



# BI-INSIDE *Magazine*

FIRST ISSUE

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS

Come Take a Stroll With Us

## FEATURES:

*Try to Remain Calm*

*Highlights from Recent Events*

*Pediatric Brain Injury: Myths and Realities*

*Shattered Dreams, New Path*

*Wisconsin Card Sort Testing*

*Feeling Brain-Injured*



"The Train has left the station" is an expression meaning that some process is already under way and there is no point in resisting. That is in essence what BI-INSIDE, the new on-line Magazine from the Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin, Inc., is all about.

The "train" is the injury to the brain and once the injury has occurred, you cannot turn back and undo it. Moving forward is the only direction you can go. Unlike other on-line and in print magazines, BI-INSIDE focuses on the individual, the family and life after brain injury.

Our readers are looking for answers to everyday questions, motivation and inspiration, guidance and support. Our readers are also looking for a magazine that speaks to them and not at them, to have their thoughts and words heard.

In every issue you will find informative, substance based articles, survivor stories, encouragement, creative ideas, and caregiver tips, just to name a few.

If your "train" has left the station, just know that you are not the only one aboard. There are other survivors, families, and friends taking the same journey.

*Lois York-Lewis*

Lois York-Lewis

Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin, Inc,

#### BI-INSIDE Magazine Team:

Bari L. Rieth (TBI Survivor, Daughter and Wife to Brain Injury Survivors, Board Secretary, Editor and Writer)

Lois M. York-Lewis (Mother, Wife and Daughter to Brain Injury Survivors, Pres. of Board of Directors for the BIRCoFWI, Editor and Writer)

Kathy Richardson (TBI Survivor, Vice, Pres. of Board of Directors for the BIRCoFWI and Writer)

Gloria Blaser (Grandmother to Brain Injury Survivors and Editor)

Sandy Rieth (Mother to Brain Injury Survivors and Editor)

Dr. Nathan Glassman (Neuropsychologist, Board of Director for the BIRCoFWI and Writer)

Denise Meagher (Family member to Brain Injury survivors and Writer)

Micki Scherwinski (TBI Survivor and Writer)

Linda Scherwinski (Mother to a Brain Injury Survivor, Writer and Board of Director for the BIRCoFWI)

Michael Strand (TBI Survivor and Writer)

Steve Maday (Photographer)





# Try to Remain Calm

## *Easier said than done*

In this day and age when we have to be very safety conscious, the chances of you interacting with law enforcement, customs employees, first responders or other security professionals is high.

The chances that law enforcement and first responders have had training on recognizing, communicating, responding and interacting with traumatic brain injury survivors is low.

Your physical or cognitive challenges may make others suspicious or concerned about your behavior to the point that they may call 911. I know of several instances where law enforcement was called because someone thought the person was drunk.

In all of these instances the TBI survivors had mobility and communication issues and had not broken any laws. They were handcuffed, taken to jail and faced

multiple court appointments.

When you first engage with law enforcement or first responders, it is important to tell them immediately that you have a brain injury and what challenges you have (deafness, blindness, mobility, communication, Etc.)!

Ask them if you can get your BIRC Wallet Card out to show them. Law enforcement and first responders report that they make their best decisions when they have all of the information.

Try to remain calm. Do not attempt to flee.

Do not make sudden movements or reach for items (including walkers or canes) unless directed to.

If you should be handcuffed and taken to jail,



Kathy Richardson, CBIST

do not speak until your emergency contact or lawyer gets there. If you have court appointments, make certain you take someone with you and are assigned a lawyer/public defender.

The legal process can become very confusing, especially when you have a brain injury and you need an advocate to help you through it and to help you remember the next steps.

To receive a Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin, Inc. Wallet Card please contact us at (262) 770-4882 or [Kathy@bircofwi.org](mailto:Kathy@bircofwi.org)

Please read and review the document on the next page.



# ★ KNOW ★ — YOUR — RIGHTS

## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS** *Stopped by Police, Immigration Agents, or FBI*

### ***If You're Stopped By Police***

- You have a right to remain silent. If you wish to remain silent, tell the officer. (Some states may require you to identify yourself to the police if you're suspected of a crime.)
- Stay calm. Don't run. Don't argue, resist, or obstruct the police. Keep your hands where police can see them.
- Ask if you're free to leave. If yes, calmly and silently walk away.
- You do not have to consent to a search of yourself or your belongings.

### ***If You're Stopped In Your Car***

- Stop the car in a safe place as quickly as possible. Turn off the car, turn on the internal light, open the window partway, and place your hands on the wheel.
- Upon request, show police your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance.
- If an officer or immigration agent asks to search your car, you can refuse. But if police believe your car contains evidence of a crime, they can search it without your consent.
- Both drivers and passengers have the right to remain silent. If you're a passenger, you can also ask if you're free to leave. If yes, silently leave.

### ***If You're Asked About Your Immigration Status***

- You have the right to remain silent. You do not have to answer questions about where you were born, whether you're a U.S. citizen, or how you entered the country. (Separate rules apply at international borders and airports, and for individuals on certain nonimmigrant visas, including tourists and business travelers.)
- If you're not a U.S. citizen and have valid immigration papers, you should show them if an immigration agent requests it.

- Do not lie about your citizenship status or provide fake documents.

### ***If The Police Or Immigration Agents Come To Your Home***

- You don't have to let them in unless they have a warrant signed by a judge.
- Ask them to show you the warrant. Officers can only search the areas and for the items listed on the warrant. An arrest warrant allows police to enter the home of the person listed on the warrant if they believe the person is inside. A warrant of removal/deportation (ICE warrant) does not allow officers to enter a home without consent.
- Even if officers have a warrant, you may remain silent. If you choose to speak, step outside and close the door.

### ***If You're Arrested by Police***

- Do not resist.
- Say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer. If you can't afford a lawyer, the government must provide one.
- Don't say anything, sign anything, or make any decisions without a lawyer.
- You have the right to make a local phone call. The police cannot listen if you call a lawyer.
- Don't discuss your immigration status with anyone but your lawyer.
- An immigration officer may visit you in jail. Do not answer questions or sign anything before talking to a lawyer.
- Read all papers fully. If you don't understand or cannot read the papers, say you need an interpreter.

### ***If You're Taken Into Immigration (Or "ICE") Custody***

- You have the right to a lawyer, but the government will not provide one. If you don't have a lawyer, ask for a list of free or low-cost legal services.
- You have the right to contact your consulate or have an officer inform the consulate of your arrest.
- Tell the immigration officer you wish to remain silent. Do not discuss your immigration status with anyone but your lawyer.
- Do not sign anything, such as a voluntary departure or stipulated removal, without talking to a lawyer. If you sign, you may be giving up your opportunity to try to stay in the U.S.
- Know your immigration number ("A" number) and give it to your family. It will help them locate you.

### ***If You Feel Your Rights Have Been Violated***

- Write down everything you remember, including officers' badge and patrol car numbers, which agency the officers were from, and any other details. Get contact information for witnesses. If you're injured, seek medical attention immediately and take photographs of your injuries.
- File a written complaint with the agency's internal affairs division or civilian complaint board. In most cases, you can file a complaint anonymously if you wish.

*This information is not intended as legal advice. Some state laws may vary. Separate rules apply at checkpoints and when entering the U.S. (including at airports). Updated Dec. 2016.*

For more information, call your local ACLU  
[www.ACLU.org/affiliates](http://www.ACLU.org/affiliates).

**ACLU**



# 7th Annual Picnic at the Blue Lotus Farm and Retreat

## Summer Fun

The thing about summer parties is that they are usually a relaxed event with lots of friends and family in attendance along with summertime food and great outdoor activities. Even if there are no outdoor activities that are planned summertime parties are usually intended to be fun, laid back and allow time for visits with friends and family in a relaxed atmosphere.

I usually picture myself taking a stroll or sitting in the cool grass in the shade of a nice big tree and visiting with friends. This year's summer picnic did just that!

We had a beautiful setting with plenty of room for strolling! The pond was great for paddle boating, kayaking, and

even allowed for a bit of fishing.

We had a huge campfire with marshmallows for toasting. Also available for our use, were games, walking trails and a giant tricycle for taking a tour of the grounds.

Blue Lotus Farm and Retreat Center was the perfect setting for this Summer party. It's located near West Bend, WI.

The day was warm and sunny with about 30 attendees. We all had a great time!

The setting is off the beaten path, which makes for quite a place to spend an afternoon.

The pavilion was a great



Linda Scherwinski

place to set up our lunch and had plenty of room for everyone to sit indoors, eat their lunch and visit with other attendees.

The picnic is such a great opportunity for TBI survivors to catch up, visit and same can be said for caregivers.

I hope that you will be able to attend the next summer picnic/party! I can almost guarantee that you would not be disappointed if you come to the next one!

See you there!





## 7th Annual Holiday Party Recap



Lois M. York-Lewis

### *Winter Fun*

Another year has come and gone and the 7th Annual Holiday Party has as well.

Even though the weather tried to dissuade people from coming, many decided to make the trek to the Mitchell Park Pavillion on Saturday, January 19, 2019. Folks from various parts of Wisconsin (from Abrams, to West Bend, from Oconomowoc to Milwaukee and cities in between) were in attendance.

*The goal of the Annual Holiday Party is to allow survivors and families to find support amongst people who share a common bond created by brain*

*injury.*

The event also saw many friends reconnecting and while new memories were being made, the chance to share thoughts and feeling emerged. The event brings hope and encouragement to new comers who often feel as though there is no one who truly understands what life challenges they face.

Talk About A Feast!

The early comers pitched in to assemble a meal that was completely tummy pleasing! The party goers were treated to a Sweet Potato/Baked Potato Bar as well as a fully stocked Nacho/

Taco Bar! Fruit and Vegetables, as well as, delicious desserts rounded out the meal.

This year our event featured a Secret Speaker, who was Pastor James Behringer. Pastor James delivered a riveting speech entitled, "A Spiritual View of Brain Injury; Responding to Suffering."

The presentation was a reminder that survivors are not alone, caregivers are not alone and there is value in your life (no matter what the struggles are). The goal of the presentation was to uplift the participants and provide another perspective.

*The full transcript is available upon request.*

The party concluded with a visit to the Mitchell Park Domes and the Miniature Milwaukee Train Show started the same day! The group took a tour of the three Domes and had a great time!





# Pediatric Brain Injury: Myths and Realities – Striving for the best outcome

"The Ride of a Lifetime"



Bari L. Rieth

*At any age, brain injuries are devastating. However, when a brain injury is sustained by a toddler, parents face challenges and decisions that will impact the child and the family for a life time.*

After a recent interview with Dr. Heffelfinger, PhD, MPE, of the Neurosciences Center at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, information and knowledge about the topic of when a toddler sustains a brain injury and further insight into the emotional and behavioral changes that occur shed light on this delicate topic. Dr. Heffelfinger began our interview by addressing the "myths" surrounding what causes a brain injury in toddlers.

Hard falls (resulting in hitting the head on the side of a table) and falling down a couple of stairs tend to not result in any significant injury to the brain, even injuries called "concussions" do not necessarily result in brain damage. Addressing the issue of a moderate to severe injury brought more significant observations to light that every parent should be aware of.

It is not atypical if a toddler sustains a moderate brain injury, they will show symptoms of being *"more disruptive for a couple of hours or maybe even days, possibly not as alert, sleeping a lot, signs of a bad headache."*

Chances are that if a moderate to severe injury has occurred, the toddler will have more issues with emotional and behavioral regulation. Symptoms, according to Dr. Heffelfinger, include often being *"more sensitive, more impulsive, more active, angrier or upset;"* just having more emotions than they did before, bring more impulsive or problems with attention than they did before, including more aggression.

These behaviors are more pronounced with the moderate to severe brain injuries, but have been known to happen with the milder brain injuries or concussions. Dr. Heffelfinger explained that the milder brain injuries and concussions tend to *"recover completely in about a week."*

An interesting aspect of our conversation focused on

continued emotional or behavioral issues after the injury. Dr. Heffelfinger noted that the cause may be due to what happened to cause the brain injury and not what happened to the brain.

Dr. Heffelfinger's recommendation is that first and foremost the parent should bring the issue to the attention of the treating doctor and try to have the child looked at by a Neuropsychologist.. By finding out what is associated with the actual brain injury or what is just a behavioral manifestation due to the experience of having the injury. is key.

Timing of the evaluation is paramount and should occur during the acute or sub-acute phase. Parents need to know what they are really dealing with.

Dr. Heffelfinger advises, parents of a toddler with a brain injury to first create a balance between the recovery phase, which can be the first few weeks or for a severe traumatic brain injury it may be months , and the child having a functional life



## "The Ride of a Lifetime" (continued)

(if they are not in the hospital and have been discharged back to their normal living) with making sure they are getting enough rest and having enough time to recover.

Parental guilt can set in especially in situations where the injury may have been avoidable. Negative parental responses include permitting more time for rest, T.V. watching, getting more treats or sleeping with the parents again if they were already in their own bed.

*"While some of this is good, important and nurturing, some of it is bad for the child",* explained Dr. Heffelfinger. Parents want their children to have as much of a normal routine as possible (having expectations) and at no point should a child be allowed to get away with negative behavior.

Behavioral changes can be a challenge when the "routine" is interrupted. They may have spent a lot of time in the hospital, gotten use to more coddling, change in sleeping routine, and it is important to return to the expected routine as much as possible.

However, it is also important for parents to not allow any negative behavior. The parents must still stress that there are consequences for negative behavior (such as time out, removing them from the situation, and so on.)

Parents must also be aware that children may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the cause of the injury that can lead to emotional regulations challenges. Dr. Heffelfinger gave the example of a toddler who was in a car accident and developed PTSD.

The emotional challenges may manifest as the child being terrified to be in a car; later that extended to being near a car; to even seeing a car and not just on the street, but also cars on television or toy cars. *"This is not a behavioral choice, this is an emotional problem that needs to be dealt with,"* explained Dr. Heffelfinger.

Parents need to be careful when helping their child and they need to let them know that they are going to be safe even though they weren't safe before. Finally, that they are being

taken care of and the parent is protecting them.

These children may tend to be sadder and more irritable, but *"parents want to still deal with those negative emotions. Reassuring them and giving them support to avoid the emotional behavior gravitating to a behavioral issue."*

Explaining that they know their child is sad and that the parent is sad too that their child cannot do the same things their friends or brother and sisters are doing. It is important to redirect these feelings by saying *"let's do something else."*

The approach to use in this situation is to *"address those negative feelings rather than waiting for the behavior problem and then doing discipline which is only going to make those sad and nervous feelings be higher,"* Dr. Heffelfinger explained to me.

Dealing with these emotions and behaviors is an area that Dr. Heffelfinger and her team work on in the "PINT Clinic," (Preschool, Infant, Neuropsychological, Testing Clinic). The Clinic is located at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

This clinic focuses on



## "The Ride of a Lifetime" (continued)

children who are six years of age and younger and was created because of the *"uniqueness of toddlers and of pre-school aged children."* *"Toddlers are typically pre-verbal and are not able to express their pain,"* said Dr. Heffelfinger.

Their responses are different and they cannot express how they are feeling, what hurts or what makes them angry, why they are having sleeping problems, and toddlers are not able to express what they're feeling.

The hard part is that you can't use reason or logic with them. Toddlers require removal from the situation or preventing the situation since they are unable to understand and process higher forms of discipline.

In reality, time outs really only start to work at about 2 to 2 1/2 years of age. Toddlers require more physical nurturing instead of the adult perception of how am I feeling.

The question that remains is can a toddler outgrow the impact of a brain injury? Unfortunately, one part that makes it complicated is that research has shown that in toddlers, the *"classification"* is not always done correctly. This

is due to the response the infant or toddler has to the injury.

If the injury was classified correctly, *"Research has shown that someone who has a severe traumatic brain injury is probably always going to have some impact from that injury"*, this impact is probably going to be somewhat on their cognition. They may not develop the same intellectual level but that does not mean they have an intellectual disability.

For example, their siblings may be in the above average range and they may just perform in the average range.

To continue on the lasting effects, for example, *"brain injuries often effect the speed of thinking of an individual, one's ability to pay attention, and the ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors."* While theses develop somewhat, they tend to still persist throughout life (and this is the severe range.)

Severe brain injury survivors are left having to compensate for those loses with the use of different strategies, such as redirecting behavior, where the effects of

the mild to moderate brain injuries tend to recover better. In mild to moderate you may not even be able to see that there were differences.

In other words, that is what they have grown up with and that is what they know, that is who and what they are. There are some with moderate injuries who develop ADHD or develop more issues with depression, anxiety, or more tendencies to be impulsive and make bad choices.

As mentioned before, mild injuries tend to recover and any residual effects are more likely caused by components of the family and not the actual brain injury. Components such as being raised in marginalized cultures, in homes where there is high chaos and high stress, and single parents with multiple other children create the secondary life factors that can impact how well the child will recover.

In situations such as these, it is important for the family to reach out and obtain help and resources including supportive help for the family and child. One of the benefits to having siblings is that it can give the parent a gauge as to what milestones the child with



## The Ride of a Lifetime – Pediatric Brain Injury: Myths and Realities – Striving for the best outcome

"The Ride of a Lifetime, continued"

injury should be at or approaching.

Knowing the patterns of the other siblings can help the parents to be alarmed as they may not be if the child is an only-child.

Dr. Heffelfinger indicated that while she has no recommendation for books about pediatric brain injury, she suggests book resources for parents that target how to discipline 2 to 12 year olds. Books that emphasize the importance of play and having time with their friends.

These are things that parents may know to do but just not how to make it happen.

Lastly, it is important for parents not to coddle children with brain injuries or any chronic medical condition. Be careful and act as you normally would if nothing happened.

Long term we know that children will do the best if they are treated like their siblings with the same kinds of

expectations. They should still be involved in doing chores, they still go to school, and spend time with their friends.

Those things are more important in the long-term development of the child who has a brain injury rather than giving them exceptional services. Some families will act as if the child always had a severe traumatic brain injury but treating them differently from the rest of the family is detrimental to the outcome.

Dr. Heffelfinger is a Clinical Neuropsychologist and specializes in the evaluation and treatment of preschool and school-age children with

neurological, behavioral, and developmental disorders in the Neuropsychology Clinic at the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Specialty evaluations are also provided through the Preschool and Infant Neuropsychological Testing (P.I.N.T.) Clinic and the Autism Clinic.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. Heffelfinger for her time and talents in participating in this interview. For more information about brain injuries visit our website: [www.bircofwi.org](http://www.bircofwi.org)



Dr. Amy Heffelfinger,  
PhD, MPE





# Shattered Dreams, New Path

## *All Life Forever Changed*

Greg Colburn's path to practicing law wasn't a smooth one, nor was it typical. Rather, being a talented, his initial dream for the future was to be a professional baseball player, or a physician.

It seemed the course of his life was set. He was drafted by the Colorado Rockies after high school and while he decided to go to the University of Washington instead, to play ball as a student-athlete, on October 10, 2002, that path took a severe turn.

The day was overcast. While Colburn was working as a carpenter in the downstairs area of Fire Station 81 - Pine Lake of East-side Fire and Rescue in Sammamish, Washington, rain was approaching.

The roofing subcontractor asked for his help to secure newly installed roofing material. Colburn complied.

Though he followed the subcontractor's instructions, he was unaware of the subcontractor's negligence when the roofing material had been installed. And, he was ignorant of the subcontractor's



Denise Meagher

noncompliance with the laws and regulations concerning rooftop safety.

Because of these factors Colburn plummeted feet first to the ground. As his feet met the earth, overwhelming agony and pain wracked his body.

*He was rushed to the hospital.*

Two weeks later, due to the result of his injuries he was told he would never again play competitive baseball; likely never run or jog again and the injuries were severe and likely permanent.

Surgeries followed along with false claims and allegations that Colburn was golfing on the day the life-altering incident occurred; and the employer claiming Colburn's injuries were exaggerated. They weren't!

Rather than capitulate to these falsehoods, Colburn fought back and while procuring legal proved to be an exhausting and

difficult task, he finally convinced someone to work through the mire of the workers compensation claims process. Two years in a wheel chair and years of fighting the litigation 'war', Colburn won a substantial settlement.

It was these experiences that propelled him away from his initial path and onto a new one. Now, thanks to the blessing of excellent medical care and hundreds of hours of physical therapy, Colburn is fully recovered and living a fulfilling life.

He's a grateful husband, father and a personal injury attorney; and an avid advocate for those victims of personal injury who feel as though they have no options, no hope.

Colburn believes that often in situations as he experiences, "accidents" are brought about, *"when a person, corporation or other entity is negligent and that negligence causes harm, the wrongdoers must be held accountable."*

What does Greg Colburn's story have to do with traumatic brain injury? "During Colburn's time in college, he majored in neuroscience as an undergrad at the University of Washington and quickly became passionate about helping represent victims of TBI's."



## Shattered Dreams..

"While in school he focused his studies on and memory. He has represented many victims of TBI and wants to help lend an extra hand to a family who has been personally affected by a brain injury."

### How?

Colburn Law in Seattle wants to be a helping hand to students who have suffered or have a loved one who has suffered from a traumatic brain injury.

They have created a \$3,000 scholarship to increase public awareness and to help a scholar in need. Their hope is that this nationwide scholarship will lend financial hope to one deserving student who has single-handedly been affected by a TBI.

Alana Redmond, representative of Colburn Law has said, "I think sharing this as a resource to your website visitors; (Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin Clients) could be very beneficial to their future.

We want to hear as many students' stories as possible!"

Greg Colburn fully understands the struggles of TBI and injuries resulting from 'accidents'. In these struggles he and his dedicated staff extend hope.

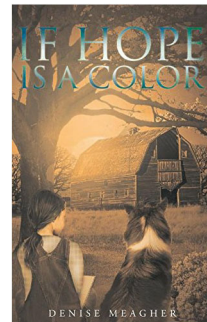
For more information and all the stipulations regarding this hope-filled opportunity, go to:  
<https://www.colburnlaw.com/scholarship/>

## If Hope Is A Color

Will **Hope** be enough to sustain her?

Denise Meagher

With a war threatening to tear the world apart, Dottie is faced with a battle for survival at home. Life on the farm, like Dottie's emotions, has gone haywire. Her older brother has left to fight. Her mother battles depression as her father continues to make his nightly visits to the barn. The care of her youngest sister, Emmy, falls to her.



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Toll Free: 866-727-5915  
Fax: 414-444-9822

**Nathan D Glassman** PhD, ABN, ABPP  
BOARD CERTIFIED IN CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY  
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# Neuropsychological Testing:

## Wisconsin Card Sort Test

As you are recovering from a brain injury or neurological disease, you might have a neuropsychological evaluation. This can be requested for a variety of reasons, including to document your cognitive skills and abilities, to confirm or establish, or to develop recommendations to help you do better in life or work activities.

Neuropsychological assessment usually involves gathering information from a variety of sources, such as medical or school records, interviews, observation, and administration of standardized tests. The neuropsychologist will often choose which tests to use based on their training level and experience, as well as the reason for referral and your background and general level of functioning.

*Tests are used to test your abilities in cognitive domains such as memory, attention, language, spatial skills, and "executive functions."*

You can't really study or prepare for neuropsychological tests. They test functions, not general knowledge, such as things you learned in



Nathan D. Glassman, PhD, ABN, ABPP

school. The best way to prepare for your evaluation is to get a good night's sleep, eat your usual breakfast, and bring a snack or lunch if you know that the evaluation will take several hours.

Many people report that they are quite nervous about neuropsychological testing, and feel "dumb" when they have trouble on some or all of the tasks that they are asked to do. However, keep in mind that these tests are designed to challenge people having a wide range of abilities, and no one can do all of the tasks.

*It is important to try your best, and to take breaks when you need them.*

"Executive functions" (EF) are skills we rely on to plan, organize and complete tasks, projects or activities. EF skills are also involved in starting, stopping and switching activities, and in solving problems. When recovering from a brain injury, EF are often affected.

This can be to varying

degrees, such that some survivors need little or no help with this, while others need a great deal of help to get even simple tasks completed. Example of EF include doing house hold tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, paying bills, shopping, driving, and working.

*In each case, there are supplies that need to be gathered, activities need to be done in proper sequence for the task to be completed properly.*

Assessing EF often involves using a number of tests, including the Wisconsin Card Sort Test. (This test was developed by David A. Grant, PhD and Esta A. Berg, PhD., in 1948.)

This test required you to solve a problem without much help from the person administering the test. You have to figure it out mostly on your own.

This is similar to how we solve many daily problems: we may be alone, or get little information on solving the problem from people around us.

While no test is perfectly accurate, performance on EF tests, including the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test, can be a good indicator of your skills in



# Neuropsychological Testing:

## Wisconsin Card Sort Test (continued)

completing daily tasks and activities, particularly ones that are not familiar, or you do only occasionally.

In addition, the neuropsychologist will use other information such as from records, interviews, or observations, to help in interpreting test results and making recommendations.

When you are finished with your evaluation, the neuropsychologist will usually be willing to talk with you about the results and explain the report that has been prepared. Keeping an open mind is best, and it is a good idea to have a friend or family member come with you when you get your feedback on your test results.

This test needs to be given by a licensed neuropsychologist, (such as Board of Director Member to the Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin, Inc.) Dr. Nathan Glassman of Glassman Neuropsychology Associates. Dr. Glassman's office is located at 2448 S. 102nd St. Ste. 270 West Allis, WI 53227. Call them today at (414) 444-9811.

If you live outside of the South Eastern area of Wisconsin and are interested in receiving this or any other neuropsychological testing please contact our Resource Facilitator, Kathy Richardson (262) 770-4882 or email [Kathy@bircofwi.org](mailto:Kathy@bircofwi.org)

\*Grant, D.A., PhD & Berg, E.A., PhD. (2018). (WCST) Wisconsin Card Sort Test, Retrieved January/February, 2019, from <https://www.wpspublish.com/store/p/3082/wcst-Wisconsin-card-sorting-test>

## Exercise and the Brain:

### A Personal Account

Just like many people that are reading this, I have a traumatic brain injury. That makes it difficult to do many things that were once easy, so it challenges me to improve myself.

That's a good way of looking at it. A good way to improve is through different types of exercise.

Different kinds of exercise can improve different kinds of things of course. It can improve different muscles in your body but also help improve your brain in different ways.

I'm going to list off a few and what they would be best at enhancing. One very fun exercise and helpful exercise is ballroom dancing.

Ballroom dancing gives you physical workout and also works

you mentally at the same time. There are plenty of moves that will work your muscle for a physical workout.

For your physical workout, you will have to remember the moves, when to move, and how to move all at the same time. Ballroom dancing goes along with the music and that's something to help with your memory.

It helps with your cognitive function, coordination, rhythm, and strategy. Ballroom dancing or any kind of dancing is great for anybody, especially TBI survivors.

Another great exercise would be any kind of aerobic exercise.



Micki Scherwinski, TBI Survivor

They are great for your heart.

Aerobics will increase your heart rate and therefore, pump more oxygen into the brain. Some examples of aerobic exercises could be something simple, such as, walking, bicycling, or swimming

Doing any of these would lead you to breathe faster and take in more oxygen with every breath. By taking more air in,



# Exercise and the Brain:

## A Personal Account (continued)

your blood will pump more, your heart will beat faster, and that will increase your blood flow. This means that blood will travel to your muscles and back to your lungs.

Aerobic exercises are known to improve brain function and act as a “first aid kit” for any damaged brain cells. On top of helping damaged brain cells, exercise helps you to grow new ones!

That’s quite exciting!

It increases growth in the brain, this happens in the “hippocampus,” this is where growth begins. The hippocampus is where all the memory is held.

By learning different exercise routines this may help expand your memory.

Another aerobic exercise (that I learned to love!), is running! It’s one that I learned to really enjoy, it’s one that can be tough but once you set your mind to it and decide that you’re going to put your all in it, you can get great!

It makes you feel very accomplished and that’s something that brings up your confidence. Once you set your mind to it, you can run 5ks, 10ks, or maybe half marathons, full marathons, and relays, like I do.

They are all great accomplishments! I have learned another great exercise for your body that is also great for your mind.

Yoga is so good for helping them both. Yoga creates a mind/body connection and it teaches you to relax and for the mind to heal itself.

Yoga can help you to “quiet” your mind and ease the stress. This reduces anxiety and the body then can focus on building strength and flexibility.

It will help you relieve tension and stress. That will help you to feel happier.

That helps with your body, mind, and spirit. Being mindful while performing yoga is good for you in a number of reasons.

Performing yoga and also being mindful is known to improve your sleep, give you more energy, decrease anxiety and depression, and help you to feel more hopeful and calm.

I named a few examples of the reason why exercise is so great for your body and your brain. It’s all very useful and now you know these fun facts!

I encourage you to use these, get your running shoes on, put on your dancing shoes, or maybe get a yoga mat out.

Try and set some goals for yourself and make check lists to help you to accomplish them.

You can set some reminders on your phone and/or give yourself some sticky notes to help you remember.

Remember to stay positive and if you can find some encouraging words to post on your wall, that can lift your spirits and help you out. I found a few that I found to be inspiring and you might like them too.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”- Eleanor Roosevelt.

“Don’t watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going”. -Sam Levenson.

“There will be obstacle. There will be doubters. There will be mistakes. But with hard work, there are no limits.” -Michael Phelps

I hope that my article will help you to find a great work-out for you to help you physically and also mentally. I know that everyone can get some help at any time with anything



# Feeling Brain-Injured

## *I can just be me*

Recently, some friends asked me to join them at a local bar for a monthly get together. I chose to decline, because I try to avoid situations that make me feel brain-injured.

I would feel brain-injured because I try to avoid driving late in the day, so I would have to ask for a ride. Sure, I have many friends that would not hesitate to give me a ride, but then it becomes difficult when I am tired, a little after getting there, and I ask them to take me home.

Again, they would do it without hesitation. The problem is that this makes me feel brain-injured.

The fact that I have a brain injury never leaves my mind, but it also isn't too glaring after all these years. Until a situation like this

comes up.

First, I must be driven around like a child, but even more than that, it is the knowledge that sitting around a table amidst a lively conversation and the bustling of a popular local nightspot is not something I am really capable of enjoying anymore.

Chatting with friends is something I enjoy immensely, but it has to happen on my terms. I would need to enter, chat for a few minutes, and then excuse myself, go home, and sit in a low light room with absolute quiet for a while.

Entering into this scenario by arranging a ride and subjecting myself to over-stimulation makes me feel brain-injured. Having to leave early makes me feel brain-injured.

*Having to ask someone else to leave an enjoyable night out and attend to my limitations by taking me home makes me feel brain-injured.*



Mike Strand, TBI Survivor

Being on my own, following routines, allows me to avoid this feeling of constricted opportunities that my brain injury has circumscribed my life with. I like to go to my favorite local coffee shop in the mornings.

I am at my best early in the day. I can engage in conversations with a variety of people, and most importantly, when I begin to fatigue I can pay up and just go home.

## *Life is Good!*

I enjoy playing board games. Many of my friends enjoy playing board games also.

The most likely times that we can get a group together is weeknights. By night, I have trouble focusing on the game.

This means that everyone has to come over to my house and I have to play host for every gaming session. Most of the games that we enjoy playing take two or more hours to play.



# Feeling Brain-Injured

All of this is extremely difficult for me. This makes me feel brain-injured.

*So, now I very rarely game with my friends.*

Nowhere made me feel more brain-injured than when I worked at my factory job. Every day, I was choosing between saying I couldn't do something and then having to worry about my job, or doing a job that required all the things that I was no longer good at like working fast, working with small pieces and tools that required focus and fine hand-eye coordination.

Working for eight hours a day with only two ten-minutes and one thirty-minute break.

My brain injury became my identity. I was "that brain-injured guy."

After working nearly twenty-five years unsupported in this factory I was let go. This was a gift.

I think it was by getting out of

that situation that I began to discover how much of my life I could live and not be limited by my brain injury. I believe that leaving the factory made it easier to avoid situations that make me feel my brain injury.

It's not always this bleak. I really enjoy playing disc golf.

I have a couple of friends that can play it with me in the late morning and early afternoon. It is something that I enjoyed doing before my accident that I was eventually able to come back to.

For all the time and effort that I have put into playing (over 30 years), I should be much better than I am, but I have a brain injury.

I have made peace with this.

*That I can play at all if good enough for me.*

I hope that others with a brain injury can see this as well. Some days I feel as if my entire life is ruled by my brain injury.

Where a resounding "No" squelches every opportunity! However, I have many more days where I feel that my life is not ruled by what I can no longer do. Instead, I affirm how much I can "be." Not be good or be bad, but just be me.

*I can just be me.*

*The sun is a daily reminder that we too can rise again*

**Kathy Richardson, CBIST**

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY SPECIALIST

262-391-0213

KATHY.M.RICHARDSON@GMAIL.COM

www.kathyrichardsonllc.com

*from the darkness, that we too can shine our light.*

*~ S. Ajna*



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**511 N. Grand Ave.**

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Mike is a parent and strong advocate for those with brain injury and their community supports such as BIRC of WI services.  
Please reach out to him for you or friends/families real estate needs.

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