

# TBI TODAY

News, Ideas, and Resources from the Virginia TBI Model System

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## Re-Think Your Self-Esteem

by Jeffrey Kreutzer, Ph.D.

After brain injury many people have trouble feeling good about themselves. **Self-esteem** is another word for how you feel and what you think about yourself. The term "low self-esteem" is used to describe people who feel bad about themselves, their lives, and their abilities. Complete the self-esteem quiz on the next page to get a sense of how you feel and what you think about yourself.

Knowing what and how to think about ourselves can be a challenge for anyone, with or without a brain injury. Many people judge themselves based on how popular they are, what they own, and how much money they make. Judging yourself based on possessions and personality can lead people to feel worthless and hopeless.



We know that you want to get better and feel better. Thinking about yourself and what you want is important. Just as important is thinking about other people. Think about and work hard to be a caring, kind, and helpful person. Being good to other people may be the most effective way to help you feel better about yourself and your life. (Contd p2)

(Self contd) **Directions:** Circle **T for True** if the statement is mostly true, **F for False** if not.

**People should love and respect me because...**

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T F 1. I have an expensive car.

T F 2. I am very attractive.

T F 3. I have an attractive boy/girlfriend.

T F 4. I can bench press 380 pounds.

T F 5. I wear expensive, large jewelry.

T F 6. I have 400 followers on my Twitter account.

T F 7. I own a large house with a three car garage.

T F 8. I have a satellite dish and a wide screen HD, 3D TV.

T F 9. I wear expensive clothing and shoes.

T F 10. I own a 14 megapixel camera with a huge zoom lens.

T F 11. I have third row seats to the upcoming Pearl Jam concert.

T F 12. I have a digital stereo system with a huge woofer and speakers.

T F 13. I own the newest iPhone.

T F 14. I have a huge number of friends on Facebook.

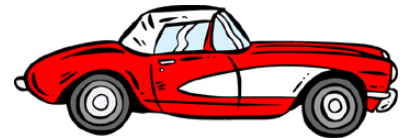
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T F 15. I treat other people with respect.

T F 16. People say I'm a caring, polite, respectful person.

T F 17. I share what I have.

T F 18. I think about other people and try to help whenever I can.



*\*If you circled "True" for items 1-14, you may be focusing too much on the things you have or don't have. A "True" response to items 15-18 means you are focusing on things that will help to rebuild your self-esteem.*

*This article is adapted from the 2nd edition of "Getting Better After Brain Injury: A Guide for Survivors," a publication of the National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury.*

## Virginia Commonwealth University TBI Model System Funded for Another Five Years

Dr. Jeffrey Kreutzer and Dr. David Cifu have received a 5 year, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP) for funding of the Virginia Commonwealth University Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems Center. Funding for this project is more than two million dollars over the next 5 years. There are only 15 other centers in the nation with similar grants, and VCU has been funded since the program began in 1987. The VCU Model System of care provides comprehensive, coordinated inpatient and outpatient care for persons with TBI. The system includes emergency medical services; early intensive and acute medical care; comprehensive rehabilitation services and long-term rehabilitation follow-up. Over the next five years, the VCU Model System will examine the benefits of two clinical interventions: (1) Intervention to Promote Survivor Resilience and Adjustment; and (2) Skill-Building, Supportive, and Educational Intervention for Couples. Research also includes data collection for the multi-center National Database and participation in a Collaborative Project. The VCU TBI Model System will also carry out a wide variety of knowledge translation/dissemination activities, including publication of TBI Today. For more information, contact Jenny Marwitz, [jhmarwit@vcu.edu](mailto:jhmarwit@vcu.edu) or visit <http://model.tbinc.com/>.

### METAMORPHOSIS SURVIVING BRAIN INJURY



DAVID A. GRANT

Brain injury survivor David A. Grant has written about his experience in his new memoir *Metamorphosis: Surviving Brain Injury*. An accomplished cyclist, David's life changed when he was struck by a car at almost 40 miles per hour while out on a regular bike ride. In an excerpt from the first chapter, he explains he has always had a penchant for writing, and began to document his experience while still in critical care.

Two years since his injury, he is now working to educate and advocate for people with brain injury. You can read more about David, read excerpts, and purchase his book from his website at [www.metamorphosisbook.com](http://www.metamorphosisbook.com).

## Mark Your Calendar!



### T.G.I.F.

- ♦ **Location:** 1st Friday of each month, Belmont Recreation Center, 1600 Hilliard Rd.
- ♦ **Description:** the local departments of recreation & parks host this monthly social event for survivors of brain injury, ages 18+
- ♦ **Contact:** Call Kariayn Smith, 804-501-5135, for more information and/or to be placed on the mailing list for monthly reminders.

### Richmond Support Group

- ♦ **Location:** 3rd Monday every month at 6 pm, Children's Hospital Auditorium, 2924 Brook Rd, Richmond, VA 23220
- ♦ **Contact:** Call the Richmond BIAV at 804-355-5748 for more info!

### Hopewell Tri-Cities Support Group

- ♦ **Location:** 2nd Tuesday every month at 6:30 pm, Nelson Library 209 East Cawson St, Hopewell VA 23860
- ♦ **Contact:** Call Mary Wallace at 804-355-5748 or email at [mary@biav.net](mailto:mary@biav.net)

### Chesterfield Support Group

- ♦ **Location:** 2nd Monday every month at 6:30pm at the Woodlake United Methodist Church, 15640 Hampton Park Drive, Chesterfield VA 23832
- ♦ **Contact:** Call Elizabeth Perry-Varner at 804-276-5761 or email [eperryvarner@verizon.net](mailto:eperryvarner@verizon.net)

### May 19-June 1, 2013

- ♦ **Event:** Camp Bruce McCoy
- ♦ **Location:** Triple-R Ranch, Chesapeake, VA
- ♦ **Contact:** Call 804-355-5748 or visit [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net)

### 37th Annual 2013 Williamsburg Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference—May 2-3, 2013

See our ad on page six!

## TBI Survivor Book Announcement



## CHAT WITH PAT

***Pat answers your personal questions about brain injury with compassion and practical advice. However, advice from Pat's column should not be substituted for consultation with a doctor or rehabilitation specialist. The identity of individuals submitting questions to "Chat with Pat" is kept strictly confidential.***

**DEAR PAT:** Well, it's been over two years since I was hurt at work. It's still hard to believe this could have happened to me and there are days that I wake up in the morning, hoping that it all has been a dream.

My injury was on a fall morning and the leaves were just beginning to turn colors. I can recall vividly being at work that morning. Things were going well in my life. I had moved to this city about six months ago, trying to start over after a divorce. I was enjoying my job and having fun going out and meeting new people. I felt I was ready to start dating again. I was happy.

Then, it all fell apart. As an electrician, I was on top of a tall ladder installing a system when I fell. I don't know how or what happened. All I know is what my coworkers told me. They found me unconscious on the ground and called 911 immediately. I was taken to the emergency room by ambulance. The rest of the events were unclear. I vaguely

recalled bits and pieces of being in the hospital.

After it was all said and done, I had a broken leg and a brain injury. I was told my leg would heal but my brain might take longer to heal. I didn't understand what all that meant at the time. I was a healthy 25-year-old man who exercised regularly and took good care of myself. I wasn't worrying that I wouldn't get better. I sent my parents back to their house and assured them I would be fine.

Was I wrong about that! My leg did heal. I can physically run if I want to or need to. The problem is I don't want to run or do anything. I lost desire in almost all the things I used to enjoy. I just want to be by myself and stay home. Luckily, I was able to go back to work in a different position because I'm afraid of heights now. So, all I do is work, watch TV, and sleep. I don't feel like myself, and some days I'm not sure if I know this person that's now in my body.

Someone recently suggested that I talk to someone about what happened. What do you think? I am tired of feeling this way... depressed, unmotivated, like a loser.

Desperately seeking help,  
Dan

**PAT'S RESPONSE:** It obviously took a lot of effort and energy for you to ask for help, Dan. I commend you for taking this first step. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness! Depression is a common problem after TBI. Many people complain about feeling

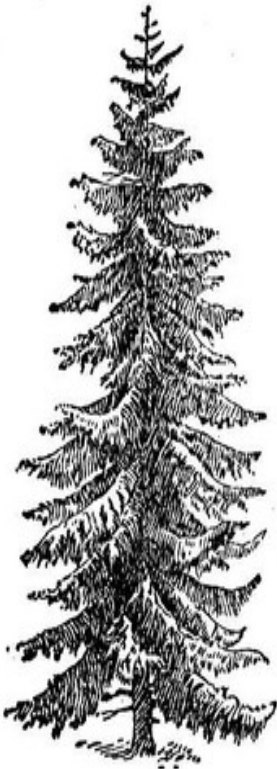
down, sad, blue or hopeless; loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities; feeling worthless, guilty, or that you are a failure; changes in sleep or appetite; difficulty concentrating; withdrawing from others; tiredness or lack of energy; moving or speaking more slowly, or feeling restless or fidgety. Some people even struggle with thoughts of death or suicide.

Although feeling sad is a normal response to loss and changes after a TBI, the fact that you are still experiencing many of the symptoms after two years suggest that you are likely suffering from clinical depression. It is important to see a healthcare professional in order to receive a proper diagnosis and receive appropriate treatment. Studies have shown that antidepressant medications or counseling, or a combination of both, can help most people who have depression. If you are not currently under a physician's care, I would recommend seeing your primary care physician, who could either prescribe the antidepressant or refer you to a specialist (e.g., psychiatrist or physiatrist).

Talking to someone could also help you feel better. Survivors have benefitted from seeing a mental health counselor who specializes in working with persons with a TBI. You could contact your local chapter of Brain Injury Association for a referral. In the meantime, you might want to consider exercising, increasing social/leisure activities, or developing a new hobby to help improve your mood. (contd p5)



(Chat, contd) Lastly, getting involved with a local support group would help you to feel less alone and overwhelmed. You will have the opportunity to meet others who may be struggling with the same challenges. If you wish to get involve with your local support group to share your experience, Brain Injury Association of America has a list of support groups you and your family may attend. To contact BIAA, you may call their family helpline (1-800-444-6443) or send them an e-mail at familyhelp-line@biausa.org. The website for BIAA ([www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)) provides links to state chapters and additional brain injury resources. You may also write BIAA for more information at 1608 Spring Hill Road, Suite 110, Vienna, VA 22182. Virginia residents may also call the local number at 804-355-5748.



## Fall Word Search!

See if you can locate all of the words in the word search above! They can be in any direction: forward, backward, diagonal, or up and down! If you're stumped, answers are on page 7.

Fall  
Autumn  
Leaves  
Rake  
Harvest  
Holidays  
Thanksgiving

Halloween  
Pumpkin  
Gourd  
Squash  
Corn  
Scarecrow  
Cool

Football  
Colorful  
Cider  
Foliage  
September  
October  
November



*Questions for Pat or the FAQ column are welcomed.*

*Send them to: "ASK PAT" OR "FAQ"*

*P.O. BOX 980542. RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542*

*or e-mail: [jhmarwit@vcu.edu](mailto:jhmarwit@vcu.edu)*



## Save the Date!

### Williamsburg Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference, May 2-3, 2013

Professionals and caregivers who work with TBI survivors are invited to the 37th Annual 2013 Williamsburg Conference: Rehabilitation of the Adult and Child with Brain Injury: Practical Solutions to Real World Problems. For 2013, we have put together a very talented group of nationally and internationally renowned faculty.

Beginning in 1977, the earliest conferences helped professionals appreciate the medical and psychosocial consequences of injury. More recently, conferences have focused on helping professionals learn new, effective strategies for resolving common challenges and achieving optimal outcomes.

Keynote presentations will focus on community-based interventions and sensory disorders in persons with TBI. Other topics include ambiguous loss, resilience, caregiver communication, behavior analysis, and sexuality.

For more information, go to [www.tbiconferences.org](http://www.tbiconferences.org) where you will find a full list of speakers and presentations. You may also contact Lisa Garver at 7033-451-8881 ext 224 or by email at [lgarver@braininjurysvcs.org](mailto:lgarver@braininjurysvcs.org).

Herman Lukow, Ph.D., NCC is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at VCU. He conducts research on traumatic brain injury (TBI) and provides rehabilitative counseling to individual survivors of TBI as well to couples and families stressed by TBI.

**HAVE YOU  
MET HERMAN LU-  
KOW, PH.D.?**

Dr. Lukow was born into a career military family and in 1982 embarked on his own military career by completing a Bachelor's of Business degree and accepting a Regular Army commission as a 2nd Lieutenant from Western Illinois University. A Master Army Aviator rated in both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, Dr. Lukow's 20-year military career was spent serving in both the aviation and intelligence branches with tours of duty across the United States as well as in The Republics of Honduras and South Korea. He performed in front of more than one million spectators while a member of the Army's Golden Knights parachute team and retired in 2002. Upon retirement he flew corporate and luxury jet aircraft for five years as a FAA certified flight instructor and airline transport pilot before leaving the aviation profession to embark on a new career in the helping professions.



Dr. Lukow completed a Masters Degree in Marriage and Family counseling from The College of William & Mary in 2009 and remained there to earn a PhD in Counselor Education this past September. During that time he delivered clinical services to families referred from local school districts, participated in grant funded research implementing interventions with aggressive youth and their families, researched the differentiation between the symptoms of dementia, substance use, or mood disorders in older adult populations, and developed gerontological training workshops and courses for counseling professionals.

Dr. Lukow's professional and research interests include clinical supervision, gerontological counseling, infusing issues of age, aging, and the aged into counselor education/preparation programs, developing interventions to promote the sense of mattering to others, and studying the impact of TBI on family systems.

He has two grown sons who live and work in Annandale VA and makes his home in Richmond with his Boston Terrier ZuZu. Interests include playing the guitar, enjoying outdoor activities, and checking out all the cool places and things to do that Richmond offers.

# JUST THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE FAQ IS INTENDED TO FAMILIARIZE THE PUBLIC WITH ISSUES RELATED TO TBI. NO INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AS THERAPEUTIC ADVICE OR AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONSULTATION WITH A COMPETENT MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.

**Q:** Since my brain injury, I haven't been able to handle stress like I used to. I feel totally exhausted and I'm not sleeping very well. What can I do to feel better?

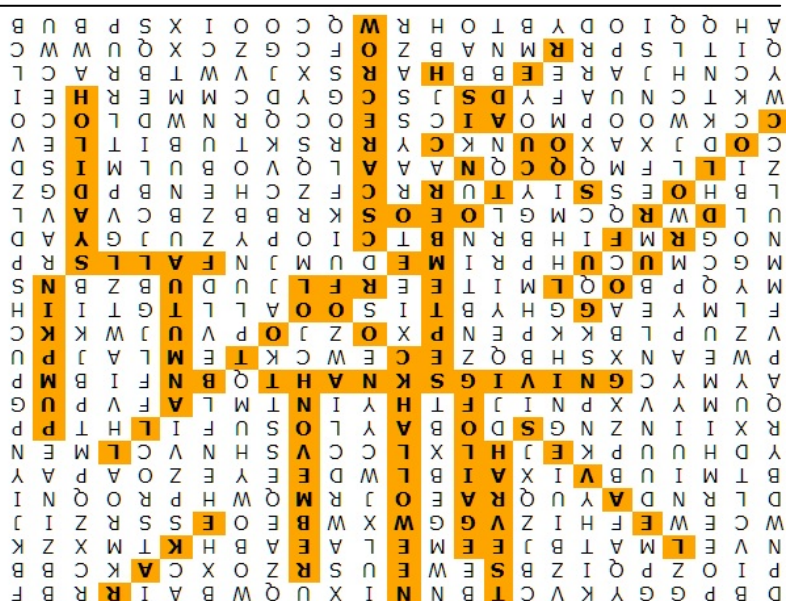
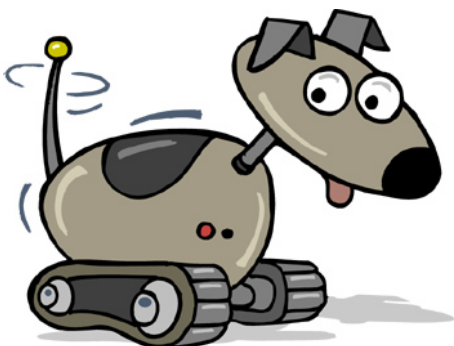
**A:** Difficulty coping with stress is a common complaint amongst survivors of brain injury. They often feel overwhelmed dealing with injury-related challenges. Stress is a normal part of life though, so it is important to learn to be patient with yourself during this process.

Here are some suggestions to help you cope with stress:

- Avoid putting yourself down or pushing yourself too hard.
- Set reasonable goals and expectations for yourself.
- Make a “to do” list, rank order the items by priority, start with #1, and work down the list.
- Work on only 1 or 2 problems at a time.
- Realize that taking on too much too soon may lead to frustration and failure.
- Think positive thoughts and keep a good sense of humor.
- Breathe slowly and deeply.
- Don't forget to take breaks. Everyone needs them.
- Do something enjoyable. For example: listen to soothing music, take a long bath, go for a walk, or read a book.
- Seek support and help from trusted friends and family members.

## Fall Word Search Answer Key

Here are the answers from the word search on page five. How did you do?





VCU, PM&R

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY MODEL SYSTEM

P.O. BOX 980542

RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Founded in 1983 by families and concerned professionals, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia is the only statewide non-profit organization in Virginia exclusively devoted to serving individuals with brain injury, their families, and those that care for and about them. Over 10,000 people find help from BIAV each year.

BIAV is a chartered state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America and exists to be the voice of brain injury through help, hope and healing for Virginians with brain injury and their families. We educate human service professionals and the community on the risks and impact of brain injury and advocate for improved medical and community-based services. Many of our staff members are Certified Brain Injury Specialists (CBIS Certified).

To find out more information about BIAV, contact us at 1-800-444-6443 or 804-355-5748. Or visit our website at [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net).



The Voice of Brain Injury: *Help, Hope & Healing*