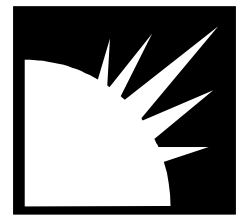


# TBI TODAY

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



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## SURVIVING A TBI - FAST FORWARD 30 YEARS

JAY MCLAUGHLIN

I was hit by a car in 1988 while riding my bicycle. My helmet broke in pieces and I was in a coma for five days. In the following months and years I began to have seizures, and I lost my wife and my home and my job and I was locked in a psychiatric hospital because I'd threatened suicide.

Fast forward thirty plus years to Thanksgiving 2020. I've been in the same healthy relationship for over eight years. I take anti seizure medicine twice each day - and nothing else. I work for myself. I wear a brace on my leg due to permanent injuries from the accident when I survived my TBI. I have a driver's license and a car. I own my small home. I have two great dogs and one great cat. I swim and ride my bicycle regularly. My running is not what it once was, but I walk a few miles every day. I have an inexpensive camera and I take lots of pictures.

My memory is not good. Neither is my handwriting. Fortunately I keep *lots* of notes on a calendar that is on my iPhone, my iPad and my computer at home. In the decades since my TBI, I've learned - sometimes after many painful repetitions - what is most important to remember. I write (on one of my devices) when I have to be at work, how to get there, what I'll need to have with me, etc. I know I'm easily confused, so I keep my life simple. I eat at home or eat food I prepare at home more often than not. I drink *lots* of tap water. I stopped watching television and eventually gave it away.

My "old" life - my pre injury life - happened a long, long time ago. I was twenty-six years old and married when I got hurt. That life is really, really, really gone. I never miss it. I could easily have died when that car hit me. Every day when I wake up now - there are no exceptions - I'm grateful I lived. Whatever bad thing happens in my life on a given day, chances are it won't be as bad as what I've already survived.



# Mark Your Calendar

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

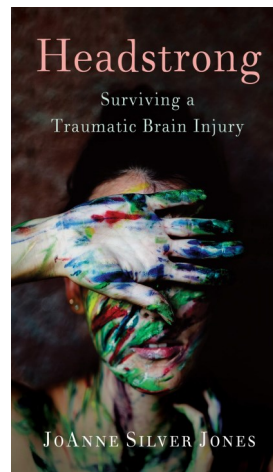
- ◆ **When:** 3rd Monday of the month, 6:30pm-7:30pm
- ◆ **Location:** Meets Online
- ◆ **Contact:** Christine Baggini at (804) 355-5748 or christine@biav.net to sign up and get invitations for future meetings

## Community Living Connection (CLiC) Care Online Support Group for Caregivers and Survivors

- ◆ **When:** 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7-8:30pm
- ◆ **Location:** Online (WebEx)
- ◆ **Contact:** Stacey Nichols at (540) 344-1200 or stacey@bisswva.org

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).

## TBI Survivor Book Announcement: *Headstrong* by JoAnne Silver Jones



*"I never intended to write a book about my experience. When I began to feel physically stronger, I started to make some notes about how I was feeling. Once I started writing, I felt more like the story was writing itself, with me as scribe. As I wrote, I realized that I had to dig more deeply into my own family history, and my raw, vulnerable places. My story, I recognized, was one that spoke to many whose lives are made invisible due to brain injury; who are the innocent victims of the violence of strangers and the violence of systems, and to the families and friends whose lives are also deeply impacted."*

JoAnne Silver Jones enthralls readers in the ups and downs of her recovery after brain injury. After a violent attack in an unfamiliar city, Jones had to rely heavily on a support network of family and friends. Jones's recovery journey, like so many others, was filled with gains and losses. Rife with laughter, tears and sparks of joy, *Headstrong* can open one's eyes to the beauty and strength that is life after injury.

"It was the getting up, not the falling down that she emphasized" (p. 34, *Headstrong*).

Available now from SheWrites Press, you can find *Headstrong: Surviving a Traumatic Brain Injury* from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and more. Please visit the author's website at <https://joannejonesauthor.com/> for more information or to join her mailing list to stay updated with future works.



## Retirement Announcement

The VCU TBI Model System team wishes a fond farewell to our Dr. Jeffrey Kreutzer as he enters retirement. Working with VCU for nearly 40 years, Dr. Kreutzer was a pioneer in the field of TBI, known as both an excellent clinician and researcher. Since 1987, he has served as the Principal Investigator of the TBI Model System, first studying outcomes after TBI and then developing and evaluating skill-building, psychological support, and educational interventions for survivors, couples, and families. Over the years, he published more than 180 peer-reviewed journal articles and 18 books. He has given more than 500 conference presentations, sharing his knowledge with countless professionals, family members and survivors.



Dr. Kreutzer completed his bachelor's degree at State University of New York at Binghamton, majoring in Psychology and Creative Writing. He then obtained his master's degree in Psychology from Appalachian State University in North Carolina. Dr. Kreutzer completed a one-year internship with Dr. Muriel Lezak in Portland, Oregon before graduating with a Clinical Psychology doctoral degree from Bowling Green State in Ohio. Following, he completed a one-year postdoctoral fellowship in Clinical Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology at VCU. He was a founding member of the Virginia Head Injury Foundation (now known as the Brain Injury Association of Virginia). Dr. Kreutzer received many awards over the years. He was the 2010 recipient of the National Academy of Neuropsychology's Lifetime Contribution to Neuropsychology Award. In 2013 he received the Innovations in Treatment Award from the North American Brain Injury Society. In 2017 he received the Jennett Plum Award for Clinical Achievement in the Field of Brain Injury Medicine, presented by the International Brain Injury Association.

We thank Dr. Kreutzer for committing his career to improving the lives of survivors of brain injury and their loved ones.

## IMPACT OF COVID19 ON INDIVIDUALS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

The Brain Injury Research Center is interested in understanding the impact of COVID-19 on individuals who have sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

This brief survey (10-15 minutes) will ask how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your health, wellbeing, and mental health with a TBI.

At the end of the survey, you will be redirected to an OPTIONAL separate screen where you have the option to enter your email address for a chance to win a \$50 amazon gift card. You must be 18+ to participate.

Protocol: IRB-20-03892  
Approved: 10/15/2020  
Expires: 07/15/2023

Go to <https://is.gd/tbicovid19> to participate

# DEAR PAT,

While everyone is complaining about having to stay home because of COVID, I'm actually happy that I have an excuse to not go out. It's been nice that my parents aren't pressuring me to meet new people and get out of the house. I feel content being at home alone. However, I know it's probably going to make it harder when everything opens up again for me to work on making friends.

What can I do to make friends now, with all of this going on? It has not even been a year yet since my brain injury and I have already lost all my friends. They no longer call or come to visit and that makes me sad to think about. I try to make myself feel better by using the pandemic as the reason they don't come around. My accident happened at the beginning of last year. I used to be very social, going out and meeting new people all the time. Now, I stay home and watch TV with my parents. I do want friends but there are a lot of days, too, that I just want to be left alone and spend time in my room. Please help me. I'm torn between wanting to have friends and being left alone.

## PAT'S RESPONSE:

Many changes and losses occur after a brain injury, including relationships. Losing friends can be painful. And for those who are able to maintain friendships, many survivors often feel like no one understands them or that they cannot relate to others. Social situations can be overwhelming for people with a brain injury. They may have a hard time following conversations, listening to multiple people talking at the same time, being sensitive to loud noise, and being easily fatigued. Many survivors also feel self-conscious after their injuries because they are concerned about being different. They are worried about what others might think of them. Sometimes, it seems easier to be alone than to deal with all the challenges.

While the COVID-19 pandemic might provide some survivors relief from having to socialize, isolation is not good for maintaining positive emotional well-being. Social interactions are an important component of our mental health. I encourage you to continue making the effort to reach out to your friends or make new ones, and make plans in a responsible, safe way, practicing social distancing. Virtual meetings are a fantastic way to keep in touch or join groups to meet new people.

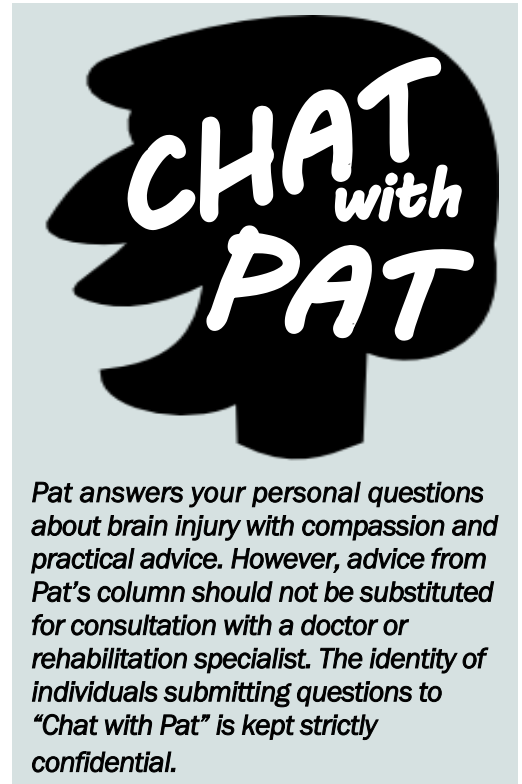
### Pat's secrets of making friends after brain injury: Important lessons from real experiences

- \* When you call to make plans, have a clear plan for what to do.
- \* No matter what your friends say, hygiene is important.
- \* Watch your temper. Nothing turns a person off more than seeing you yell at the waiter.
- \* Keep your hands to yourself. Ask before you touch.
- \* Don't talk too much about yourself. Ask questions to show you're interested in the other person.
- \* Think before you speak.
- \* Don't make noise when you eat.

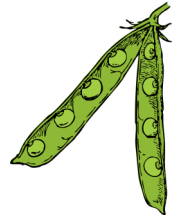
The next step is building and maintaining relationships, which can be hard. Here are some strategies that you may find useful on how to cope with feelings of loneliness and build relationships.

- ⇒ **Show a commitment to helping yourself.** People will be more supportive and respectful if you do.
- ⇒ **Do volunteer work.** By helping others, you are likely to meet people with a kind and giving heart.
- ⇒ **Don't lose track of your faith.** You may meet understanding and kind-hearted people with similar interests and values at your house of worship.
- ⇒ **Take care of your appearance.** Feelings of helplessness and discouragement can lead some people to stop taking care of themselves. No matter how you feel, don't let the basics go undone. Wear clean clothes, brush your teeth, and comb your hair. You will feel better about yourself.
- ⇒ **Be careful not to be overcome by your problems and the challenges you face.** Avoid being too quick to share negative thoughts and feelings with others. Talk about things that are good in your life and the world around you.

Lastly, getting involved with a local support group would help you feel less alone. 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 America has a list of support groups you and your family may attend. To contact BIAA, you may call them at 1-800-444-6443 or send them an email at [info@biausa.org](mailto:info@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 3057 Nutley Street, Suite 805, Fairfax, VA 22031.







# Fruit & Vegetable Word Search

C	D	O	K	N	E	F	J	P	N	O	G	J	E	O
J	L	M	T	K	F	J	Z	A	C	M	G	R	B	H
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R	T	I	M	J	T	B	E	U	R	E	Y	Y	H	X
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STRAWBERRY

TOMATO

CUCUMBER

BLUEBERRY

RADISH

POTATO

CLEMENTINE

PEACH

RHUBARB

GREEN BEAN

**JUST FOR FUN!**



# 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:

Living with TBI during a pandemic is no small feat. Many things got put on hold and I had to wait to work on getting better. I know "patience is a virtue," but it is definitely not easy. I get frustrated almost every day. Help me to become more patient!

## ANSWER:

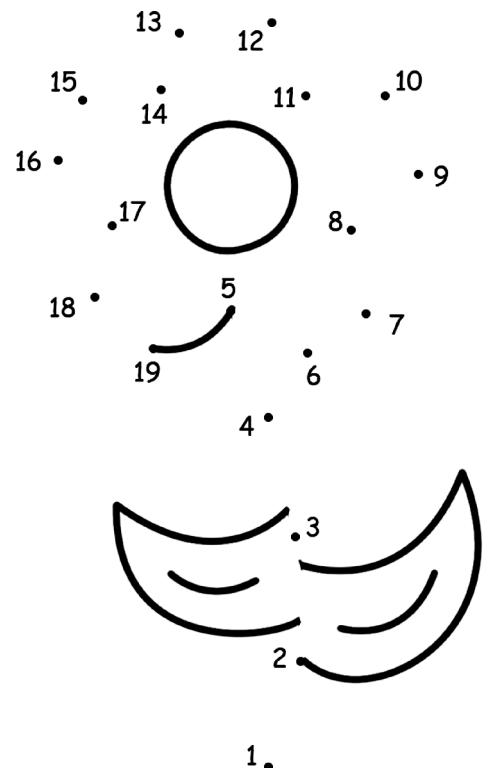
Luckily, patience is a skill that you can learn over time. Here are some tips for you to keep in mind and practice:

- ⌚ You can choose to be patient or impatient.
- ⌚ Remind yourself that you are trying your best to get better and give yourself a break.
- ⌚ Don't stay angry and try to remain calm. Practice slow breathing when you feel overloaded. Breathe slowly and deeply 10 times.
- ⌚ Define success by all the things you have accomplished *since* your injury. Think about progress you have made since the injury instead of comparing yourself to how you were before the injury
- ⌚ Focus on accomplishments, not failures. Keep a list of gains you notice from day to day, focusing on progress.
- ⌚ Give yourself credit and reward yourself for taking small steps toward reaching your goals.
- ⌚ Avoid becoming overloaded. Focus on one or two tasks/goals at a time.
- ⌚ Ask for help from family and friends. Taking a break from solving the problem will allow you the time to slow down and find a better solution.

## JUST FOR FUN! CONNECT THE DOTS

Connect the numbers 1-19  
to reveal a hidden picture!

HINT: You can find these sprouting  
throughout spring!





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

**Send them to:**

**“ASK PAT” OR “FAQ”**

**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 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.

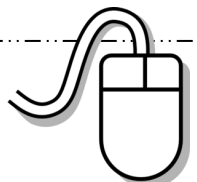
**If you are interested in participating,  
please call Jenny Marwitz at  
804-828-3704  
or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email  
[jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org](mailto:jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org)**

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KEY

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To access our archives of past issues go to [tbims.vcu.edu](http://tbims.vcu.edu) and visit the “Newsletters”



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**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY MODEL SYSTEM**

**BOX 980542**

**RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Go to [tbims.vcu.edu](http://tbims.vcu.edu) to access back issues!



**1-800-444-6443**

**biav.net | info@biav.net**



## **We're here for what comes next.**

The human brain is extremely complex. So, it can be difficult to know where to begin when it comes to navigating life after brain injury.

### **That's where we come in.**



We provide free and confidential resources and support to people with brain injuries, caregivers, and health and human service professionals.



We work to raise awareness, advocate at the federal, state, and local levels, and offer community connection through membership.



We offer professionals guidance for their patients and continuing education through conferences, webinars, and workshops.