZONA

Save
the
Date

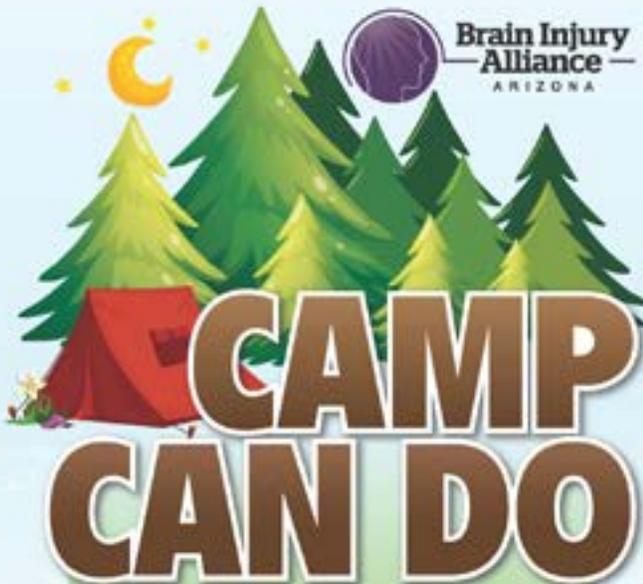
THE MYSTERIES OF BRAIN INJURY

Annual Conference for Professionals

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

To register or for more information, please visit BIAAZ.org

SAVE THE DATE!



AUGUST 8-11 2019

Join us for fun, friendship, acceptance, and cabin-style camping. This is a retreat for adult survivors of brain injury that takes place in Payson, Arizona.

- Archery
- Arts & Crafts
- Horseback Riding
- Kayaking
- Live Band Performance
- Talent Show
- Theme Dinners

**INFORMATIONAL
OPEN HOUSE
JUNE 1 IN
PHOENIX**

www.Biaaz.org/programs • Camp@biaaz.org • 602-508-8024

BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE 101

Meet the Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona

The Brain Injury Alliance of Arizona invites you to learn about the Alliance. We will explore our comprehensive services, the impact and magnitude of brain injury in Arizona, and how we can work together to get information, resources and education out to those who have been affected by brain injury.

JUNE 11

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

SEPTEMBER 19

10:00 - 11:30 am

DECEMBER 6

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

HELD AT

Ability 360
5025 E Washington St
Classroom A
Phoenix, AZ 85034

**EVENT IS FREE AND
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

Please call 888-500-9165 or log in to
<https://2019biaaz101.com>