



BRAIN MATTERS

December 2022 Vol. 3



Reports of my Death were Exaggerated

*Written by
Brad*



It was such a terrible car crash that I was actually listed as a fatality on the police report. I was airlifted to Hamilton General Hospital and was in a coma for a few weeks. As well as a number of broken bones, I sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Before my accident, my life was good. I was very athletic and played and coached various sports.

I was a dedicated and hard working teacher in the elementary school system. I started my teaching career with a Grade Four class in St. Catharines and at the time of my motor vehicle collision I was teaching grades seven and eight. During this time, I was involved with school sports and clubs for the children and helped children in other grades with problems they were having with their work. I enjoyed being a teacher in whom the students felt they could confide their problems. My social life was good, filled with friends, family and activities.

The MVA occurred October 20th, 2002, on my way from my friend's house. Fortunately, the police were wrong about listing me as a fatality. From the hospital, I was transferred to an inpatient rehabilitation program at Cherokee Hospital in Hamilton where I learned there was lots of work ahead of me if I wished to achieve maximum recovery. The brain injury affected my physical and mental abilities and I needed help with dressing, eating and taking care of myself. My balance was off and I was weak. I was in a wheelchair, but eventually was able to stand and use a walker.

December's Birthdays

Mike 9th

Kim 31st

Terry 31st

Brad's story continues.....

Most of my injuries were on my left side and I'm left handed. I remain deaf in my left ear and at times have double vision because of the injuries to my left eye.

But I was so highly blessed to have the support of my family, my school community and my friends. There were constantly people visiting, encouraging supporting and loving me. Students from my class made a special bulletin board expressing their good wishes.

When I was finally able to go home I did it in style; in a limousine!

I lived with my parents for a few months. Rehab therapists, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, a speech-language therapist and psychologist helped me. After a few months, I moved into a bachelor apartment in the city and learned how to care for myself in order to stay safe and healthy. When I became self sufficient, I decided with my parents' help to upgrade my living situation to home ownership. This involves a lot more responsibility and I enjoy it.

Because of my injuries , I no longer drive, so to go places I have to depend on the transit system, taxi, family or friends and I'm fortunate to have these transportation options. I now have many activities on my schedule that are meaningful to others and me. I cut grass in the summer at my parent's house, brother's house and my place. I volunteer with the Big Brother Program where I go into a school and spend time with my Little Brother in his elementary school. During the summer, I'm back at the golf course and continue the work I've had had since I was in high school.

Our pet dog Jasmine, she was a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog. I would take her to visit residences in seniors' homes and that's a positive experience for everyone.

In my spare time I enjoy doing a number of things like working out at the YMCA, attending family events, cheering my nephews on in their sports, going to the movies, participating in social support groups and keeping in touch with some of my favourite students.

And there is one very important event that has happened every year since my accident which encourages me to keep going forward. There is a charity golf tournament held on my behalf. My brother and sister in law organizes it and the proceeds are donated to the local brain injury community.

You'll have noticed that I briefly skimmed over the days, weeks and months of my accident. This is not to suggest that any rehabilitation journey was easy. It was a lot of hard work and it took a long time to realize the impact the accident and my injuries had on my life.

I had to face a lot of changes. There have been changes to my role as a teacher, athlete and coach. I had to rebuild my life again. Although this was difficult, I refused to focus my energy on the past and on the negative.

I am a positive person. I believe that my positive attitude and ability to accept these changes are what has allowed me to rebuild my life. I have created a new fulfilling and meaningful roles, roles that continue to allow me to be a helper to others and roles that continue to define who I am and who I have always been. My attitude and ability to remain positive and optimistic has always remained 100% intact.

It is my positive outlook that allows me to put one foot in front of the other and know that life will continue to get better.

Since 2017, my life has drastically changed once again, but that folks is for another story for another day. Stay tuned for the February edition when I continue my story..... what could it be???

MENTAL WELLNESS ACTIVITIES

MEDITATION

Can help reduce workplace stress, anxiety, and despair. Improves emotional stability.

YOGA

Can help relieve mental illnesses and improve resilience.

MAINTAIN DIARY

Emotions can be dealt better by writing them down.

PASSION

Doing what you love is a great method to distract yourself from negative thoughts.

TAKE BREAKS

Working in a competitive atmosphere can be suffocating. It is good to take few days off.

EXERCISE

Generates mind-boosting chemicals. This aids greater self-management and emotional stability.

AFFIRMATIONS

"I am worth it, I am better than this," is a great self-motivating make-belief.

BE THANKFUL

Gratitude helps us cope and disguise terrible events.

LAUGH LOUDLY

Humor can help us cope with difficult situations. By watching or sharing funny videos.

HELP

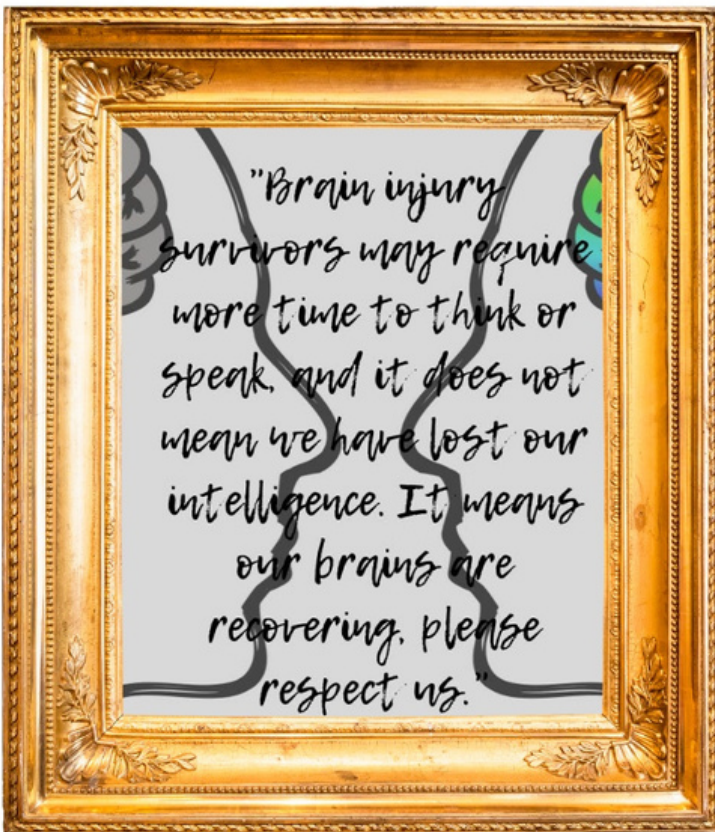
Gain a new perspective on your feelings after a long absence. Great method to relax.

SOCIAL SERVICE

Office outings and parties have a significant impact on mental wellness.

SPEAK UP

Emotional and mental health require communication.



Access 2 Card, Don't Go Home without it!!



It has been 6 months since I received my Access 2 Card from Easter Seal Canada and it has paid for itself already. From movies to museums, I have been able to access these activities and have been able to have Brad as my support person and got him in for free or for a cheaper price.

The Access 2 card is for people of all ages and types of permanent disabilities who require the assistance of a support person at hundreds of participating entertainment, cultural and recreational venues across Canada.

A support person is an adult who accompanies a person with a permanent disability to assist with services that are not provided by the employees at the participating venue, such as assistance with eating, administering medication, communication and use of the facilities.

First, you must download the application on the Easter Seals website at www.access2card.ca. Fill in your section of the application. Send the second half of the application to your professional health care worker which can be your doctor, psychologist, social worker, etc..(it is a long list to choose from). Then you must pay either \$20 for 3 years or \$30 for 5 years. This can be paid by cheque or pay online. The whole process will take 4-6 weeks to receive your card in the mail. Once you get it, go and enjoy the activities with a friend or loved one. Enjoy being out once again. All you do is show your Access 2 card when purchasing your ticket at one of the many participating companies which you can find on the website. I do know at the movies, they do ask you to fill out some paperwork, but no big problem. Have your support person help you, if needed. Enjoy your activities!



Written by Christine



As we all know, being physically active is very important especially when recovering from a brain injury. The clubhouse adapts several physical activities so that everyone can participate.

Written by Christine

Chair Zumba incorporates movements taken from Latin dances like merengue, salsa, and cha cha to create an exhilarating program that aims to improve overall energy, core stability, muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and

motor skills. Zumba Gold Chair classes are specifically designed for people with limited mobility, people with balance issues, and anyone who wants a great seated workout. You can take breaks whenever you need to, and you can also work harder than you might expect.

In Picture left to right

Sarah (Coop Student), Brad, Wayne

OPEN MY EYES AND SEE

Written by Mary Lou

While driving the car out and about in Niagara, there are so many beautiful sights to see this time of year. Pierre and I keep ourselves feeling good by taking a tour of the back roads from Welland through spots like Fonthill. New roads with an amazing assortment of housing subdivisions, all types and sizes including the large expansions of plazas growing at a frightening rate with groceries, restaurants, take-out foods, pet shops and hairdressers. This area was wilderness just a few years ago, with miles of farmers' fields of corn, grains and grassy fields with cattle, lambs, free-run chickens and horses grazing. These areas remain just a little further away in Fenwick. A must-see area if you get the chance. The roads are hilly and winding with beautiful views. The newer homes are built far apart with some new MANSIONS that are interesting to see. These newcomers have adopted the farmlands with their grazing horses and other animals. Many of the original barns and homes are remaining. It's a wonderful area to explore. The fall colours change almost on a daily basis, it's a must-see!





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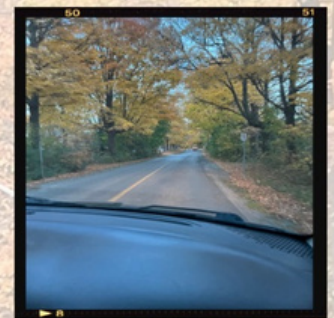
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DON'T QUIT

When things go wrong,

As they sometimes will,

When the road your trudging seems all uphill,

When the funds are low, And the debts are high,

When you would like to smile

But you have to sigh,

When care is pressing you down a bit,

Rest if you must, But don't you quit,

Life is strange with it's twists and turns,

As everyone of us sometimes learns,

Many a failure turns about,

When he may have won,

Had he stuck it out,

Don't give up though the pace seems slow,

You may succeed with another blow,

Success is failure turned inside out,

The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,

You never know how close you are,

It may be near when it seems so far,

So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit,

It's when things seem worst that you must not quit

APHASIA From a Stroke

I had a stroke ,

What can I say?

Now , I don' t remember his name,

That what-cha-mi-call-it he likes to play with,

All I can say is I don't have those wheels that match up,

They're in my mind, those wheels,

The ideas and people that match up with their names,

I am not ignorant,

I know exactly what I mean,

I just can not make...

That connection...

The connection between the brain & their names,

Names, names floating around with no where to go,

There in my mind.

Poems written by Andrea



Travelling with Friends

Travelling with friends can be a lot of fun. Travelling with friends with each of you having different brain injuries can be interesting. In October, Brendon, Brad and I decided to explore our nation's capital together. It took us a couple of months to plan the trip from budgeting to finding a cheap hotel. Each gave our opinion on where we wanted to visit or where we wanted to eat.

Brendon was the expert when it came to transportation and hotel deals. He found us some great deals.

We used our Disability Travel Card to get discounts on the buses and Via rail to Ottawa. We even had an amazing opportunity to meet and stay over at Brendon's mom's house in Toronto.

Overall, I think our trip was incredible and it made our friendship even stronger.

Was it perfect, no but we sure did have an amazing adventure together!

Where to next? Who knows. All I can say is that travelling with people who are like yourself is comforting to know you are always in good hands.

Written by Christine



15 Tips to Survive the Holidays when you have a Brain Injury



Flashing lights. Crowded stores. Loud family gatherings. The holiday season should be joyful, but it can often be overwhelming to someone who is living with brain injury. If you are living with TBI, share these tips with your friends and family. If someone you love is living with TBI, the tips below can help you plan to make the holiday season happier and more relaxed for all of your friends and family.

1. **Identify — in advance, if possible — a quiet place to go at gatherings if you are feeling overwhelmed. This gives you a chance to take a break and lets your loved ones stay involved in the festivities.**
2. **Avoid crowded stores and order gifts online instead.**
3. **If you are shopping in stores, remember to make a list in advance and plan your trips on weekdays — either early in the morning or late at night when there are fewer crowds.**
4. **Wear a cap with a brim or lightly tinted sunglasses to minimize the glare of bright lights in stores or flashing lights on a tree.**
5. **Wear noise-reducing headphones or earbuds. These are also great gift ideas for loved ones with TBI if they don't already have them.**
6. **Ask a friend to go with you to stores or holiday parties. They can help you navigate crowds and anxiety-producing situations.**
7. **Plan in advance as much as possible. And ask your hosts what their plans are so you aren't surprised by anything.**
8. **Volunteer to help with the holiday activities that you enjoy the most and are least stressful for you.**
9. **Remember to ask for help and accept help if it is offered to you.**
10. **Ask someone you trust to help you with a budget to avoid overspending on gifts.**
11. **Take a nap if you need a break. Allow yourself time to recuperate.**
12. **Remember that it's okay to say "no." Skip the big parties and plan to celebrate in a way that makes you comfortable and happy.**
13. **Check in advance to see if fireworks are part of outdoor celebrations — and skip them if they make you uncomfortable.**
14. **If flashing lights bother you, ask your friends and family to turn off the flashing feature on Christmas tree lights or other decorations when you visit their homes.**
15. **You can let your host know in advance that you may need to leave early. It will help you feel comfortable if you need to get home or to a quiet place and it can also help avoid any hurt feelings.**

Restaurant Apps **HOT DEAL**

How

You need to go to the Google play or Apple App Store to download the app onto your smartphone. It will only take a few minutes Try to download your five favorite places to eat.

When

You can use your restaurant apps anytime when the restaurants are open . Every week new deals are announced and you don't have to search for coupons because the apps will have all the details.

Where

Restaurant locations that you choose to go can be found for specific locations by searching on the internet. This will help guide you to find where you need to go.

DON'T miss it!

Who

The restaurant you like will listed on Google or in the Apple app store.

What

You will find that you have options to choose from when opening your restaurant app. Choose the item you like and watch how much you save. ALWAYS REMEMBER TO budget so you don't over spend or over eat. Keep it simple.

Why

You want to use your restaurant apps to help search for deals to help save money on meals and also gain points on your purchases . This is a terrific opportunity to shop smart.

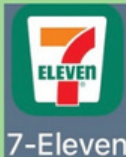
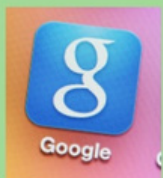


Tim Hortons

Harvey's

PC Express

Swiss Chalet



Google

SUBWAY®

7-Eleven

Written by Brendon



CLUBHOUSE DATES TO REMEMBER

Last Day of Clubhouse for the holidays - Dec 22nd

Holiday Fest Party - Dec 22nd

Reopen after Holidays - Jan 3rd



HAPPY Holidays



KARRI'S KORNER

Question of the Month



What habits help you get ready for the holidays?

Survivor - Ron

One of the best ways to get into the season is to go to the shopping mall to enjoy the Christmas music and decorations.

It's also fun to explore the old holiday pictures and ornaments to bring back memories of years past.



Activities to do during the Holidays



Call your friend





The Niagara Falls Soup Kitchen

LOCAL FOOD SECURITY

This amazing charitable organization is run by many hard-working volunteer board members and just a couple of talented paid chefs and a kitchen manager. The mission of the Niagara Falls Community Outreach Program is to alleviate the pain of hunger by providing nutritious meals free of charge to persons in need with dignity and respect, in an atmosphere of acceptance and safety. The organization is carried on without the purpose of gain for its members and any profits or other gains to the organization are used in promoting these objectives. Their guests are a cross-section of society, many of whom face the challenges of unemployment, seasonally-based employment, or fixed incomes. Some are dealing with physical, emotional, or mental challenges. Anyone in need is welcome, and may come to be fed with no personal questions asked.

Before the pandemic, they opened up their doors with volunteers serving their guest a hot meal indoors to approx 150 per day. During the pandemic, needs grew higher by many and so did their numbers. They shifted to one hot meal a day to be served between 11:30 am – 1 pm in a bagged lunch to approx 300 individual. During this time, the community of Niagara stepped up to help the Niagara Falls Soup Kitchen with physical food donations from companies, restaurants and from individuals like myself and my family. Monetary donations were also received from organizations to individuals to help the NF Soup Kitchen keep their doors open. They were blessed enough to purchase a refrigerated van to help pick up fresh fruit, vegetables, protein and water from many organizations donating. They even were given a green space to grow their own vegetables. All the labour to up keep the project were all done by volunteers with a green thumb.

You can see the NF Soup Kitchen Van at several events like the Niagara Falls Farmers Market, Parades, or Zehrs all to get the Soup Kitchen recognized out in the community. It's to make the community understand that there is another agency other than Project Share which is funded by the government in Niagara Falls. So come on down and receive a delicious hot meal from some very caring people. Hey, sometimes they handout extras like gloves, sweaters, personal hygiene products, hats, and diapers.

Every little bit helps when you are in need!

Written by Christine



GROCERY LIST



- INDIVIDUAL FRUIT CUPS
- GRANOLA BARS
- WATER BOTTLES/CASES
- CANNED CORN
- CANNED DICED TOMATOES
- CANNED KIDNEY BEANS
- PARBOILED RICE
- TOMATO SAUCE
- COOKIES
- SALAD DRESSINGS
- PENNE PASTA



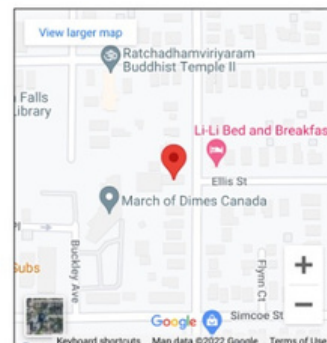
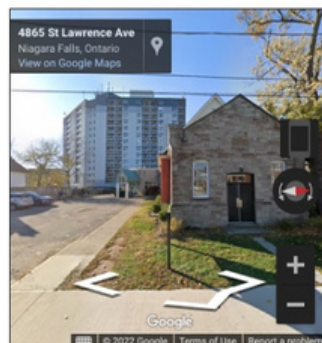
DONATIONS ACCEPTED DAILY
BETWEEN 9AM-11AM & 1PM-2PM

LOOKING TO VISIT?

OUR LOCATION

4865 St. Lawrence Ave.
Niagara Falls Ontario
L2E 3Y1

Bagged lunches given daily from
11:30am - 1:00pm at the front
doors



Winter

SUPPORT



Start Me Up Niagara's WINTER SHELTERS

November 1st, 2022 - April 15th, 2023

St. Catharines

Westminster United Church
180 Queenston Street



Niagara Falls

Coronation Centre
5925 Summer Street



Open 7 days a week from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.

Contact

St. Catharines:
(647) 617-9755

Niagara Falls:
(289) 783-6216

For general inquiries:
info@startmeupniagara.ca



**START ME UP
NIAGARA**
Working Together... Moving Forward

St. Catharines

OUT OF THE GOLD



SUPPER PROGRAM

November 1, 2022- March 31, 2023

5:30 pm to 6:30 pm* (Take out)

SUNDAY	Knights of Columbus Hall	235 Church St
MONDAY	Silver Spire United Church	366 St Paul St.
TUESDAY	Cathedral of St Catherine	3 Lyman St.
WEDNESDAY	St George's Anglican Church	83 Church St.
THURSDAY *5 - 6:30*	St. Alfred Roman Catholic Church	272 Vine St.
FRIDAY	Knox Presbyterian Church	53 Church St.
SATURDAY	Queen Street Baptist Church	57 Queen St.

Out of the Cold St Catharines
PO Box 29077
St Catharines - RPO Carleton
Ontario L2R 7P9

outofthecoldstc@gmail.com

Temporary Seasonal Overnight Shelter

Overnight accommodations for unhoused individuals aged 18+ only. Shelters open from 7:30pm to 7:30am, 7 days a week.

St. Catharines

289-501-4357
Silver Spire United Church
365 St. Paul Street
November 1st to 5th, 2022
and November 30th to
December 3rd, 2022

Westminster United Church
180 Queenston Street
November 6th to 29th, 2022
and December 4th, 2022 to
April 15th, 2023

9:00 PM curfew
10:00 PM doors close



Preregistration

If someone is unable to preregister, walk in's will be assessed at the door.

St Catharines Start Me Up Niagara 1:00 - 3:00 pm everyday
17 Gale Crescent

Temporary Seasonal Overnight Shelter

Overnight accommodations for unhoused individuals aged 18+ only. Shelters open from 7:30pm to 7:30am, 7 days a week.

Niagara Falls

289-501-4205
5925 Summer Street
November 1st, 2022 to
April 15th, 2023



9:00 PM curfew
10:00 PM doors close



Preregistration

If someone is unable to preregister, walk in's will be assessed at the door.

Niagara Falls Niagara Falls Public Library 1:00 - 3:00 pm everyday
4848 Victoria Avenue



SHOPPING EVENTS

Saturday November 26, 11:00am - 1:00pm
Tableland Ministries
125 Queenston St, St Catharines

Wednesday December 7, 10:00am - 11:30am
McBain Community Centre
7150 Montrose Rd, Niagara Falls

Thursday December 8, 4:30pm - 6:30pm
Out of the Cold/St Alfreds Church
272 Vine St, St Catharines

All Are Welcome! No Questions Asked!

TELL ME AND I'LL FORGET.
SHOW ME AND I'LL REMEMBER.
INVOLVE ME AND I'LL UNDERSTAND.



GAMES, PUZZLES & JOKES

November's Answers

1 SAND	2 MAN BOARD	3 STAND I	4 R E A D I N G
5 WEAR LONG	6 R ROAD A D	7 T OWN	8 CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE
9 LE VEL	10 O M.D. Ph.D. B.S.	11 KNEE LIGHTS	12 I I O O O O O
13 CHAIR	14 DICE DICE	15 T OUCH H	16 GROUND FEET FEET FEET FEET FEET
17 MIND MATTER	18 HE'S/HIMSELF	19 ECNALG	20 DEATH/LIFE
21 GI C C C C C C	22 PROGRAM	23 S E E T H R O U G H B L O U S E	24 J U S T Y O U S M E

Remembrance Day

HFTPREMEMBRANCE
MDEZPOBEECAEPQF
WFNTFDCZGETLNWS
UCNTNNRELDUVUCR
YQJDEFIELDRRENE
MHCLMCVUBUERAID
XSI PQEVAQMERTKN
USDUNVYQEMEFNNA
MQITZERMOTHVSSL
ZAHUGUBNEDNBOAF
XII EOEYVULAJRNJ
DCMNRSQBQNJMI OY
RUOB POPPYDERGRC
I HHZRQNHU ELTTAB
VPSUFTZREIDLOSM

Answers to wordles

- Sandbox
- Man Over Board
- I Understand
- Read Between the Lines
- Long Underwear
- Cross Roads
- Downtown
- Tricycle
- Split Level
- 3 degrees below zero
- Neon Lights
- Circles under the eyes
- High Chair
- Paradise
- Touch Down
- 6 Feet Under Ground
- Mind Over Matter
- He's Beside Himself
- Backward glance
- Life After Death
- Gi overseas
- Beginning Program
- See through Blouse
- Just Between You and Me

BATTLE
CEREMONY
ELEVENTH
FIELD
FLANDERS
HONOUR
NOVEMBER

PEACE
POPPY
REMEMBER
REMEMBRANCE
SILENCE
SOLDIER
VETERAN

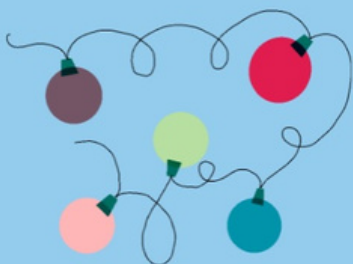
8	7	6	1	2	3	9	4	5
5	4	3	8	9	6	7	2	1
9	1	2	7	4	5	3	8	6
3	9	4	6	5	1	8	7	2
1	6	8	9	7	2	4	5	3
7	2	5	4	3	8	1	6	9
6	5	1	3	8	7	2	9	4
2	8	9	5	1	4	6	3	7
4	3	7	2	6	9	5	1	8

BRAD'S JOKE OF THE MONTH

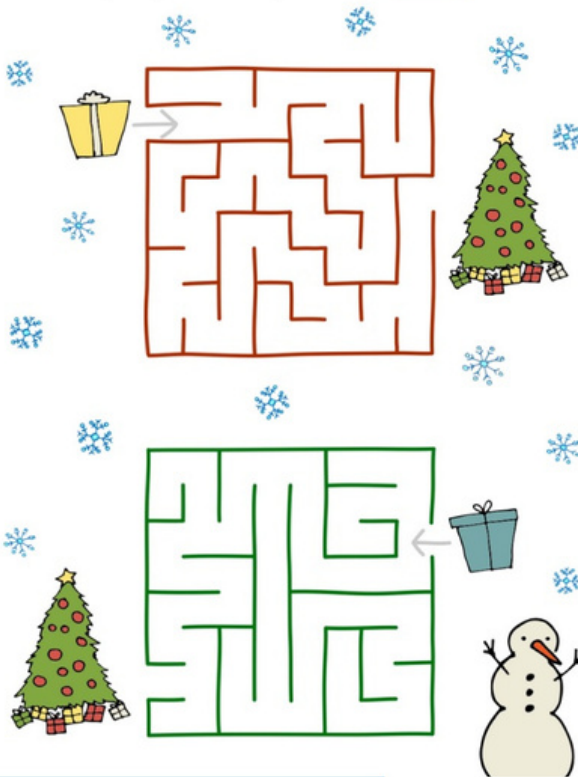
GAMES, PUZZLES & JOKES



"You'd better sit out the rest of the game. You might have a concussion."



Can you help to deliver the presents to the **Holiday** tree?



Spot the Difference

Can you find all 8 differences between these pictures?



Holiday Word Scramble

1. ledcna _____
2. nelag _____
3. mnnotreat _____
4. ihyoadl _____
5. soceoik _____
6. vesle _____
7. yrstfo _____
8. naptoiets _____
9. bnrbo _____
10. letnsi _____



Holiday Riddles



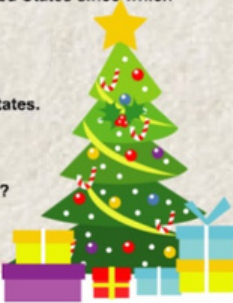
Match the each **Holiday** riddle on the left to the correct answer on the right.

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| 1. _____ | What do Santa's elves learn when they go to school? | a. A cookie sheet |
| 2. _____ | What does a gingerbread man put on his bed when he goes to sleep at night? | b. Santa Claus walking backwards. |
| 3. _____ | Why are Christmas trees bad at knitting? | c. The elf-abet |
| 4. _____ | Who says, "Oh, oh, oh!"? | d. They're always dropping their needles. |
| 5. _____ | Which elf is the best singer at the North Pole? | e. Santa Jaws. |
| 7. _____ | Who brings presents to baby Sharks? | f. Frosted Flakes. |
| 8. _____ | What's black and white and red all over? | g. ELF-is Presley. |
| 9. _____ | What do snowmen eat for breakfast? | h. Santa Claus covered with chimney soot. |



Christmas Tree Trivia Quiz

- Where are most Christmas trees grown?
 - Tree Farms
 - Wild Forests
 - Tropical Jungles
- What did most Europeans use for Christmas tree lights?
 - Bulbs
 - Candles
 - Fairy Lights
- Until the mid-20th century what was used for tinsel on Christmas trees?
 - Strips of Gold
 - Strips of Tin
 - Strips of Silver
- In 16th century Poland it was popular to hang your Christmas tree upside down from the ceiling.
 - True
 - False
- How long does it take the average Christmas tree to mature?
 - 2-3 years
 - 4-6 years
 - 7-10 years
- Between the 1500s and 1600s, people in which countries began decorating Christmas tree
 - Latvia and other Eastern European Countries
 - Ireland and England
 - Italy and Spain
- Besides evergreens, what other types of were used as Christmas trees in the past?
 - Cherry and hawthorns
 - Apple and maple
 - Hawthorns and Apple
- Live Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since which year?
 - 1750
 - 1800
 - 1850
- Each year how many Christmas trees are sold in the United States.
 - 1-2 million
 - 25-30 million
 - 70-80 million
- How many States in United States produce Christmas Trees?
 - All 50
 - 35
 - 45



HOLIDAYS



P R E S E N T S G Y K U Z X M Y D
 O H M F W M D C M W B Q R W L G E
 Z R W N V I F S C M V W L L K S C
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 D S V B M D V X O G T M H L T W B
 O A O U O E G S L E Y A S E R M E
 L S C W S J N O E R U E L I S A R
 P E T T W Z W T R Y V T T G W N K
 H B F O T M S R S L S L R H D C Y
 C I B B C E L R E I N D E E R C Q
 G K G S I K G T M A E A I H S H Q
 T U T K A N I X A E T C C T I I V
 P I O H N L C N R K N H H V T M N
 D O E Q C Z E T G V B G B U Z N T
 C A N D Y C A N E T I N S E L E K
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| CANDY CANE | GIFTS | RUDOLPH |
| CARDS | HOLLY | SANTA |
| CAROLERS | LIGHTS | SLEIGH |
| CHIMNEY | MANGER | SNOWMAN |
| COOKIES | MISTLETOE | STOCKING |
| DECEMBER | ORNAMENTS | TINSEL |
| ELVES | PRESENTS | TREE |
| GARLAND | REINDEER | WREATH |

Holiday Carol Challenge

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		CHRISTMAS	
REINDEER OO GRANDMA	your partridge tree	W.	
	NOEL NOEL NOEL	NOEL NOEL NOEL NOEL	RING RING RING RING



Six Tips for Surviving the Holidays with a Brain Injury

CATEGORIES: Being a Caregiver, Living with Brain Injury



By Amy Zellmer, Brain Injury Association of America Advisory Council member

With the holidays upon us, many brain injury survivors will find themselves facing more overstimulation than normal. This stimulation can cause additional brain fatigue and stress, and in some situations, both fear and panic set in.

Overstimulation is one of the most common effects of brain injury, and it can be caused by any combination of sounds, images, light, smell, taste, and touch. Because overstimulation can't be seen, it can be a mystery to those who have never experienced it. It can also cause frustration for someone who is going through it or for loved ones who don't understand it.

I know about overstimulation from personal experience. I have a hard time dealing with a crowded restaurant or busy malls, especially during the holidays when there is too much noise, too many lights, and lots of scents. I have a hard time focusing when there is a lot of background noise, and I am unable to carry on a conversation or make sense of what I am trying to do. I will leave the mall feeling completely exhausted, and I often develop a headache to go with my exhaustion. I usually tire out before my 78-year-old mother, who can shop circles around me.

Here is my list of six simple things you can do to make the holidays easier on yourself or a loved one who is dealing with overstimulation.

1. **Stay hydrated.** The brain functions best when it is fully hydrated. When you are out shopping, it is easy to become dehydrated rather quickly. You can combat this by always having a water bottle with you and refilling it often. As tempting as it is, drinking alcohol and caffeine will cause you to become dehydrated, so it is best to avoid alcohol and caffeine when you know you are going to be faced with overstimulation.
2. **Keep additional stimulation to a minimum.** Decrease the amount of stimulation in places where you have control. If you know you're headed to the mall or a crowded restaurant, don't watch television before heading out or listen to the radio on the way there. If you're going with friends or loved ones, explain to them that you might not be able to have a conversation while you're there. Bring your sunglasses and earplugs along, and use them if necessary.
3. **Get additional rest.** While this one seems obvious, it is sometimes hard to do with the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. Rest is critical to help your brain recover from overstimulation. Take a nap before or after your outing, and do your best to get a good night's sleep each night. Give yourself a designated bedtime, and stick with a schedule throughout the holidays.
4. **Take shorter trips.** If you have a lot to do, you may want to consider breaking it up into smaller trips. I find it easier to do one errand each day rather than trying to cram five things into one outing. It may take longer, but your brain will thank you.
5. **Write lists.** I am the queen of sticky notes and shopping lists. Why add additional stress to the situation by going shopping without a clear list of where you need to go and what you need to buy? Even with a list, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and out of sorts. Having a plan that details exactly where you need to go and what you need to purchase at each location will help keep your stress levels down and keep you organized.
6. **Ask for help.** It can be hard to do, but sometimes you need to ask for help – whether it's asking for someone to drive you somewhere, carry your bags, or even run an errand for you. It's best to know when you've reached your limit (preferably before you've reached your limit) and ask for help. If you are a friend or loved one of a person with a brain injury, offer to help before you are asked – or better yet, do something that's on your loved one's list before you see that he or she needs assistance.

If you are a caregiver, family member, or friend of a brain injury survivor, please understand that overstimulation is very real. Allow us to take the steps needed to ensure our health and sanity this holiday season and all year round.

To all my fellow brain injury survivors, I wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with peace, joy, and love. Take care of yourself, and give yourself grace when needed. It is easy to push ourselves because we feel like we have so much to do; however, it is important to know when to step back... and take a nap.

About the Author:

Amy Zellmer is an award-winning author, speaker, and advocate of traumatic brain injury (TBI). She is a former member of the Brain Injury Association of America's Advisory Council (BIAAAC) and travels the country with her Yorkie, Pixxie, to help raise awareness about this silent and invisible injury that affects over 2.5 million Americans each year. One of her books, *Life With a Traumatic Brain Injury: Finding the Road Back to Normal*, can be purchased from BIAA's Online Marketplace.

This article originally appeared in Volume 10, Issue 4 of *THE Challenge!* published in 2016.









Mark
YOUR
Calendar



DECEMBER 2022 | Oasis Clubhouse Activities Calendar

Hours of Operation: 10:00 – 2:00pm | Registered Members Only

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
			<p>1</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Sausage Skillet 1-2 Baking Banana Muffins + Decorating our Space!</p> 
<p>5</p> <p>10-2 Social Drop-in</p> <p>Come enjoy the space, grab a coffee, check things off your to-do list, access advocacy services, and socialize with friends!</p> <p>(no food provided)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Chicken Pot Pie 1-2 BINGO Club</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Hotdogs and Salad 1-2 Therapy Tails Visit</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Tortellini & Salad 1-2 Holiday Cookie Decorating / Jeopardy</p>
<p>12</p> <p>10-2 Social Drop-in</p> <p>Come enjoy the space, grab a coffee, check things off your to-do list, access advocacy services, and socialize with friends!</p> <p>(no food provided)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Tacos 1-2 Holiday Wreath Activity</p>	<p>14</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Breakfast for Lunch 1-2 Men's Peer Support Group</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Chicken Stir Fry 1-2 Women's Peer Support Group</p> 
<p>19</p> <p>10-2 Social Drop-in</p> <p>Come enjoy the space, grab a coffee, check things off your to-do list, access advocacy services, and socialize with friends!</p> <p>(no food provided)</p>	<p>20</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Pierogis 1-2 Game of Things</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Meal Preparation Group 12-1 Spaghetti & Meatballs 1-2 Music Trivia with Dylan</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>10 Meet N Greet 11-12 Mix n Mingle Lunch 1-2 Holiday Celebration Party</p> <p>Join us for trivia + games Wear red & green or your best sweater!</p>



Clubhouse Closed
December 23rd through January 2nd
We will reopen on January 3rd



- Activities / Programs
- **Monday Drop-in Social** (no scheduled programming or lunch – independent recreational & social opportunity with access to advocacy services)
- **NEW!** Women's Peer Support Group (last Thursday of every month, unless there is a conflict)
- **NEW!** Men's Peer Support Group (second Wednesday of every month)
- Lunch Menu Items (please prepare in advance if you have an allergy or dietary restrictions) – the cost for lunch is \$3.00
- Please email newsletter submissions to brainmattersnewsletter@gmail.com



"Brain injuries are like snowflakes and fingerprints. NO two are the same."



Be true to yourself and surround yourself with positive, supportive people.

peace
love

Letter from the Editor



Joy

Happy Holidays! to everyone. This year has been filled with adventure both good and bad.

Please remember that kindness and caring are gifts to give to those who are in need. Pay it forward. Remember to take care of yourself during the holidays. Make new memories. Make new friends. Try something new. This is the time to try and make the effort to move forward in your recovery.

I would like to remind our members that they too can contribute to the newsletter. It doesn't matter how big or small. We are looking for articles, pictures, poems, and songs - things that make us feel good and successful during our journey to recovery.

All submissions are sent to brainmattersnewsletter@gmail.com by the 15th of every month.

Don't be shy. We want to hear from you!



Christine

