

Brain Injury with Tammy Kirkwood

Continuation....

I celebrated my first year of survival with my friends and family. I wasn't on this journey alone. My youngest daughter did a speech and a few paragraphs stood out to all of us:

***"When something negative happens in your life, or if it keeps happening over and over again and you feel like that world is crashing down, remember that you are not alone. Take a good look at the people around you, the people who have always been there for you. We have all conquered what we thought we couldn't. Because when you're in that moment of darkness nothing seems right, But once you step out of that hole, and the light shines down on you, it's right then and there when you realized that you're not lost. That, we're all here for you.***

***Through out the past year the greatest, most courageous, strong woman, has worked so hard to overcome what the doctors thought she couldn't. That woman everyone, is my mom Tammy Kirkwood. This year she has made it through her accident and the affects of it and after all that, look at her now! Not one single person in this room can tell me that she doesn't look amazing. But you can tell me that we're all so proud of her. With everything that's gone on this year, me my siblings, my family, my mom, I'm sure we have all felt alone and hurt and scared but looking at mom now and what she has become is inspiring. It inspires me to let me know that no matter what happens in your life, you can overcome it. It takes work and time. She's inspired me to keep my head up when I thought that I couldn't and she's inspired me to go for my dreams.***

One of my sister's made a speech at my 5 year celebration of life. I wanted to share some of her words:

***"Then the call came in ..... the police were looking for family of a Tammy Kirkwood . There had been an accident and they needed someone for identification purposes.***

***"Was she okay?" "Was she alive?" ....He wasn't sure but they were air-lifting her to Sunnybrook Trauma Center in Toronto. Unfortunately, because we had a 5 hour trip to make, there was no way of telling what we would face on our arrival. Tammy was alive, but the prognosis was not good. The rest is history."***

***And so Tammy began the long, rocky road of recovery. From that first day, seeing her laying in that hospital bed, you could almost feel her fighting to come back. Anyone that knows Tammy — knows her tenacious, fight for what you believe in attitude. And with every visit we could see subtle changes. With the prayers and messages of encouragement from so many, especially Michael, Tammy flourished.***

***Over the past five years she has worked diligently to regain her strength and individuality, both physically and emotionally. Although it's been an extreme challenge, Tammy is pretty much back to her old tenacious, badass self. If it weren't for her cane and few other flaws, most would not ever suspect what has brought us together to celebrate here today. Who would have thought !!!***

Recovery is one of the toughest journeys a person takes after an injury. It's not a journey we take alone because what happens to us happens to those around us as well.

My oldest sister's memory:

***This was the 40-year-old baby of the family who took pride in her physical fitness – almost every day she either went to the gym or participated in one sport or another. She was energetic in supporting union and political fights to keep open the residential centres for people with severe developmental disabilities. She was the single mother of three teenage children.***

***At first they didn't think Tammy would survive the accident and if she did they had little hope that she would ever be able to live without daily assistance.***

***Tammy has always been a fighter, but this was never more apparent than when I watched her struggle toward recovery. The physical and psychological strain on her was immense. She had to re-learn everything – how to feed herself, walk, talk – everything.***

***Even when it appeared that Tammy didn't know us or could not respond to us, we were told that our visits were one of the most important tools in her recovery. It was difficult to encourage Tammy to do things for herself instead of doing it for her, but that too was a crucial step in her recovery.***

***Some people call her a miracle child and though her recovery was truly miraculous, much of it was due to Tammy's own commitment. I am very proud of her.***

## **Testimonials**

*Tammy Kirkwood is a fighter. Tammy was catastrophically injured in a car accident that was not her fault. Early on after the accident Tammy struggled adjusting to her new life. She struggled adjusting from being the organized loving mother that was always helping her kids to the injured mother who needed help from her kids. But, with the help of a wonderful team of experienced providers and a good involved lawyer to help her navigate any roadblocks put in place by the insurance companies, Tammy turned the corner and started understanding her injuries and her limitations and it was at that point that Tammy embraced the challenge that stood ahead of her.*

*Tammy has made a remarkable recovery. Tammy is an inspiration on so many levels—as a mother, as an advocate for the rights of accident victims and as a friend. Tammy did not let the injuries get the better of her and is determined to help others with their struggles. Tammy is simply amazing. **Darcy Merkur, Thomson Rogers Lawyers***

*In my role as case manager I had the privilege of working with Tammy and being part of her rehabilitation team. She adopted a “never quit” attitude and giving up was never an option for Tammy. No matter the challenge or barrier that she faced through her journey of recovery, she maintained a positive outlook and belief in herself. She did not take “no” for an answer and continue to challenge those working with her. Though I did not know Tammy prior to the accident, one could easily see the woman she was – her strength; her devotion to her family; her resilience to continue to meet each new*

*task with determination. These characteristics are the essence of who Tammy is and what enabled her to continue with her journey to achieve the goals she set out for herself.*

*She is a true inspiration and mentor to others who are also on the journey of recovery. **Jodi Harendrof, Catastrophic Injury Management***

*I supported Tammy in the role of rehabilitation support worker. She was a determined client who wanted to beat the odds. She worked diligently and followed through with anything asked of her.*

*Tammy kept wanting to be challenged to see where her limitations were and although she would get frustrated she continued to push through.*

*It was amazing to support someone with such determination, who was going to prove to herself, family and friends that despite this setback she would become "Tammy Kirkwood" new and improved taking on the world in a different way than she ever thought. **Benita Leech, RSW***

*We joined Tammy's recovery team in November of 2009. Her motor vehicle accident left her with severe left sided cerebral hemiplegia and Tammy is currently undergoing rehabilitation at Back to Function on a weekly basis. She presented with constant pain and inability to fully ambulate in November of 2009. Tammy's determination amazes us daily, there is nothing that she won't try and looks at every obstacle in a positive way. Today, Tammy works very hard with her constant battle of rehabilitation and pain control. She is doing very well and is determined to continue to improve, despite any challenges that may arise. She is currently seeing a chiropractor, massage therapist, and a Kinesiologist weekly, and is working on maintaining the success she has gained to this point. A large portion of her rehabilitation process is the work she puts in outside the clinic setting. Without her constant determination to improve and her ability to overcome challenges her current outcome could have been much different. Tammy is a fighter and is always willing to work hard to achieve her rehabilitation goals. She is very strong willed and resilient. Tammy is one of the most positive people and always brings a smile into the office no matter what is thrown her way. Tammy truly is an inspiration to the office and to all that meet her along her rehabilitation journey. **Back to Function Staff***

