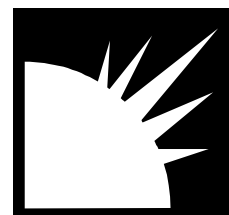


# TBI TODAY

NEWS, IDEAS, AND RESOURCES FROM THE VIRGINIA TBI MODEL SYSTEM



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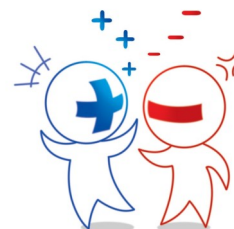
## Get the Most Out of Recovery Behaviors

by Michael Cerreto

*What are your behavior patterns that impact your ability to recover from a brain injury?*

In general, people carry forward in life patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that have been present in family members throughout generations. Some of the patterns help them thrive, while others create recurring problems and stagnation in life.

After a brain injury, you face relearning life skills and creating meaning in your life. You carry with you many past patterns or habits of behaving, both positive and negative, that may be automatic and less conscious. A negative pattern may be a history of anger, impulsiveness, or poor social skills. A positive pattern may be a history of being organized, kind, or creative.



To successfully recover from a brain injury, you must consciously change your negative patterns and use positive ones to grow and prosper. The first step is to be aware of your negative and positive behavior patterns. Only then can you manage them to create the life you want, instead of having them derail you. To get started, answer the following questions:

- *What negative behavior patterns have I experienced in my life that have held me back in the past? How should I change them to create the life I want after my brain injury?*
- *What positive behavior patterns have helped me succeed in the past? How can I fully use them to recover from my brain injury and create a meaningful life?*

After answering these questions, start taking small steps toward behaving in ways that help you create a constructive, healthy life.

Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with **A Talented Mind Clinic** in Richmond, Virginia. He helps children, adolescents, and adults with a TBI improve the quality of their daily lives. He also facilitates **The Comeback Project** that is a free, private online community for brain injury survivors and their families. You can join the community to get the support you need at: [a-talented-mind.mightybell.com](http://a-talented-mind.mightybell.com). If you have any ideas for a future article about cognitive rehabilitation, please contact Michael at [cerreto@atalentedmind.com](mailto:cerreto@atalentedmind.com).



# Mark Your Calendar

## Aphasia Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Thursday of the month, 6-7pm
- ♦ **Location:** Wells Coleman office building in Monument Corporate Centre office park, 5004 Monument Avenue, Richmond, 23230
- ♦ **Contact:** Susan Hapala at (804) 908-3261 or Jan Thomas at rva.aphasia@gmail.com

## Stroke/Brain Injury Survivor & Caregiver Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm
- ♦ **Location:** Sheltering Arms Rehab Hospital, 8254 Atlee Rd, Mechanicsville, 23116 Conference Rm C OR 13700 St. Francis Blvd, Midlothian, 23114 4th Floor Conference Rm
- ♦ **Contact:** Kate Lim at (804) 764-5290 or klim@shelteringarms.com

## Support Group for Adults with TBI, Family, and Friends

- ♦ **When:** 3rd Monday of the month, 6:15pm-7:45pm
- ♦ **Location:** Disability Law Center of Virginia, 1512 Willow Lawn Drive, Suite 100, Richmond, 23230
- ♦ **Contact:** Christine Baggini at (804) 355-5748 or christine@biav.net

## Supportive Survivors

- ♦ **When:** 2nd, 4th, and 5th Tuesdays, 6-8pm, Outings planned for the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays
- ♦ **Location:** Regency Mall Food Court, 1420 Parham Road, Richmond, 23229
- ♦ **Contact:** Ted Taylor at (804) 781-2144 or taylorted58@yahoo.com

## Women's Luncheon Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Tuesday of the month for lunch, 11:30am
- ♦ **Location:** The Mill House, 7812 Shrader Road, Henrico, 23294
- ♦ **Contact:** Jen Candela at (804) 386-0926 x 104 or jennifercc@communitybraininjury.org

Looking for a support group in your area? Check out [www.biav.net/virginia-support-groups.htm](http://www.biav.net/virginia-support-groups.htm) for more support groups organized by region!

*If you have an upcoming event of interest to the Brain Injury community in Virginia, we would be glad to consider including it here. Please call (804) 828-3704 or email [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org).*

## HAVE YOU MET LAUREN?

Lauren Burnette is currently an undergraduate student at The College of William and Mary. With one year remaining, she is pursuing a BA in both psychology and kinesiology. After graduation, she hopes to join the clinical psychology graduate program at VCU with the goal of one day becoming a researcher for the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

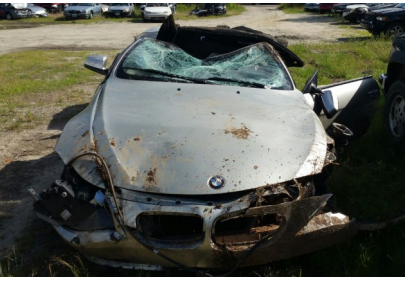
As part of a summer internship, Lauren has become a member of the TBI Model Systems Project as a research affiliate. Gaining experience through exposure to research and inpatient environments, she will be better prepared to serve the community in years to come.

Although Lauren is originally from Georgia, she has been primarily raised in Virginia. She absolutely adores her three pet cats, Tux, Callie, and Chet, who are all rescue animals. Outside of school, Lauren enjoys cooking, riding rollercoasters, and playing badminton. Above all, she is a kid at heart, visiting Disney World every chance she can get and is even planning yet another trip.



## A Survivor Story: Finding Strength and Purpose

In May 2016, Mikael King was on his way home one morning after a fun night out. The last thing he remembers is driving on the interstate on a sunny spring morning.



He has no memory of what happened nor was anyone there to recall what happened, but he has been told by many what could have happened. At some point on the interstate, something caused Mikael to lose control of his car, causing him to bounce off a median and flip two times then strike a tree. When he was found, it took a total of 20 minutes for the Emergency Medical Services to get him out of the car. Unresponsive and not breathing, Mikael was reported to have “died on the scene,” and after being resuscitated again and again, he appeared to have died a total of seven times. Once intubated, Mikael was rushed to VCU and sent to the OR.

Mikael endured multiple physical injuries, including a fractured skull, broken ribs, internal lacerations, and multiple facial and pelvis fractures, as well as a severe traumatic brain injury. He spent about five weeks in the Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit, three weeks in acute care, and another 6 weeks in inpatient rehabilitation care. His girlfriend, Rachel Asch, says that Mikael was a totally different person for two months, and then one day, things just started to turn around, slowly but steadily. They were told by doctors that his personality would change because of the damage to his frontal lobe. They did not know if Mikael would ever be able to walk again or be independent. Mikael’s family was devastated, but throughout his hospital stay, they provided an enormous network of endless support and had faith that God would take care of the rest.



Since then, Mikael has come a long way. From the brain injury, he developed heterotopic ossification, bone growths in his pelvis and stomach. After multiple successful surgeries and months of physical therapy, Mikael is now almost running! He is living as independently as possible and sees this as his second chance at life. He credits a lot of his recovery to the overwhelming support he received from his family and friends. To this day, his support continues, and he is very thankful for his physical therapist; his girlfriend, Rachel Asch; and God.

Mikael shares his story to give hope to others with a brain injury. Knowledge and resources available to him have allowed him to be open to learning how to cope with his injury. With all of that, and in addition to his support system, he knows that his faith and determination is what got him here today.

*“It is definitely not easy; I get down on myself often, but I like to remember that things happen for a reason. I need to remember that I have a purpose in life, and God kept me alive for a reason. My message to you is that just because doctors say your life will look a certain way, it does not mean it has to. It doesn’t mean you can’t get better. I believe that if you truly want to get better, you will. Although every brain injury is unique, I believe every survivor can learn something from one another. I have found strength and a purpose in sharing my story.”*

Thank you to everyone who took the time to read my story. I hope you can find inspiration and faith in my story.



- Mikael



# DEAR PAT,

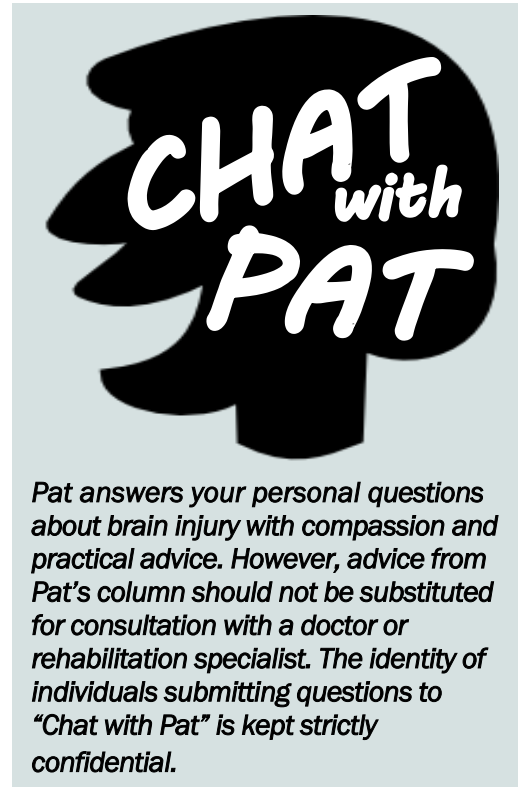
I am a 45-year-old divorced mother of two teenagers. I was in a bicycle accident almost three years ago now and had a traumatic brain injury. Who knew that the outing that day with my daughters, riding our bikes together, would change our lives? We were really careful to watch out for cars when crossing the street, but the driver didn't see us. I'm just glad that he didn't hit my girls. They saw what happened to me, but they weren't harmed.

So, I haven't been the same since the accident. I couldn't go back to work because my brain could not process information, and it still has a hard time with that (it's better than what it used to be, for sure). I am easily distracted and can't focus for a long time. I am also very forgetful. But the most frustrating thing that I'm no longer able to do is multi-task, which was something I was proud of as a working mother.

Three years later, I still get overwhelmed just trying to get through the day. I get tired easily and feel pretty useless by the afternoon. I try to do as much as I can in the morning. Taking care of the house and my daughters is exhausting. But, I just keep pushing through. It's not their fault that I was hurt. I want to keep their lives as normal as possible. I also have a sick mother who I help take care of because my father can't do it by himself. My sisters also depend on me a lot and they call me for advice all the time. I was the person everyone turned to before the accident, and I still want to be that person.

Pat, there are good days and bad days. Some days, I feel like I can keep going. Some days, I just want to lay in bed all day. Is there something I can do to have more good days than bad days? I want to be the strong mother my daughters know and are proud of. How do I keep doing it all without disappointing my family who counts on me?

- Bridgette, Proud Mother/Daughter/Sister



## PAT'S RESPONSE:

Dear Bridgette,

It is obvious that your family is very important to you and that you want to care for those you love despite the challenges. Often-times, people forget about themselves when they are in a caretaking position. You're so used to taking care of others and placing others' needs before your own that you forget about your own needs. However, it is important for you to take care of yourself. You will not be able to care of your family if you are ill.

Here are some ideas to manage fatigue and stress. First of all, schedule frequent breaks to rest and rejuvenate throughout the day. Secondly, continue to schedule challenging activities in the mornings, when you feel most energetic. In addition, here are...

### Ten important ways to take care of yourself:

- 1. Remember no person is an island. Ask for help when you need it.** Everyone needs help at times in their lives, especially when facing new challenges. Let trusted family and friends help carry the load.
- 2. Take time out to do things you enjoy.** Read a book, go dancing, watch a movie, etc. You'll be happier and better able to cope with life's stresses if you take time to do things you enjoy!
- 3. Set aside alone time.** We all need time alone to recharge our batteries. Take a little time out each day to do something alone – take a bath, go for a walk, write in a journal, meditate.
- 4. Protect your health.** Eat a balanced diet. Get enough sleep. Exercise regularly. Avoid alcohol and drugs. Follow up with your doctors regularly and take medications as prescribed.
- 5. Give yourself credit for things you accomplish.** Everyone likes to be recognized for their successes. Don't wait for others to praise you. Reward yourself when you take positive steps or reach a goal.
- 6. Don't overload yourself.** When you take on new responsibilities, drop some of your old ones. Ask others to step up to the plate and help. (*Cont'd next page*)



(Chat, cont'd)

7. **Keep track of your stress level and emotions.** Monitor them regularly, so you can get help and support as needed.

8. **Remember that no one can do everything.** Recognize your limitations. Try to take on activities that play to your strengths. Ask for help with tasks that are difficult for you.

9. **Ask others how they've coped with similar problems.** You can learn a lot from people who have had similar experiences. Find out how others deal with problems. They may be able to save you time and pain.

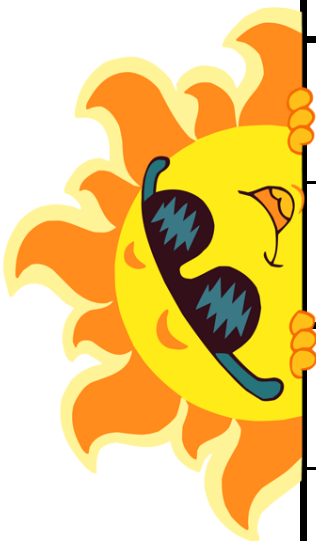
10. **Be kind to yourself.** You have been through a number of difficult situations. Give yourself credit for doing your best.

Lastly, getting involved with a local support group would help you to feel less overwhelmed. You will have the opportunity to meet others who may be struggling with the same challenges. If you wish to get involved with your local support group to share your experience, Brain Injury Association of American ([www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)) has a list of support groups you and your family may attend. To contact BIAA, you may call their National Brain Injury Information Center (1-800-444-6443; 703-761-0750) or send them an e-mail at [info@biausa.org](mailto:info@biausa.org). You may also write BIAA for more information at 1608 Spring Hill Road, Suite 110, Vienna, VA 22182.

## SUMMER SUDOKU

Fill in the grid with the letters: B R I G H T.

Make sure no letter is repeated in each row, each column, and each mini-grid!



	T			G	
	R	G	B	I	
T					R
G					I
	B	H	I	T	
	G			R	

JUST FOR FUN

Stuck? You can find the answers on page 7.

# 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.

## QUESTION:

How do I deal with all the changes in my life after a brain injury? Nobody seems to understand how hard it has been for me. The injury has changed my life! Even though I have family and friends who care about me, I feel so alone.

## ANSWER:

It is common to feel alone during this process and believe that no one understands this “new” you. Coping with the losses and changes can be challenging. Here are some ways you can help yourself:

- Allow yourself to ask for help (which you have already done by reaching out to us!)
- Join a support group. Talk to other survivors for support and ideas for coping. (Find out about available support groups on page 2 or through your local Brain Injury Association at [www.biausa.org/find-bia](http://www.biausa.org/find-bia))
- Realize that your feelings are a common, normal response to your experience.
- Take one step at a time, set goals for each day.
- Recognize the good things in your life and changes for the better.
- Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't.
- Be hopeful. Say positive things to yourself and others (e.g., “I will make it through this,” “I’ve come so far”).
- Remain active, do things you enjoy.
- Build new relationships and improve old relationships.
- Distract yourself with music, a book, a movie, or television.
- Make a list of things that you are thankful for and qualities you like about yourself, refer to the list often.
- Appreciate the value of patience and persistence in reaching your goals.
- Apply coping strategies that have worked in the past.
- Talk to a mental health professional (i.e., counselor) to learn additional ways of coping.



**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: [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)**



## Join a Supportive Online Community for TBI Survivors and Families

The Comeback Project is a free, private online community for survivors of brain injury and their families to help you get your life back after a brain injury. You can join the community to share and get the support you need at: [a-talented-mind.mightybell.com](http://a-talented-mind.mightybell.com).

The community is provided by A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia, that provides cognitive rehabilitation therapy to brain injury survivors and families. For more information, you may also email Mike Cerreto at [cerreto@atalentedmind.com](mailto:cerreto@atalentedmind.com).

### Survivor Stories Wanted!

Recovering from a brain injury can be very difficult. Sometimes, one of the most helpful and inspiring things is simply hearing from other survivors who have gone through recovery and faced the same challenges. Are you a survivor with a story you'd like to share? If so, then we'd like to hear it, and it might get into a future issue of TBI Today!

Submit to: [jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)

or

TBI Today, VCU P.O. Box 980542  
Richmond, VA 23298-0542



### RESILIENCE AND ADJUSTMENT STUDY FOR ADULTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!

**Have you had a traumatic brain injury (TBI)?  
You May Qualify for an Ongoing Research Study!**

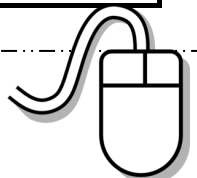
Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with traumatic brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help people adjust to having a brain injury. Qualified volunteers will participate in seven rehabilitation and education sessions and possibly three additional sessions. Study volunteers will be given information on brain injury, local resources, skills development, and positive coping strategies. Volunteers will also be asked to complete several questionnaires. Participants must be at least 18 years old. There is no charge for services and volunteers are compensated for their time.

**If you are interested in participating,  
please call Jenny Marwitz at  
804-828-3704  
or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email  
[jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)**

Here are the answers to Summer Sudoku on page 5.  
How did you do?

B	T	I	R	G	H
H	R	G	B	I	T
T	I	B	G	H	R
G	H	R	T	B	I
R	B	H	I	T	G
I	G	T	H	R	B

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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*