

How to Live with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury-The Brainlash with Gail-Denton – 2023 Summer BrainStorm

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JEAN LENGENFELDER:
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Welcome to our quarterly speaker series summer brainstorm. This series is sponsored by the Kessler Foundation as part of our TBI model system grant, which is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. It is now my pleasure to introduce Dr. Gail Denton, who will be presenting the brainlash way. Dr. Gail is the author of Brainlash: Maximize Your Recovery from Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. Brainlash was first self-published in 1996 and is still available 27 years later. As a psychotherapist of 40 years, who sustained a TBI herself, her book offers down to earth, practical advice for every aspect of the recovery process through her first person experiences. Dr. Gail continues her work part-time and by phone, offering support, understanding and practical help to assist in recovering and enhancing life going forward. She still kayaks, canoes, camps, sails, fishes, hikes, paints, and eats adventurously throughout Western North America. Join her today on her 30-year walk enjoying her life, a journey with brain considerations. Thank you, Dr. Gail, for being here with us today.

GAIL DENTON: 01:34

This is really, really funny. For most of you, it's afternoon. For me, it's still morning here in sunny Colorado, where I make my home now. I would like to introduce you to my book, Brainlash. Let's see, there it is. This is the third edition. This is what you'll see on Amazon. And in the beginning of it, it does offer a disclaimer, which I will offer again now, which is everything I say is my own personal experience and I'm not offering you any medical advice. So that's my favorite disclaimer. Well, it all started in 1991. I had a sporting accident. You can tell I have a sports lifestyle. So I basically acquired a double brain injury through a lot of different missteps and ended up with what's known, and how I was diagnosed originally, as the most severe mild injury you can have. So great. So what do I do now? Because it's 1991, I'm a practicing psychotherapist in Colorado. And essentially, my colleagues had nothing. I went to my various colleagues and they're like, "Well, yeah, you're not severe. You're not in the hospital. You're not having someone else breathe for you. Just be grateful that you can tie your shoes and drive your car." That's a direct quote from the neuropsychologist who administered a test to me. He said, "You should be grateful you can tie your shoes and drive a car."

DENTON: 03:30

And that is exactly the message I took to say, "All right, buddy. I'm writing a book because don't tell me I'm lucky. Don't tell me this is a blessing because I can tie my shoes." So that's the reason I wrote Brainlash years ago. And I started by just journaling, taking little notes, what did I try, what worked, what didn't work. And over about three years, I essentially journaled my way towards this book and wrote it, self-published it. And actually, I had rejection letters, which said, "We're sorry. We won't publish your book because there's no category for it." Well, that was a part of the problem. Of course, there was no category. So I just went ahead, whipped out my own plastic and paid for the first and the second editions before I found a medical publisher who had caught up with the discovery of mild to

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moderate brain injury. So how do we recover? How do we get three years down the road and still be able to put on a decent outfit and get on a computer? And there are a bunch of categories and a bunch of lifestyle adjustments. The top ones are, of course, the food you eat, whether or not you're exercising, supplements you may choose, therapies you've had or need, treatments, are you sleeping, things like that. But of course, it's all individual because each of us arrives at our brain injury with all the life baggage we've come with up to that point.

DENTON: 05:26

We all have different sensitivities. We all have different weaknesses and strengths. And we all have a different kind of response. So every brain injury is a puzzle. And it's a puzzle for the docs. It's a puzzle for us. We do have to figure out how to navigate, and so do our team members. Now, there are a couple of instant tips and tricks which I find that usually doctors don't tell you about these things. The first one is the ball cap. So why should I wear a hat? It's going to mess up my hair. Well, here's the experiment. If you put your hand up here, like you're shading your eyes and looking off into the distance, what you notice is you might immediately relax your face. And why is that? That's because your brain has lost its boundaries and it's no longer attending to all of this light and all of this information. So you're actually conserving energy for your brain by protecting it with just a little hat. Oops, there we go. So yes, I have all sorts of hats and I wear them most all the time. Not today, though, because it looks kind of creepy. But in general, yes. Lighting. Incandescent lighting is your friend. Fluorescent lighting is not your friend. For people with a brain injury, fluorescent lighting is actually perceived as millions of flickers a second.

DENTON: 07:22

And so when you go into a big box store, for instance, no wonder you're immediately exhausted. And it's overwhelming because it's flickering and your brain is recording. It used to be that your brain just recorded all the stuff in the background and you weren't aware of it, but now, you're spending your brain bucks being in a big box store. Earplugs. I have earbuds. I have earplugs. I have tiny earplugs. I have the purple ones that stick out your ear and everybody knows you have earplugs. I carry them around with me constantly because there is background noise, and your brain, because it isn't regulating as it should, is attending to each and every little thing. So you're spending brain bucks trying to filter out or trying to attend to decibels that aren't important and not helpful. Sunglasses. I walk around with my sunglasses all the time because that also cuts down the amount of information your brain is processing. Workplace and home place accommodations. In particular, fluorescent lights, if you're in a place that has fluorescent lights, you can ask for incandescent. Bring in your own floor lamps if you want to. I removed all fluorescent lights from my home, except for the garage because I don't live in the garage. So we still have them out there, but everywhere else-- it puts money back into the brain bucks savings account. So there are some tips and tricks. It is important to drink water.

DENTON: 09:14

It's important to not drink soda pop and things like that, which have excitable chemicals in them from time to time. Only you know whether caffeine is helpful or hurtful. So pay attention to that. And eat protein three times a day. Your brain is

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working to heal itself and proteins are the building blocks. So those are some of the, I'd say, standard pieces of advice I just hand out whenever I'm talking to somebody who wants to know about quick things to do to help your body. Let's talk about building your support team. Yes, you're the brain injured person, most likely, and you have to come up with the ideas. What is my support team? Why do I have to be the one organizing? Well, there you are. You do need to pay attention to your support team. And it may include all sorts of different practitioners, family members, but that's going to be a moving target. And the moving target is that you're going to change, you're going to grow, you're going to bring in information into yourself, and you'll stop meeting a certain practitioner, but then somebody else will come in and take over the next chapter of what you're going to use, what you're going to need. It is important to know how to ask for what you want and/or to figure out how to ask for what you need. And to figure out what it is you do need because you might not know. And the people around you might not know either.

DENTON: 11:10

It's important to have some flexibility. When I first had my accident, I had a seriously [inaudible] private practice in psychotherapy. I worked 40 hours a week. I saw 40 patients a week. I was in [inaudible] children. I was doing all sorts of interesting therapies. And right after my accident, I couldn't read. I couldn't comprehend. I couldn't hang on to information. I couldn't practice. My attention span was right up there with squirrels. And I was not able to follow along, even be on the phone or have a house visitor. I wandered off in my mind in a matter of minutes. So what do I do? How do I continue to make a living? And so what I did in general was to figure out which talents I still retained. What was in my long-term memory that was a useful skill. And so I did find an occupation and I was able to go forward with that about 10 years, while my brain healed. But I did take skills in that were left and reorg them into a new profession. Over time, of course, I have now been able to get back into psychotherapy, thankfully, but it took a while to get back here, but I did it. And now I still work, even though I'm clearly ready for retirement. I'm not going to retire quite yet. I do work one day a week, with a full schedule on that one day, for brain injury people. But it was a matter of reinvention.

DENTON: 13:05

I did have to figure out how to reinvent myself and to maximize the skill set I still retained. So what happens to your relationships? Well, some will stay and some will go. There are people in your life who are there because you're the one who buys the beer, essentially. You're the entertainment. You're the one who carried the relationship. And so now, you may lose or those people may fade away because you're not the present source of their entertainment that you used to be. Some of your friends will stick with you because they have what it takes to stick with a friendship. And so your relationships will change a bit. And then, of course, we all discover that some friends used to be helpful, but they've turned toxic or they look at you like, "Well, are you still going to use the brain injury card? Are you still going to use that excuse?" It's like, "Oh, okay. I wake up every day with a brain injury. It isn't something that completely goes away." So that will happen in friendships, and it will also test committed relationships. So just be aware that that can happen, and we can talk more about that later. How do you manage your

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future? And usually what I tell folks is that you're going to have a certain amount of therapy or treatment or activity that will go forward for the rest of your healthy life.

DENTON: 14:51

You may start out seeing doctors five days a week, and the good news is that once you start seeing them four days a week, then three days a week, then two days a week, you can start to go on a walk instead or try a yoga class or just watch other people on TV take a yoga class. But you will eventually shift the amount of attention you give to daily rehab, essentially. So as the years roll by, you hopefully will be able to replace all those medical appointments with things that are more fun or at least less medical or don't cost anything, like taking an art class or just writing, reading, exercising, learning how to cook something yummy. So it's a matter of management going forward. You'll never not be managing your life again. But weirdly enough, the people around you aren't paying as much attention to their management. So you might actually end up looking like a more organized person than the people around you because you need to be organized. And if you can have a sense of organization, then you will get more out of your days. And people will think you're amazingly organized because, wow, you showed up on time doing something. So just know that managing is going to be on your desk forever and it's just going to look different as the years roll by.

DENTON: 16:39

One of the more important concepts I've discovered in the brainlash way is paying attention to my brain bucks. And I use that as a metaphor for how much energy do you have. How much energy do you have to spend? How many brain bucks can you spend on something? And this is usually an issue that is lost on people. You don't explain it to them. But you can explain it this way. When you make your breakfast, it costs you three brain bucks. When I make my breakfast, it costs me 120 brain bucks. So can you please help me make breakfast? And so if you can put it in monetary terms that people can understand, give them an example, then you'll benefit with a little more compassion from people who see that it just costs you more to be here. Also, with the brain injury, reserve is generally gone. So you don't spend all your brain bucks and then expect the savings account in the back of it to kick in. That savings accounts is gone at the moment. Over time, it is possible to build reserve back into your lifestyle. But at the moment, there are spawn and off. You're either spending or you're dead in the water. And so it's important to understand where that is and can you tell it's coming. When you can tell it's coming, it's very helpful. When you can't, well, you crash, and then you learn for the next time. Bad news, good news, that's a moving target too.

DENTON: 18:34

So you don't always have the same amount of brain bucks in your account to spend on any given day. You can run out at any moment. So the strategy is to know what you're going to do if you do accidentally run out. Usually, it's we go in 100 miles an hour, and then you're sitting down staring off and you got nothing. So coming up with your own personal words for how you express that is very important, but also being aware when it's running out. It is okay to seek peace and quiet. To seek a recharge space, to say, "Excuse me for a minute. I'll be back." And then you go, finding your room, turn off the lights, close your eyes for a few minutes, regain

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yourself. People don't need to know what you're doing. But you can obtain a few moments of peace and quiet just by excusing yourself. I mean, we've all said, "Oops, got to get off the phone, honey. The UPS guy's at the door." I mean, I use that excuse all the time, "Oh, no. There's somebody knocking at my door. I have to go now." Well, okay. It's a little white lie, but it gets people out of your face, especially if they're sucking you dry on the phone. So it's okay to defend yourself and garner your own reserve. Turn off your screens. Not this one, right this minute, but turn off your screens. Don't let the TV run all day long to keep you company.

DENTON: 20:30

Turn off the radio. Don't drive with the radio on. It's too much. Don't talk on the phone. Don't talk on the phone when you're driving. Those sorts of things. Try not to overuse all your senses at once. Back away from the phone. And in fact, a little known secret, I turn the ringer off my phone all the time. The only time I have my ringer on is my husband says, "Honey, if you're going to need me, turn on your ringer." So then I do. But mostly, my take on the modern world is, I don't need to be available to everybody all the time. Just because you send me a text doesn't mean I'm living, waiting for them. Just because you call me on the phone, it doesn't mean I'm required to answer. I may be dating myself, but I remember when there weren't even answering machines. And if you didn't happen to be in the kitchen, when the phone rang, well, you didn't pick up and people would just have to try again. So don't worry. They'll try again. Even the telemarketers will try again. So turn off your phone. You're not available all the time. You're not required to be. This is very freeing. It's like, "No, I'm not on all the time. I'm just not." Personal balance review is important. Is it a moving target? Yeah, absolutely. It's a moving target. But it's okay to pivot and it's okay to change your mind. It's okay to do what you need to do when you need to do it. It's not selfish.

DENTON: 22:30

It's self-care. Self-care is so important. As an example, even though my brain injury was in 1991, so 32 years ago, I still pay attention to my energy expense. I look at my day timer for the week and I decide, "Do I have too many appointments on here? Is there anything I can kick off? Is there anything I can cancel with 24 hour notice, stuff that I don't have to run around town or jump in the car, driving to town twice in the same day, once at 9:00 in the morning and then at 5:00 in the afternoon?" It's like, "No. You can reschedule stuff." And I do that all the time. I look at my day timer and is like, "I've created a nightmare here. I'm not doing it." And it's never a surprise to receptionists when you call and ask to reschedule. That's half their phone calls all day long. So you're not interrupting their day. You're not changing their world. You're just reorganizing your life and you're like, "I can't come in on Thursday at 5 o'clock. Do you have something on Friday instead?" And they're like, "Let me look. Oh yes, how is Friday at noon?" They do it all day long. So don't think you're inconveniencing anyone by asking for what you need or what you want. Is life going to keep changing and pivoting? Yes. Yes, it is. Are there things that you're going to have to make decisions about as life goes on? Sure. But not everything is brain injury based.

DENTON: 24:22

For instance, one of the things that wasn't on the giant list of all my fun stuff I do is I was actually a ski patroller in Colorado for 28 years. Well, I got Lyme disease and

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the Lyme disease made my hands and my feet overly sensitive to the cold. And when you go skiing at 10,000 feet and it's 10 below, there aren't enough socks on the planet to keep your feet warm. So over time, I realized that even though I had been a stalwart member of our patrol, I couldn't show up for duty days anymore because it hurt me. So I retired. Was that a brain injury function? No. Was I getting old? Sure, I was. Some things are just in the natural course of life and don't have to be based on brain injury. So I let go of skiing patrolling. Did I let go of my skis? Absolutely not. If I want to go skiing, I'll go skiing. But I don't have to show up in the dead of winter on a day when I can't even go outside. So there are things that will happen to you that are in the course of aging - pardon the expression - and they're not based on your brain injury. They're just what everybody deals with as life goes on. So as you mature in your brain recovery, it is important to remember that a lot of things that happen to you and for you and with you are the result of real life and do not have the added attraction of being there because of brain recovery.

DENTON: 26:19

So life goes on and we get over it. So there's lots of-- there are lots of things that don't have to be about brain injury, but there certainly are plenty that do. I enjoy being in this particular climate, at this particular altitude. Will I have to move to sea level? Someday I might. I might because the brain injury actually enhanced my childhood sleep apnea. So it's quite possible that 5, 10 years from now, I'll have to descend. We'll have to go back to the coast or at least down valley, take 1,000 feet or so off of my altitude in order to sleep better. Okay. That's not today. And I don't have to deal with it today. Maybe in 10 years, I will. Today, I won't. Here's hoping I get to stay in Colorado. I don't know. I could go salmon fishing in Alaska too. That'd be all right for me. So the road ahead. Consistent management of restorative and supportive lifestyle choices. To me, that means I go to a cranial sacral therapy two or three times a month. That I see my chiropractor about once a month. I try to get a massage at least once a month. It also means that I exercise. That I'm walking or bicycling, or kayaking, or camping, or yoga.

DENTON: 28:18

Now, I'm one of those people that I am-- I mean, even during COVID-- during COVID, okay, I watched the yoga videos and I did COVID yoga, basically. But I wasn't so good at it. I could always bargain away that the laundry needed to be folded instead. How lame is that? But that's me. I've always been one of those people that did better if I joined a club and paid money and then had to show up because I felt guilty that I had joined and paid money. So I joined the yoga club and I go three days a week. And that's a system that works for me. If you're better at video exercise than I am, that's awesome. Congratulations. But peer group pressure happens to work on me when it comes to exercise. So I go to yoga. I have a monthly routine and I also have a routine of medical appointments. Doctor number one, I see once a year. Doctor number two, I see twice a year. Doctor number three, I see once a year. But I show up for those appointments. I get my blood work. I make sure everything is hunky-dory. And I have a reliable primary care physician who gets who I am, and when I tell him something's wrong, he believes me. And that's worth a lot. So good relationships with good medical providers. And these providers are all lifestyle based. None of them are-- except for the cranial

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sacral lady, none of them are brain injury based. They're all just really good taking care of myself based.

DENTON: 30:14

You'll find that these habits and this strategy are extremely important. And you will be more organized and have more energy reserve because of your organization and your ability or willingness to keep to that schedule. To that end, I would like to recommend the day timer that I use, which has been very good for brain injury because it gives you a month and a day every day so that you can go through, make notes, record where you've been, done. This is the company called the Franklin Day Planner. You can Google them. They've been in business at Salt Lake City for a gazillion years. I have used their system and I highly recommend it. I think if you have a calendar on your laptop and another calendar on your phone, whether it's linked or not, and then you have something on the wall in the kitchen, and you're constantly walking around in a circle checking screens and chunks of the wall to find out where you're supposed to be, at 10:15 at the dentist, well, that takes up a lot of brain bucks. And so I found that using one of the systems that the Franklin Day Planner people have, or a similar product, that allows you to spread out the year, the month, and one day at a time for notes, that's what works for me. And so I recommend that to people who don't have a system or people who are saying, "Well, yeah, I had your-- well, Dr. Gail, I had your appointment on my phone, but it was on my laptop, so I'm really sorry I didn't make my appointment." And it's like, "Yeah, you have divided attention at that point."

DENTON: 32:09

Get all your stuff in a pile and use just one system for following along, because for me, one of my issues is still sequencing. After all these years, sequencing. So it works for me because it keeps me from having to go to three places to figure out whether I'm supposed to be uptown, downtown, or on my yoga mat. So lifestyle predictability, lifestyle systematic, walking through most everything so that you know where you're going and what you're doing and you're not spending brain bucks constantly solving your schedule. So here's what I wrote for this presentation, the brainlash way. Lessons, tips, tricks, wisdom, pivoting, focusing, leaning in, recalculating, revising, strategizing, regrouping, managing, redreaming, and enjoying a life on a journey with brain considerations. Redreaming, I think, is for me, the most important. Prime example of that is I moved to Colorado in 1987 from sea level. And I got here and I thought, "Oh, this place is gorgeous. This place is wonderful. I think I'll go rent a pair of skis and figure this out."

DENTON: 33:57

So I was on the ski lift and the ski patroller sat down next to me to ride up the hill and started chatting me up and I'm like, "Oh, I didn't realize, I could be a ski patroller." And I didn't even know how to ski. But it hadn't occurred to me to dream that. And so then later in life-- as you can see, we're surrounded by art in here. About 12 years ago, I picked up oil painting outdoors, and that's called plein air painting. And so I now plein air paint, competitively. There's cash and prizes involved with plein air painting. So I love to go out and paint with my friends and be outdoors and enjoy myself. But it had never occurred to me, in my academic life, to be an artist. And then one day, I just thought, "I think I'll buy some art supplies and see what happens." And 12 years later, I'm now in galleries and people are inviting

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me to submit my work, and that feels really good. But I hadn't dreamed of it as a kid. And now, I'm dreaming of it. And that, to me, is also a part of life. What you can dream becomes more possible. So I don't know, maybe by next year, I'll be doing something else or I'll stumble into something I didn't know I could dream. I remember going to travel with a woman friend of mine who was-- she had had a completely different life than me, but we were traveling together.

DENTON: 35:51

She started telling me about how she and her sister talked their parents into getting them a pony. And all I could think in the back of my head was, "Wow, I didn't know I could ask for a pony." And so that was a prime example of redreaming. You say, "Well, what else could I have in my life?" So I encourage you all to dream, to create, to manage, and to be as gentle and peaceful with yourself as possible on this journey of rediscovery, healing, and finding out what life is like with brain considerations. The brainlash way. So thank you all so much. I think it's time for Q&A, for questions and answers.

FEAMLE 1: 36:44

Hi. Thank you so much. That was awesome and inspirational, and I appreciated all the helpful tips. I took lots of notes. So my questions are on this paper. I guess the biggest question I have is how do you get organized once you're-- during COVID, I was so unorganized. My papers are piled up. I have nothing in the right file. My whole life is a mess because I don't know where to look, like you were saying, because they're all in the wrong files. And it's so overwhelming. I don't even want to look at them anymore. So I'm not taking care of things that I probably should be. And I can tell I'm so unorganized. I'm so discombobulated since COVID. Do you have any strategies for where do I start without being totally overwhelmed?

DENTON: 37:49

Well, this is all a part of what's called sorting. And know that when you're getting ready to do the laundry, you can put your laundry in three baskets, darks, colors, and white. You can do the same thing with any other horrible pile of stuff that's been neglected. And either it's the keep, donate to Goodwill, or garbage. That's my secret. Those are the three things that you pick it up and you go, "Yeah, I need to read this later. It goes into keep." It's like, "I'm not so sure about this one. It can go in the middle one." And then there's like, "Oh, free pizza coupon that expired two years ago. Trash." And so your first pass through all of this basically takes your piles down to two piles, okay? Then you go through the first pile and if it says 30 days overdue on your electric bill, you put that into the, "I need to read that today." Yeah. And so then you have the magazine subscription. It's like, "Oh, oh no. You're going to lose your magazine." Well, probably not. It's probably a six-month bill. So you can look at that later. And losing your magazine doesn't-- it doesn't change the world as much as having your lights turned off. So that's how you would sort. Just treat it like it's laundry, in three piles.

FEAMLE 1: 39:29

Okay, so that's a great, great strategy. But I think I have a problem with prioritizing too. Yeah, if it says it's expired, I'll throw it in the trash. But if it's not that black and white, sometimes I'm like, "Okay, should I pay my electric bill or fix my car or replace my water heater that just burned?" I don't know what is the most important sometimes.

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DENTON: 39:57

Right. Actually, there's a chapter in my Brainlash book that talks about that is like, "Well, there's a squirrel at your window. The house is on fire. The phone is ringing and your dishwasher is overloading. And you can't choose." Of course, the answer is your house is on fire, but when your brain is not sorting, you still think you should, while you're standing in a pile of water, take the toast out of the toaster, right? And it's like, "No." So one of the things I do is I write all those things down. And then I have a chart. And I'm just going to draw it and put it up on the screen. This is the urgency chart. And it's very helpful. I discovered this after I wrote my book, so it never got into the book. But here it is. If you can see that, this is that, four squares. And it's urgent, not urgent on the top, and important, not important on the bottom. And you can see that you can choose whether something is urgent and important. Not urgent, but important. Urgent, but not important, and not urgent, not important. So of course, not urgent, not important, is where the pizza coupon comes. I mean, barring a pizza emergency, the expired pizza coupon isn't helpful. Urgent and important would be your electrical bill, your water heater, and your flat tire, right?

DENTON: 41:57

Important, but not urgent would be remembering your own birthday. Urgent, but not important would be the phone is ringing. You can choose not to answer it, okay? If I'm faced with something, a piece of mail, is like, "Well, which is it?" Then you can mark it, mark that envelope as urgent, not important and just make four piles. So when all else fails, I do what they call on TV phone a friend. So I'll phone a friend and I'll say, "I've got these five things. Please help me to sort them out because I can't. I don't have any brain bucks left, but I know there's something in this pile that probably will take my water service away or something. And so just three minutes on the phone, if you could help me." Also, if I'm driving around town and I have seven errands, I will list the errands and draw a quick little map of the town, like one north and two east, west streets. Put everything on the map, and then go, "Oh, there's a natural route that will save me a lot of time." So just making something visual sometimes is the key. And then, of course, throwing away spam, the spam that's in your life. Okay.

LENGENFELDER: 43:38

Right. I see Cathy had her hand up next.

FEMALE 2: 43:42

Hi, Gail, thanks for coming in today.

DENTON: 43:45

Thank you.

FEMALE 2: 43:47

I'm a survivor of a similar kind of injury to you, and I'm about eight years out, and organizing is a big challenge. The other question I was going to ask about, so that one got answered. Thank you. And it's always great to get new tips or tricks. And relationship was the other one that really felt important to ask because I'm having a hard time in my primary relationship for reasons that you understand. And I keep trying to find somebody to help us, and I keep bumping up against challenges. Sometimes they're financial because the person-- the only person that we found that was really helpful was \$250 for an hour, and it's just not possible to do that. And I just feel like things are falling apart. It's been a very long, hard time, and I don't have any more ideas of what to try.

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- DENTON: 45:09 I understand. I actually had a meltdown this morning myself. The stress of this and five other things going on. And so I picked a fight with my husband about the garbage, right? And then I lose because I melted down and needed to spend an hour getting myself back together so I could take a shower, fluff my hair, and put on some decent doctor clothes so I can do this show. I understand what happens when you get to the end of your energy and you don't have the energy to solve it. Well, there aren't that many therapists out there who actually understand the brain injury piece in a couple's counseling situation. Usually, it's like, "Oh, well, so and so has to stop drinking or whatever. Get a decent job or stop going out by yourself or whatever the deal might be." Those are pretty standard issues. But having a brain injury partner in a relationship is exhausting, and most therapists are ill equipped and think they can solve it with their magic little systems that they use. So I will give myself a commercial here. I do meet with people over the phone once a week. I have a small practice. Please feel free to find me on gddenton@brainlash.com. You can email me and we can talk further.
- DENTON: 46:53 I can also give you some ideas for how to get a more successful experience with your therapist because you definitely need support and you need to be able to have words to express what's happening for you if you're crumbling on the inside. And from the outside, it just looks like you're being a recalcitrant baby and you're playing the brain injury card. So yeah, it's a tough one. And I can see that your cat is no help.
- FEMALE 2: 47:31 I didn't see her there. She's got the clean-- she's getting her fur on the clean towels. Yeah.
- DENTON: 47:39 Yeah, so thanks for helping. And so Cathy, it is important to get some guidance from somebody who has a clue about that. And so that you can move forward and have a more stable primary relationship. I know I almost lost my house. I wasn't in a relationship. I was about to move into my car. Then I met my future husband. And so he's only known me with a brain injury, which I guess is an asset, but yeah, that's a tough one. And I'll be happy to chat with you more offline. Do you have any other questions today?
- FEMALE 2: 48:26 That's the main one there. I'll leave space for somebody else and I will reach out. Thank you.
- DENTON: 48:32 Yeah. Just reach out to me. Yes. Thanks.
- LENGENFELDER: 48:37 So up next, we have a question from Andrew.
- MALE 1: 48:41 Hello, can you hear me?
- DENTON: 48:43 I can. Hi, Andrew.
- MALE 1: 48:44 Okay. Hi. There was a lot of things you said that were similar to me. The things that really got me was the-- I wrote an article for the TBI news and views in Kessler. I did it myself, and it's about the latter. Basically, it's similar to what you're saying and every step I took to get where I'm at now. And one thing that, just based on what you're saying, was my neurologist called me the Lazarus about two years ago

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because of the way I progressed. And what I wanted to say was, unfortunately, my wife passed away two years ago. You were talking about relationships and how you do that. She was my advocate and she really helped me along with friends and all that, and all those people, the doctors and everything else, to get where I'm at. And the difference was, I used to sit in the chair all the time and watch TV, and my wife would do stuff and I'd just do that, I was like not-- I guess I was being complacent. I really should have done more of the physical activities that you said towards the end. And when my wife passed on, I hadn't driven in 13 years. And I got my license again and I started-- I got a personal trainer. And now I went to place here called Oakland Spinal Rehab to get a chiropractor, you said that too, and I'm getting all that straightened out. And I go to a gym. I'm going to go one on one with them next week. Because you have to do not because you had a brand injury. You have to do it because-- I'm 66. So you've got to be around that age. And you have to do it anyway. Okay, whatever. You have to do it as a any-- whatever happens to you, nothing happens to you, you have to just do what you said.

MALE 1: 50:41

Your physical activity has to be-- you have to keep it up because that helps you go on and get better. And what else was I going to say? Oh, the earplugs. Now, I have tendinitis in my left ear. I fell on my left side. I was on a ladder at a store, delivery, this door wouldn't close after the delivery was finished, I fell 15 feet on a concrete floor. And that was pretty whatever. And I got tendinitis on my left ear. I hope I said that correctly. But you said the thing with earplugs. Now, as I have to find out if I can get earplugs that'll fit over my hearing aids, because when I go to a restaurant with friends, it's tough to hear sometimes. Sometimes it isn't, sometimes it is. And that you mentioned the brain stimulus, I never really thought of that. I just thought it was just the restaurant. But I'll have to try that. That's a very good thing to say. And the organizing thing, I had to organize myself a long time ago. The things you said about the Franklin Planner, I knew about that years ago. You just told me that, that's [inaudible] and I just was able to perceive what you're saying, but I pretty much do the same thing on the computer, because 2010, computers were just becoming the thing they are now. And I really didn't know how to get care. I was in retail, "Who cares? The register changes, big deal." I really should have learned them more. But the places I recovered in is they had you work in a lab pad, all that stuff. But anyway, another thing is, I do studies for Kessler. I'm in the middle of-- I'm going to be starting one next week. And I've done 15 studies, at least. And I think they're very important for people, if you can get involved in a study by you.

MALE 1: 52:37

And PhD runs them, and there are other people, it goes up the ladder, basically. And what they do is they get to statistics and they combine it. Maybe they do it-- if we're approaching it this way, we approach it this way now because of the statistical analysis. That's what happens. And I think it's very important to do it. That's what I think. And that's pretty much it.

DENTON: 53:01

Thanks for sharing, Andrew.

MALE 1: 53:03

Okay.

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- LENGENFELDER: 53:04 I think we have time for one last question from Carol.
- MALE 2: 53:09 Hi, Gail. Thank you. So mine is just more of a comment. So I have been living with brain injury not quite as long as you have, but almost. Mine was in 1999. And your book was instrumental for me in the early years after my injury. And I just wanted to tell you that, how much it helped me, how much the larger print in it helped me, the spacing in it. And when I read it, it felt like somebody understood what I was thinking, what I was feeling at a time when I was so very lost. And when I saw-- when I got the email and I saw that you were going to be presenting, I said, "Oh, I'd really like to meet her. Somebody who has such an impact on my own early years as a survivor." And actually, I mean, you were, I mean, among one of the inspirations-- I'm now an author of a brain injury book myself. And seeing others in the community who were able to do that, it gave me confidence that maybe someday I could do that too. And what you said about having to reinvent oneself and that constant process, it is so very true.
- DENTON: 54:29 Well, thank you. Carol, one of the things that I have noticed is the people who have used my book over time have actually come up with books, and now yours would be the third. This is the second one, which I just got in the mail, of another patient whose wife wrote this book, too. It's called Forward March and hot off the press. And there are a number of people who reach out to me and say, "Would you proofread my book?" That sort of thing. Or, "Look what I did. I wrote a book and thank you very much." And so from the bottom of my heart, thank you, Carol, for wanting to meet me. Thank you very much.
- MALE 2: 55:19 Well, thank you.
- DENTON: 55:20 You're welcome.
- LENGENFELDER: 55:22 Well, again, we'd like to thank you, Dr. Gail, for your wonderful presentation today. And thank you, everyone, for attending. And just so everyone knows, immediately after this presentation, there's going to be a survey for you to answer about today's presentation. And we'll also be following up with an email survey, if you're unable to complete it, the survey right now. Also, be on the lookout for our fall brainstorm, which is going to be from Kelsey Boyer, from the Save a Brain Foundation. And if you're interested in any more of our events or participating in our research, much of which can be done remotely, please check us out on the Kessler Foundation website. And again, Dr. Gail, we thank you so much for being here with us today and for your wonderful and inspirational presentation. We hope you all have a wonderful afternoon. Thank you.
- ANNOUNCER: 56:15 Join a study at kesslerfoundation.org/join.