
◆ BrainWaves ◆

Once More With Feeling... Inner Resources

The members of our Vocational Adjustment Group in Philadelphia, PA have often contributed to this article in **BrainWaves**. We have frequently quoted the insightful comments they have made spontaneously during their weekly session or their responses during guided discussions. Recently, Ray Finley, Ph.D., the facilitator of the Vocational Adjustment Group, decided to select a book that could be used to facilitate self-awareness. He hoped to enhance the group members' awareness of universal experiences as well as their own uniqueness. He selected the book **Life's Greatest Lessons: 20 Things That Matter**, by Hal Urban (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2003).

Since reading a book of this kind is a new experience for some of the group members, they have taken turns reading short passages and are then asked to comment on them, drawing on their own experiences. There are many valuable lessons to learn, from the book and each other. Even though the book was not written for persons with disabilities, there are themes that people with disabilities can certainly relate to.

Three of our four regular group members are working in some capacity and one is currently seeking a new job after resigning recently from a job he held for many years. He hopes to find a job more focused on his interest in animals. As most of us have, the group members have thought about what it means to have a job, how we adjust to the work demands and work culture in any employment setting, and how we know if we are successful.

In writing about what it means to be successful, Hal Urban said:

Successful people accept life as it is, with all its difficulties and challenges...They say YES to life in spite of its negative elements and make the most of it, no matter what the circumstances.

He also ends Chapter 2, "Life is Hard...And Not Always Fair," by saying that, although life is not always fair, that "doesn't mean it can't be good, rewarding and enjoyable. There are still a lot of reasons to say YES to it." He talks about courage and laughter, which our group members know about. And now they are using a new process in the group to tap into their inner resources and continue to learn what the human experience is for all of us.

Whether or not this group will continue to read and discuss some of these universal themes or will prefer to have less structured discussions, they have another way to think about life and how to approach its challenges in their daily living, including work.

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Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Alex, Andrew L., Andrew M., Becky, Cherrae, Denise, Hal, Jerry, Joseph, Neil, and Richard.

Our clients and staff continue to be involved in many interesting, varied activities. As usual, in each issue we mention some of them; more will be mentioned in the next issue of **BrainWaves**.

- Howard has been doing well with his Check Writing Partner program—a computer software program that assists with bookkeeping, banking and bill-paying.
- In March, Jackie accepted a part-time (30 hours a week) position as a marine scientist at Rutgers University Marine Field Station. Jackie had been volunteering there since June of 2009 and, in March, was offered a paid position.
- Todd has dinner out and participates in a weekly card game that takes place at a local hotel; he said he enjoys the evening each week.
- Kirk has continued to work on adding details to his log cabin model, which he plans to display at this year's **Creativity Expo** in July. He also completed his artist's profile for inclusion in the expo. (See page 6 for details about the **2010 Creativity Expo** at Raritan Valley Community College.)
- In March, Ken began attending a therapeutic activities group; the participants engage in cognitive activities, have lunch together, and address their social interaction skills. (See our Announcement on page 6.) Ken has reported enjoying the group, which takes place in the office and in the community.

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Update continued *(from page 1)*

- In April, Rafael began a remodeling project on his mobile home. He is having a large addition built on his trailer and anticipates doing some of the work himself.
- In March, Lorine prepared quiche, using a recipe. She also initiated a knitting project; she chose a pattern and yarn to make a blanket for her new grand-niece.
- In May, Gerard began volunteering at the Battleship New Jersey one day a week. He is hoping to add a second day of volunteering. He has been performing exceptionally well in his position so far.
- Brian continues to volunteer at a local animal shelter where he walks the dogs. Recently, he began initiating conversations with other volunteers. Also, in March Brian prepared two dinners for his nephew and himself while his mother was in the hospital.
- In March, Dan navigated his way to Connecticut for a weekend retreat, using the train system. He also continues to work part-time at a local grocery store and in the learning center at a local community college where he tutors college students four hours a week, primarily in English.
- In March, Pat received an \$800 safety bonus from Sam's Club, where he has worked as a full-time maintenance associate since May of 2006. Also, in April Pat had his annual performance review at Sam's Club; he received a very good evaluation and a pay raise.
- Dottie participates in several clubs—an art club twice a week, a writing club once a month, and a book club. She recently began attending a family history workshop in which she will work on writing a personal memoir.
- Paul has continued to manage his finances successfully. He also continues to improve his computer skills and his use and understanding of Braille.
- Anju continues to participate in crocheting projects. Her overall ability has improved and she continues to express both joy and accomplishment with each project she completes; she has made a scarf and three bracelets. She is currently working on another scarf for her brother.
- In April, Mike built and painted a Purple Martin condominium birdhouse. He had researched and downloaded the plans from the Internet. Mike also assisted a friend with building and installing wooden screen panels to enclose a front porch. In addition, he prepared his garden for the planting season and obtained pepper, tomato and corn plants and bean seeds for the garden.
- John S. attends an adult day program three days a week. He says he enjoys going to the program and interacting with the staff and other participants.
With the assistance of his neurorehabilitation specialist, John has begun managing his medications, using a medication chart. The chart contains the names of his medications, their purpose and dosage, the time he takes them, and descriptions and pictures of them. He requires less prompting now to remember to take his medications.
- With the assistance of his neurorehabilitation specialist, John V. has been using a calendar and dry erase board on his bedroom wall to help improve his ability to recall important information. He also uses a notebook to keep his notes organized in one place.
- In April, Harris followed up with obtaining accommodations at his local community college where he is a full-time student; he arranged for a note-taker for his history class, and sought out tutoring for his composition writing class. He intends to finish the semester and register for fall semester classes.
- We want to wish Megan Rohrbach, M.S.S., LSW, CBIS, client services liaison, all the best in her new position at Aaron's Acres, a camp program providing social and recreational activities for children with disabilities.
- We also want to wish Will much happiness in his new home in Hornell, NY.
- Congratulations to Eric Share, B.S., CBIS, one of our neurorehabilitation specialists in New Jersey, for being elected to the board of directors of the Jewish Community Center of Atlantic County.
- Sally Kneipp, Ph.D., director of Community Skills Program, presented on traumatic brain injury topics at a conference sponsored by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for vocational rehabilitation personnel, on April 29, 2010 in State College, PA. She also made comments on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities at the Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania's Leadership Training on May 8, 2010 in Camp Hill, PA. On May 17, 2010, she provided vocational rehabilitation personnel at the Reading District Office of OVR with a two-hour continuing education program on the vocational issues and implications of traumatic brain injury.
- Nina Geier, M.S., M.P.T., PT, CBIS and Maria Zakula, M.A., CBIS, our program coordinators for northern and southern New Jersey, respectively, presented "Connecting with Community Through Volunteering" at the Annual Seminar of the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc., on May 20, 2010 in Eatontown, NJ.

Spotlight: Judi Levin



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Spotlight: Judi, tell us a little about yourself.

Judi: I'm 42 and, when I was 19, I had no idea how much my life was going to change—from being as healthy as could be and a freelance fitness instructor, to pulling off a side street and someone going through a red light and running into me. I ended up with a severe concussion. That was back in 1987. I was taken to an emergency room and I had no idea what was happening or what was going on. And, then I was sent home like nothing was wrong. As far as me being able to tell you everything that happened for the next five years of my life, I would love to, but I can't because of what my memory has been through. It's been quite a loss of memory, with amnesia and Alzheimer's-type feelings, even cells dying in my brain from all the seizures I've had.

Five years after the accident, epilepsy began as a result of the traumatic brain injury. With the epilepsy, I was told there was a scar on my brain and it was like putting a pot of cold water on an electric stove on low. When the seizures began, it was a matter of the water coming to a boil. It boiled into a seizure and the epilepsy began. And I

had it in rare form. I'm right brain dominant and I have a rare brain—I've been told it's one or two out of 500. It was an experience for me. There are a lot of different types of seizures—more than just convulsive—and no two brains are identical.

Spotlight: What kind of seizures did you have?

Judi: I had complex partial and secondary generalized tonic-clonic and partial. I had intractable seizures that were not controllable with medication. In fact, the medications were making me worse in every way because the side effects were terrible.

Spotlight: How did all this affect your abilities?

Judi: Terribly—not just *my* abilities, but everyone who suffers as I do. Many people in this country don't know anything about epilepsy or understand it. People with epilepsy are very stigmatized and discriminated against. It is not well understood. Many people would rather run from us than learn about epilepsy and help us.

Spotlight: What actually happened to you and your functioning? How did it affect you?

Judi: My reading, writing, comprehending, knowing which way was up or down, left or right, which hand I wrote with, or being able to recognize people I know. Somebody like my own mother—I couldn't recognize or tell you who she was.

Spotlight: All because of the seizures?

Judi: Yes.

Spotlight: Could you work or drive?

Judi: Oh no. The driving definitely not, because of the seizures. You're not allowed to drive when you're having seizures until your seizures are in remission for a good six months.

I tried to get jobs, but the minute people heard I had epilepsy, they were

afraid to hire me. I had one job for about a month, but I was having too many seizures and they had to let me go.

Spotlight: You told us that a couple of years ago they got the seizures under control. How did that happen?

Judi: Ten years ago, I was evaluated for surgery to get rid of the seizures. That's when they found out I had a rare brain and they couldn't do the surgery with better than a 50/50 chance I would come out of it. Then, on an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] several years later, my doctors saw there was a broken blood vessel and a noncancerous tumor in my brain. They wanted to see if there was a chance they could go in there and get it out and save my life. They said, "We have got to see if we can do this because this is not good...this is terrible." It was a risk I took just going in for the evaluation of that surgery because they had to cut my brain open and put implants in. And, it's a miracle it all happened and I was able to survive it—not just the surgery but also living day-to-day all these years, because I had no support.

If it wasn't for my friend John in my life, I wouldn't have been able to have surgery 21 months ago. He was there before, during, and after the surgery. After the surgery, there was no way I could have come home and done everything independently. I could not remember a thing after the brain surgery. I couldn't even remember the Acme market that was right up the street from me.

Spotlight: How about now?

Judi: I've come a huge distance with the speech therapy, occupational therapy, and the Pennsylvania Head Injury Program funding that I got for cognitive rehabilitation services through the Drucker Brain Injury

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Spotlight continued *(from page 3)*

Center at MossRehab Hospital. But, I didn't feel that type of facility-based program would be enough to help me get back what I needed.

Spotlight: Which was what?

Judi: My life and my abilities. My cooking abilities, my grocery shopping abilities, my creating abilities, working with what was familiar in my home to get my old memories back. Then, they [Drucker staff] made me aware of Community Skills Program.

Spotlight: What have you learned in your seven months with Community Skills Program?

Judi: I'm working back in my place (my own home and my own community) with the same person all the time, Carrie Kozub, M.S.S. [Judi's neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program who conducted this interview]. We started with cooking every session. After the brain surgery, I had zero confidence and that was one of the main things I needed back—my confidence. Cooking was another way of me "creating" and I got my cooking back. I still don't remember all foods; it's still a workout with my memory—my reading, my writing, my comprehending. I've still got a distance to go, but I've also come quite a distance.

Spotlight: You mentioned "creating" as being something important to you. Tell us about your creativity. What has that meant in your life?

Judi: Everything. It's something I've been doing my whole life...it's a gift from God. I've been a God-gifted creator/artist since I was a small child. And it saved my life. When all this disability happened—even when I couldn't talk or make sense or sentences—my creativity was still working. After the surgery 21 months ago, I thought my creativity was gone. But, since January of this year, it's

come back—not totally like before, but definitely back.

Spotlight: What kind of artist are you?

Judi: I create mixed-media functional art. I turn trash into treasure. I do collaging, assemblaging, candle making, beading, jewelry, sea glass... everything. I'm always just creating. And, I have created poetry. My poetry isn't back yet; I hope it comes back someday.

I'm living proof of art as therapy. I would love to become an art therapist more than anything, so I could help others with disabilities of any age. But it doesn't seem anyone will give me a chance without having a college degree. And to get that, I need to have back my reading and writing skills.

Spotlight: What's on your horizon? Where are you heading now?

Judi: I'm going to OVR [the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation] with hopes of more funding for speech therapy to get my skills back and to be able to go back to college. And, to look into hopefully getting a job.

Spotlight: Do you have any other passions?

Judi: Yes, being an advocate for people with non-visible disabilities.

Through these past 23 years, I've never stopped growing, learning, studying and researching all that I could about the brain. It's my life mission to open doors and windows to the truth of non-visible disabilities.

Spotlight: Do you have any words of advice for those recovering from traumatic brain injury?

Judi: That you're not a toy for anybody. As much as they may have an education, they are learning from you. Because going to college is not learning...living is learning. They can't tell you; you have to learn to teach them and work as a team. Don't ever quit. And find your own creative voice. There's no such thing as perfect; just let it out.

[Editor's Note: Many thanks to all the people who have supported Judi in her rehabilitation efforts and will continue to do so as she strives to achieve more of her personal goals. Thanks especially to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Head Injury Program for funding Judi's Rehabilitation Service Plan. To learn more about Judi's story, go to YouTube.com and search for "The Magic of Life's Adventures."]



Judi in her apartment, working on her artistic creations.

Creativity Corner

Word Scramble: Brain Injury

Below are many words that are parts of the brain; see how many you can unscramble and write in the blank space next to the word. Then (not before) look on page 7 to see the answers.

1. RINAB ETMS _____
 2. MLELURCEBE _____
 3. LRACEBER TORXEC _____
 4. LINODECEPAHN _____
 5. SNOP _____
 6. DALULEM _____
 7. BIMAINDR _____
 8. SUTMAHAL _____
 9. THYPOMUSALAH _____
 10. GALADYMA _____
 11. PIHOPSUCMAP _____
 12. LABSA LIGANGA _____
 13. SENIMEGN _____
 14. SBRORECELANIP DUFLI _____
 15. TAFNORL ELOB _____
 16. PORATEML BEOL _____
 17. TAPLARIE LEOB _____
 18. ROLTANF-ERP TOCERX _____
 19. PORCSU SALLUCOM _____
 20. CURETILAR TINGACVITA SETYSM _____
-
-

The 2010 Creativity Expo

Dedicated to exhibiting the work of people with acquired or traumatic brain injury.

The **2010 Creativity Expo** will be held from Saturday, July 10 through Sunday, July 18, 2010 at the Raritan Valley Community College Art Gallery in North Branch, New Jersey. A special artists' reception will be held on the opening day, Saturday, July 10th from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., with food and beverages provided. This is the seventh consecutive year for this non-profit event, which features a wide variety of artwork, including painting, photography, jewelry, sculpture, needlework, crafts, video, music, poetry, prose, and more. For more information, please call Vince Diorio at (703) 297-7726 or (800) 374-0071, extension 4121, or you can e-mail him at vincentd54@msn.com. You can go to www.braininjuryartsnj.com to see photos from past expos and get directions to the expo.



Announcing...

Therapeutic Activities Group in Warrington, PA

Space is available for one or two (maximum) adults with a traumatic brain injury to participate in a very enjoyable and beneficial small group in Warrington, PA on Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The group is co-facilitated by Dr. James J. Stone, neuropsychologist, and Carol Bardsley, M.A., CPCRT, CBIS, one of our neurorehabilitation specialists.

For more information on the group, please call:

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The Center for Neuropsychology
and Counseling, PC
1243 Easton Road, Suite 203
Warrington, PA 18976
(215) 491-1119
www.theCenterinWarrington.com

Tips On... Neuro Film Festival

The **Neuro Film Festival** describes itself as a new contest held by the American Academy of Neurology Foundation to help raise awareness through video about brain disorders and the need to support research in prevention, treatment and cure. The entries highlight compelling videos from patients and their families and caregivers about living with a neurologic condition. More than 65 video entries were submitted to the 2010 **Neuro Film Festival** and winning films were screened at the **Neuro Film Festival** in Toronto, CA, during Stop Brain Disorders Week, which began on April 10, 2010. To view the winning films, go to www.neurofilmfestival.com. (Please read our Spotlight article about Judi Levin on pages 3 and 4. Her story, "The Magic of Life's Adventures," was submitted to the **Neuro Film Festival** and can be viewed on YouTube.com.)

David's Drive

The fourth annual **David's Drive** will be held on Tuesday, October 5, 2010 at White Manor Country Club in Malvern, PA. **David's Drive** is sponsored by the Council on Brain Injury (CoBI), which was created by ReMed in May 2007, in memory of Dr. David Strauss. The mission of CoBI is to fund education related to brain injury, conduct and support research for improved treatment, and advocate for improved services. Events at **David's Drive** include a golf tournament, reception and dinner, silent auction, and a golf clinic. To obtain sponsorship information or to learn more about **David's Drive**, please call Rose Marie Dalton at (484) 595-9300, extension 119, or e-mail her at rdalton@remed.com. Online registration is available at www.davidsdrive.org.

Solution:

Word Scramble: Brain Injury

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Brain stem | 11. Hippocampus |
| 2. Cerebellum | 12. Basal ganglia |
| 3. Cerebral cortex | 13. Meninges |
| 4. Diencephalon | 14. Cerebrospinal fluid |
| 5. Pons | 15. Frontal lobe |
| 6. Medulla | 16. Temporal lobe |
| 7. Midbrain | 17. Parietal lobe |
| 8. Thalamus | 18. Pre-frontal cortex |
| 9. Hypothalamus | 19. Corpus callosum |
| 10. Amygdala | 20. Reticular activating system |



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