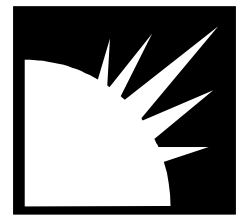


# TBI TODAY

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



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## It's All Good: a Life of Possibilities After a Brain Injury

by Michael Cerreto

"It's all good," said James, a seven-year brain injury survivor, as he finished telling me about the struggles he was experiencing. He quickly transitioned to explain how his life was also good and rewarding—he had a few good friends, kids, a job cleaning a restaurant, home workshop, and can drive a limited distance from home.

While James has many cognitive and physical disabilities from his truck accident, he is able to put his struggles into a broader perspective to appreciate what is good in life.

### APPRECIATION AND ACCEPTANCE

For many brain injury survivors like James, appreciating what adds value to their lives helps them persevere through daily struggles. They also develop the resilience needed to keep moving forward to make their lives better. This is often difficult for many survivors who want their "old life back" after a TBI. Acceptance of their current life is a turning point to seeing the deep value and possibilities of their new normal.

To develop appreciation for your life after a TBI, you can start by reflecting on what you receive from others that adds value to your life, and how you add value to them. Being more reciprocal causes you to appreciate what you both receive and give to others. A life filled with giving and receiving helps you feel more constructive and supported in life.

### START BY CREATING RELATIONSHIPS OF VALUE

To start, pick one person in your life and answer the following questions. Don't worry if you receive more than you give to some people, or the opposite. You can create more balanced relationships with them down the road.

- What have I received from this person in my life?
- What have I given to this person?
- What additional actions can I take to enhance this person's life?
- What else do I need from this person that will enhance my life?



You can continue answering these questions about other people in your life. If you need help with the answers or want to discuss them with someone, get a friend or family member involved.

By looking closely at the people and things that add value to your life, you may one day say, like James, "It's all good."

Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia. Learn more about Michael at [www.atalentedmind.com](http://www.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/TBI Survivor & Caregiver Support Group

- ♦ **When & Location:** 2nd Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm at Sheltering Arms Rehab Hospital, 8254 Atlee Rd, Mechanicsville, 23116 Conference Rm C  
OR 4th Wednesday of the month, 2-3pm at 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).*



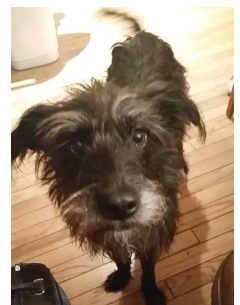
**HAVE YOU MET LAURA ALBERT?**

Laura Albert, B.A. is a new Clinical Research Assistant in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Virginia

Commonwealth University (VCU). She has been hired to work on a Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) study looking at opioid use and misuse amongst people with TBI. She will also assist in some of the other research projects in the Department, such as the TBI Model Systems project.

Born in Fairfax, Laura is a Virginia native. She graduated from the University of Virginia in December of 2018 with a degree in Cognitive Science, her concentration being Psychology. Involved in several research labs while there, Laura grew an ever increasing interest in the developmental research field. Her time in the Early Development Lab at the UVa gave her the opportunity to participate in research studying infants' understanding of pretend behaviors. She also conducted classroom observations of several different Montessori schools in order to analyze student concentration in the classroom. In addition, she assisted with several research projects looking at racial identity development and the effects of the events during the weekend of Aug. 12, 2017 in Charlottesville on local youth. She is looking forward to learning more about the research process while she takes on her new role here at VCU.

In her free time Laura enjoys spending time with her dog, Olive. She is a voracious reader and is always looking for new book suggestions. She continues to attempt to get through her never-ending "to watch" list of movies and TV shows while trying to make time for friends, board games, and puzzles.



# Rediscovering Myself

by Demaris Brown

If you would have asked me two years ago who I am, this would have been my answer: I am the oldest of three children who has an answer or a solution for everything, and I am a winner. I played sports as a child and as an adult. I was always good at them, and I always won. My dad taught me that I am a winner. When I was young, he said that I can face anything or anyone and if I try hard enough, I would always win. I also like to help people and think of myself as a fixer—whether at work or home, for immediate family, teammates, or customers—if there is a problem, I can fix it, and I can do it well. I was a Quality Assurance specialist in the US Navy, a special educator, and I currently do customer service for a government agency—perfect jobs for a “fixer.” If I can’t do it, by golly, I will stay awake all night and figure out how to fix it. I can fix the world!

I suffered a moderate to severe brain injury in October of 2017. While riding a Vespa in Italy, I crashed and sustained four subarachnoid bleeds and some physical injuries to my left leg and head. I spent three days in a coma and 21 days in an Italian hospital trying to get well enough to fly home. Once we got home, therapy began, and I tried very hard to get back to life as it was before. I wanted my old life back; I wanted to get back to fixing things! After all, that is who I was. I didn’t need fixing, I was the fixer.

As a year passed, I came to several realizations that shocked me. First and foremost, I will never be the person I was before the injury. That being said, let me clarify, I am still me; I am smart, loving, kind and helpful. Those traits are still here. The problem is, what do I do with them now? I had life all figured out. I fix things and help people. I had a great job that allowed me to do just that, and if someone had an issue they would come to me, and I would help as best as I could—that’s how I lived my life. The idea that I couldn’t do those things as well as I did before didn’t sit well with me at all.

I was looking for a way to become more involved with other people who have brain injuries so I called Brain Injury Services (BIS) and asked how to be part of the group. When they told me what they did, I said, “Oh, I don’t need that kind of help, but I am sure I could help the group. Is that possible?” The conversation was a bit awkward after that, and I didn’t understand why.

Right now, I’m knee-deep in the midst of an identity crisis and struggling to figure out how to fix it. My work is suffering because of the TBI and I’m coming to terms with having to retire early. I’m not sure where to go from here. On March 6, 2019, I attended the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) Convention, and it was the best thing I could have done for myself. I thought I would get some information about working with a TBI, some help with sleep issues, and that I would be able to meet some people like me. Boy, was I in for a surprise! While I did take away some helpful information and I did get some good tips, I also realized that I am a person living with a TBI who needs help and can’t do it all by herself. The fixer needs help fixing herself?! How in the heck do I tell my husband this and tell him that we need to use some of this help that is available to others? I have to figure out how to move forward and use these accommodations. *What a phenomenal day.*

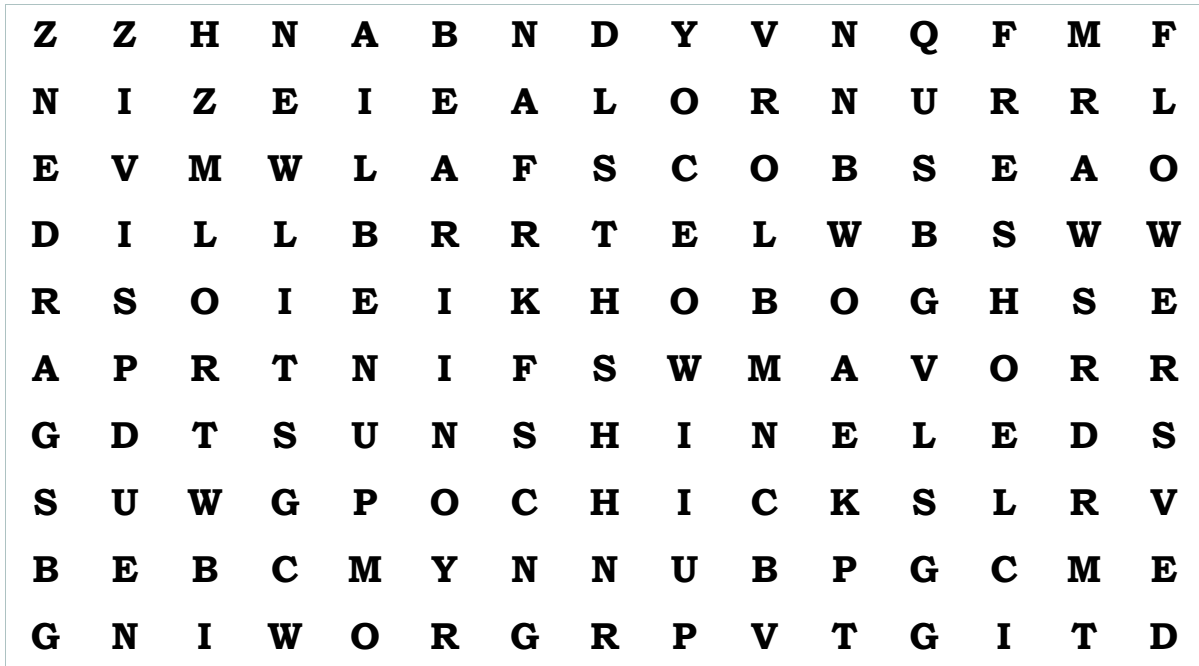
So, where do I go from here, and what is next? I have some work to do; just the realization that I cannot move forward on my own or solely with the help of my family and friends is a big step for me. Putting my pride aside is not an easy thing to do. Identifying who can help was a great win; asking for help is next and biggest step I will take in my recovery to-date. Earlier, I said I was smart, loving, kind and helpful, and I still am. Now, I get to figure out what to do with those traits—for me! I get to help me and I get to continue to be a winner. My dad was right: if you try hard enough and face anything, you can win. I am ready to face this new challenge head on. Thank you, Dad!!



## SPRING WORD FIND

See if you can find the following words in the word find below. Words can be forward, backward, diagonal, horizontal, and vertical. If you get stuck, answers are on page 7!

JUST FOR FUN



BASEBALL

BUNNY

CLOVER

FRESH

POLLEN

BIRDS

BUTTERFLY

DOGWOOD

GARDEN

RAIN

BLOSSOM

CHICKS

FLOWERS

GROWING

SUNSHINE

## 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:** What is the best way to help someone manage their anger?

**ANSWER:** Anger and frustration are common reactions due to changes following a brain injury. Here are some suggestions to help someone better manage their anger:

- ♦ Help the person understand that they have the power to control their anger. Anger control is a skill that will get better with practice. *Cont'd on page 5*



*FAQ cont'd*

- ◇ Encourage the person not to say the first thing that comes to mind. Teach them to think about other people's reactions before speaking or acting.
- ◇ Encourage the person to be positive and sensitive to others' feelings. Remind them to explain themselves calmly.
- ◇ Encourage the person to take a "time out" and try to relax when they recognize that anger is building. Helpful strategies include breathing deeply and slowly or counting to ten before speaking or acting.
- ◇ Help the person identify troublesome situations, people, and places that bring out anger. Then, help them make a plan to successfully deal with trouble situations and practice the plan ahead of time.

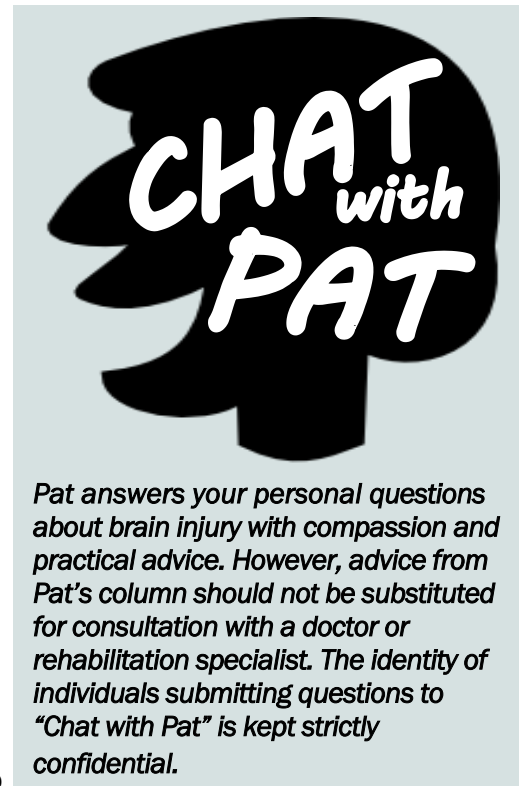
## DEAR PAT,

I was in a bike accident over a year ago and had a concussion. Although I know I am better now than I was when I got out of the hospital, I'm still having problems. I thought I would be in a better place by now. Things seem to be happening really slowly these days, and I get really irritated with myself because I think I should be doing better. What can I do to make this recovery go faster so I can go back to work and live on my own?

## PAT'S RESPONSE:

It is understandable to feel frustrated when things do not seem like they are happening fast enough for you. Many people become frustrated and disappointed when problems do not clear up within a year or two after injury. However, wanting things to go faster will not make anything move more quickly. During the recovery process, it is important to build patience. Getting better often takes years. Persistence and working hard are ultimately the best ways to improve your life.

- ⇒ Remember that you can choose to be patient or impatient.
- ⇒ Try not to allow yourself to feel pressure to speed up the process. Remind yourself that you are trying your best to get better and that recovery takes time.
- ⇒ Remember that success is relative. Instead of comparing yourself to how you were pre-injury, focus on more recent experiences. Think about progress that's been made since the injury.
- ⇒ Recognize your limitations. Be kind to yourself about these limitations and remember that you are doing your best.
- ⇒ Focus on accomplishments not failures. Try to focus on progress and accomplishments. Keep a list of gains you notice yourself making from day to day.
- ⇒ Celebrate small steps forward. Give yourself credit for the small steps toward reaching your goals.



## The Development of a Cultural Family Intervention after Brain Injury (CFlaBI) for African Americans

Kelli Williams Gary, Ph.D., MPH, OTR/L

Survivors and caregivers go through many changes after brain injury. While survivors face physical, cognitive, and emotional problems from the injury, caregivers deal with the stress and burden of role changes in the family, finances, and their loved one's recovery. Interventions have been developed to help the whole family after brain injury. Reasons to make sure these types of interventions also include cultural factors are the following:

- Different racial/ethnic groups may have different ways of coping that help them adjust to brain injury.
- Some assumptions about different racial/ethnic groups may affect interactions with others (i.e., law enforcement) in the community that can get worse if a person with brain injury has behavior problems.
- Interventions might not be as helpful for racial/ethnic groups if therapists do not consider different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, or values while trying to help resolve problems from brain injury.

The Cultural Family Intervention after Brain Injury (CFlaBI) is being created to improve the quality of life (QOL) for African American families after injury. The CFlaBI is being developed with a grant (no. 90SF0014-01-00) from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). An important goal is to improve the active lifestyle of African American survivors in the community, while at the same time, helping their caregivers with worry and stress. Twelve individuals with brain injury, along with their primary caregivers, participated in this research project. All participants were from Virginia or North Carolina with survivors ranging from 32 to 56 years of age and caregivers ranging from 30 to 75 years of age. Caregivers included spouses, siblings, and children.

This part of the project is almost complete. Once the CFlaBI is totally created by June 2019, Dr. Gary will apply for more money to make sure the intervention will be more accessible (can be used on a computer and/or with tablet/smart phone). Dr. Gary will also choose the best ways the CFlaBI can be provided to those who need it in the community.



## DARS Receives Funding to Expand Brain Injury Case Management

The Brain Injury Services Coordination (BISC) Unit is pleased to announce that the General Assembly allocated \$500,000 in state general dollars for State Fiscal Year 2019 to expand the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) contracted network of statewide specialized brain injury case management services. Starting in the 1980s, in response to brain injury advocates, the General Assembly provided \$250,000 dedicated funding for brain injury services in Northern Virginia. Today, DARS manages over \$5M that supports a statewide network of nine programs that offer the core services of specialized case management, outreach / information and referral, and clubhouse / day programs (<https://www.vadars.org/cbs/bioutcomes.htm>).

The new funds allocated in FY '19 were intended to enhance existing case management services provided by six of the BIS Programs (one organization is contracted by DARS to provide statewide outreach and information and referral services). The majority of the BIS Programs serve adults only, although three programs now offer pediatric case management services in Northern Virginia, Winchester, and Southwest Virginia – and more will be added statewide as additional funding is garnered. Two programs were able to establish new brain injury case management programs for the first time on the Eastern Shore (No Limits Eastern Shore) and in Virginia Beach (Eggleston Services / Beacon House).

Since these services are state-funded, there is no cost for most services (consultation, guidance), but there may be a financial means test for some cost services. In addition, for eligible participants, there are limited case services dollars available through each Program that can be used to purchase services or goods for which there are no other sources of funding.

For more information on the services offered through DARS' statewide network of contracted Brain Injury Services Programs, contact: [Donna.Cantrell@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Donna.Cantrell@dars.virginia.gov).



**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)**



### **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



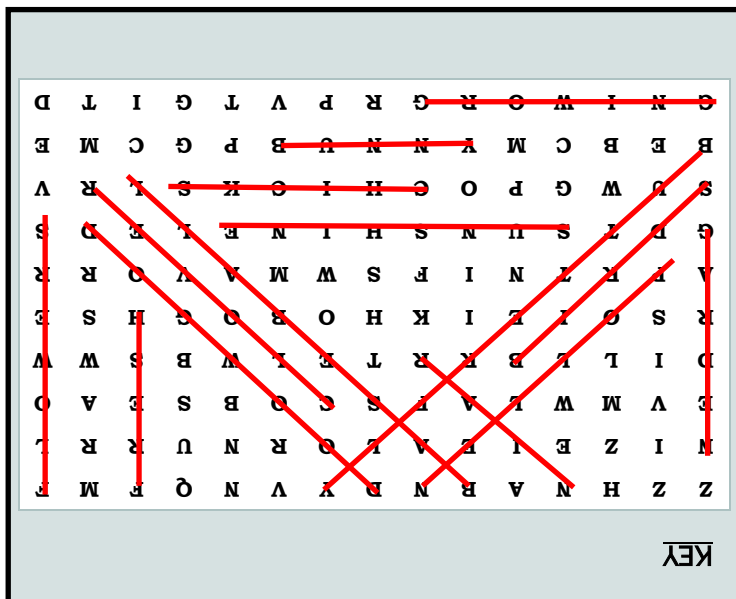
### **RESILIENCE AND ADJUSTMENT STUDY FOR ADULTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!**

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

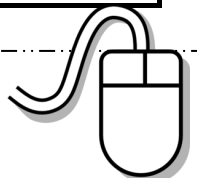
Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with traumatic brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help people adjust to having a brain injury. 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)**



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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*