

Journeys through EXPAND

Providing Affordable Fitness, Leisure and Cultural Arts Programs for
Adults with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and other similar
Neurological Conditions.



Fall Issue 28



How I Recovered from a Brain Injury—by Steven Luiting

Top Ten things that I did to recover.



It was a bitter, cold night in the winter of 2004. Due to my constant exhaustion from my brain injury I was sleeping almost around the clock. The four or five hours I was awake that day consisted of a walk to the local branch library just two blocks away. I went there to check out a book in order to teach myself how to read again. I came home to find that I literally couldn't even read a single paragraph. I got up and walked around my section eight apartment in panic and at the same time realized that I had no furniture and also that my clothes were two sizes too big. It was then that it hit me that I was disabled, really disabled. The life that I had a few years ago, wearing nice clothes, making more money than I'd ever seen before was replaced by this nightmare.

I went into the bathroom, crumpled to the floor and sobbed. I must have cried for hours. Then it dawned on me that if I allowed myself to wallow in self-pity I would definitely never recover. This was when I came up with rule number one in how to recover.

Now, fast forward to 2013, although I have some residual symptoms of brain injury they are, for the most part, not noticeable. I work full time and make a good living again. I commute to work in heavy traffic daily. I am married and have a beautiful daughter. I drive a new car and my wife and I own our own home. After rule number one came I developed an entire set of rules.

Offered by the City of Boulder Parks & Recreation Department
EXPAND Program

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Program
Registration
Starts
August 6th

See
Enclosed
Insert for
Upcoming
Fall
Programs

Registration
Starts
August 6th

Cont: How I Recovered from a Brain Injury

1. I will not allow me to feel sorry for myself.

When I realized how bad my brain injury was, I broke down in my bathroom and cried for what seemed hours. Afterwards, I realized that I could not allow myself the luxury of feeling sorry for myself and yet also knew that I needed to feel these feelings. So, I allowed myself ten minutes, once a week (on a Friday) to do this. I timed myself. After a while the need to grieve went away.

2. Tell yourself that you will recover in five years (or whatever feels right to you) even if you don't believe it.

Disregard what even the experts say, many will tell you that you will always be the same. I was told that since my injury was so long ago I didn't stand much of a chance. But I proved them wrong. Eventually, if you tell yourself something long enough you will begin to believe it.

3. Running (or walking) while listening to music.

This forces the brain to try to focus on two things at once. Careful, it's easy to get hurt here. Start out slow and be vigilant while running. If you find yourself spacing out or forgetting to pay attention then build up time slowly. Start at two minutes, then three, etc...

4. Stay positive.

When I was living in my car, before my section 8 housing, I was thinking at the time that five years earlier I was making more money than I had ever seen and now here I was homeless. So, if this can happen in five years what can happen in another five years? I could be married, have an even better life and be recovered.

5. Do not be seduced by financial help into staying disabled (section eight, SSDI, etc...)

Although SSI can feel familiar and safe, it can also make it hard to even try to go back to work. SSI has a back to work program that let me test the waters first so I could feel confident before taking that leap of faith.

6. Inversion table.

More blood flow to the brain is always a good thing. They cost between \$300 - \$400 dollars. If you don't have the money try to figure out a way to hang upside down just to increase blood flow. Gradually work up to ten minutes.

Continued from page two

7. Keep a journal and write your day in it.

Write down everything you did the day before from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed. This helps with tracking time. It also gives you a sense of self which is easily lost when memory is fragmented and time can become distorted as in what happened months ago can seem like yesterday and what happened yesterday can seem like last month or forgotten altogether.

8. Keep a schedule. Buy a scheduler and use it.

Write down appointments. Keep it open somewhere prominent so that you see it every day.

9. Eat as healthy as you can. Take supplements if you can afford them.

I used a product called Brain Speed by a company called Natrol. Natrol's Brain Speed worked within 15 minutes (at double the dose recommended on the label for me). I also take fish oil, etc...

10. Meditate and visualize

Why? Having a brain injury and living with it is stressful. Also, in order to create a vision of what being recovered looks and feels like. Imagine yourself healed and fully recovered as you meditate.

I also used a free audio demo available from centerpointresearch.com that moved me through different brain wave states. I read that because of my brain injury I spent more time in one brain wave state. Yes, I had to listen to a sales pitch, but I was able to tune that out. Once the audio put me into a deeply relaxed state I started practicing seeing my new, recovered life on a movie screen that I imagined.

In retrospect, I ran into three major obstacles. One, not believing at first that I would get better, two, making sure I stayed positive even when I didn't actually believe what I was telling myself and three, the fear of leaving the safety of government programs.

Finally, if you tell yourself that in five years you will be completely healed and a part of you says, "That will never happen," argue with your own thinking. You can have, be, or do anything if you eventually come to believe that you can. I didn't believe it until I practiced it. I figured out in the long run that I had no choice but to keep an open mind and try anything at least once if I wanted to get better.

If you would like to share your story or let us know what has helped you through your journey of living with a brain injury, please call Cory Lasher at 303-413-7269 or email at: lasherc@bouldercolorado.gov

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Word-of-Mouth is the Best Advertising

- **WHO DO YOU KNOW . . .**
who has an MTBI and would like to benefit from these programs?
- **WHO DO YOU KNOW . . .**
who would like to learn more about these programs and give their financial support?
- **WHO DO YOU KNOW . . .**
who could help us brainstorm various fundraising ideas?
- **WHO DO YOU KNOW . . .**
who has access to free or reduced-priced tickets for Sports Events, Concerts, Play, The Theater, Dance?
- **WHO DO YOU KNOW . . .**
who may want to sponsor a canoe and/or river raft trip, hiking excursion, or hut trip?

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Journeys you can give this program the support it deserves.**