



on the brain blog

ASLS Brain Injury Program Newsletter

HOW AUTUMN AFFECTS US

It has long been known that sunlight, as it rises and sets over the year, affects people differently. During the warmer months, it may be easier and more welcoming to get up and engage in the day since we are more active and work better when the sun is shining. Fall season as we know is a sentimental time for us all and we usually experience an overwhelming flow of emotions which usually is on the low side.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, "Researchers have tied SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) to melatonin, a sleep-related hormone the human pineal gland produces and releases in the dark. Production of the hormone seems particularly active during winter when the days are shorter and darker." So then, "Let There Be Light"!

Create a strategy. Your plan should include multiple mood boosters, including:

- exposure to sunlight,
- exercise,
- finding activities that you enjoy, and
- social contact

As you find which strategies work best for you, build those into your life. For instance, some people find a midwinter trip to a sunny climate helps them make it through the season. Others find their salvation on the ski slopes or at the gym, or in coming together with friends and family.

Harvest Pumpkin Soup

www.Cooks.com

- 2 tablespoons Butter
- 1 large Onion
- 1 large Potato, pared & diced
- 3 cups Chicken Broth
- 1 (16 oz) can Pumpkin
- 1/4 teaspoon Nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon Pepper
- 1 cup of Heavy or Whipping Cream
- Packaged Croutons

- 1) Cook onions and potatoes for 5 minutes.
- 2) Add chicken broth and heat to boil.
- 3) Ladle 1/2 of mixture into container and blend pumpkin in.
- 4) Return mixture to saucepan, add nutmeg and pepper, heat to boil.
- 5) Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.
- 6) Add cream and simmer and heat through

When serving soup, add croutons. Enjoy!

Seasonal Delight Pumpkin Soup

... Is full of Anti-Oxidants which work to protect our brain cells from damage caused by free radicals that are responsible for aging and tissue damage ...

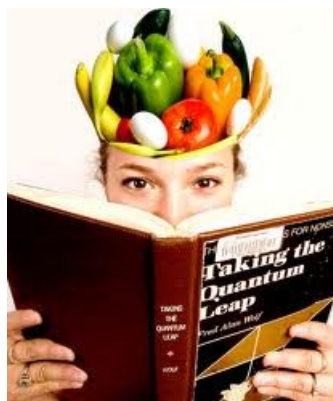


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Researchers have found that the brain is a thinking organ that learns and grows by one's interactions with the world through perception and action. Also, it has been discovered that mental stimulation improves brain function and actually protects against cognitive decline as we age. Scientists have discovered that severe mental decline is usually caused by diseases, inactivity, and a lack of mental exercise and stimulation. **In other words...use it or lose it.**



Keeping Brains Fit

Okeremute Okoro

GET UP AND BE ACTIVE!

You can join a local gym or call your local brain injury support group to inquire about exercise classes for survivors. You can also join a local hospital exercise class where you will be monitored and supervised.

If you are a
Survivor who is
interested in accessing the
Grande Prairie
Leisure Centre, contact
ASLS @ 877.539.0433
for a free
Access Pass today!

Brain injury could be tough and devastating for survivors, their families, and caregivers. After an acquired brain injury either through stroke, motor vehicle accident, lacks of oxygen or trauma to the brain, brain cells might die in the affected areas resulting to damaged or even lose of neurons. Survivors often suffer disabilities resulting in paralysis on one side of the body, sensory loss, visual disorders, aphasia, memory loss and language disorders. The level of recovery varies from survivor to survivor and a rehabilitation program is the key to recovery.

After a brain injury, exercise may be the furthest thing from a survivors mind, but think again. Physical activity plays an important role in improving functional ability and improving quality of life. It has a huge impact on your ability to maintaining good health and your healing process.

When you're living with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), There are many benefits to being physically active on a regular basis. A regular exercise program will:

- Help nerve impulse travel faster to the brain, which improves how quickly you process or think
- Decrease health-risking behaviours such as smoking and depression
- Increase focus and ability to stay on task
- Increase mood, memory and blood flow to the brain
- Increase body awareness and positively affect balance
- Increase heart and lung efficiency.

Physical Exercise is one of the main methods of building up the brain. According to articles in a Harvard health publication, exercise sharpens the brain. If fact, scientists have discovered that rodents who spend a lot of time running in exercise wheels have better brains than their lay-about lab mates.

Positive/good mental health is more than just the absence of a mental illness or brain injury.

A new report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) states that people reporting higher levels of positive mental health also report better physical health and fewer days of reduced activity. The report examines five aspects of positive mental health, including: life enjoyment, coping ability, emotional well-being, spiritual values & well-being, and social well-being & connectedness.

Need more info on Brain Injury?

The **NEW** Resource Library will be open

Mid-September 2011!

Resource Library Hours:

Monday to Friday

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

at the Brain Injury offices in
Grande Prairie and Peace River

Upcoming Events



Alberta Caregiver College 2011

Information sessions aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of Caregivers of Survivors of Brain Injury and Stroke.

Fall sessions begin on
Tuesday, October 4, 2011
From 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Grande Prairie:
Public Health Building
Room 121, 10320-99 Street

Peace River:
Contact Don for location details
780-624-3316,
ext.104

Alberta Brain Injury Conference 2011

From November 11-13, 2011
Hyatt Regency Calgary,
700 Centre Street SE,
Calgary AB

For more information and to
register, please visit:
www.biaa.ca/abic2011

Survivors, Caregivers, Family
members, and Service Groups have
the opportunity to learn, network,
and share.

ASLS Client Celebration

See page 4 for more information
and stay tuned for Event Updates!

Brain Awareness

The Grande Prairie Brain Injury Office will be offering weekly sessions that will cover a variety of Brain Injury topics each week, including:

- Memory and Concentration
- Time Management
- Anger and Frustration
- And more

September Sessions

- Monday September 19
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Monday September 26
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

October Sessions

- Mondays
- 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Break for Thanksgiving

**# 205, 10006-101 Avenue
Grande Prairie, AB**

We are open to suggestions!
Above dates/times don't work for
you? Interested in different topics?
Let us know!

Find out more about

A Registered Disability Savings Plan

Contact Richard Harriman @ 780.539.0433 x 126

Precautions & Strategies for Brain Injury Survivors

- **Emotional Behaviours** can cause:
Impulsivity, irritability, lack of inhibition and indecision.
- **Memory and initiation:** Have a properly structured workout and use repetitions and review to prevent poor planning and poor goal-oriented behaviours.
- **Slowed thinking:** Make sure to have a clear and concise breakdown and understanding of the exercise since it can take longer to process the information.
- **Fatigue:** Lack of sleep, chronic pain, and depression can cause fatigue.

Properly timed activities can help tremendously (e.g., certain times of the day)

- **Medications:** Talk with your physician before starting a fitness program to ensure that it is an appropriate plan of action for you at this time.

Also, ask him to explain the effects of the medication on your body.

A Christmas/Holiday Card Contest for ASLS Clients!

We would love to have all ASLS Clients participate in this fun contest...Here is how you can:

First, start thinking about all the good things that you love about Christmas & the Holiday Season!

Next, get your pens, pencils, markers, crayons etc out and start drawing your ideas on the template provided to you on the next page.

When it is all done, give your drawing to ASLS Staff before September 16, 2011 – & **don't forget** to put your name on it so we know who created it!

ASLS Staff will submit all entries to the Grimshaw Office on or before **September 19, 2011** so five designs can be chosen for this year's ASLS Christmas Cards. Winners will be notified soon after that.

Ready, Set...Go Start Creating->

Please call Michele @ 780-332-4183 x 100 if you require more information.

2011 ASLS Client Celebrations

October 21, 2011—Peace River & October 22, 2011—Grande Prairie

ASLS will be celebrating their clients between two events this Fall and we hope YOU can make it!

The evening's festivities will commence at 5:00 pm with a Mix & Mingle followed by a supper, and then entertainment that all can participate in.

For more information or to register at a Celebration near you, please contact:

Michele Coutu at 877.332.4183 x 100 (Peace/North Region)

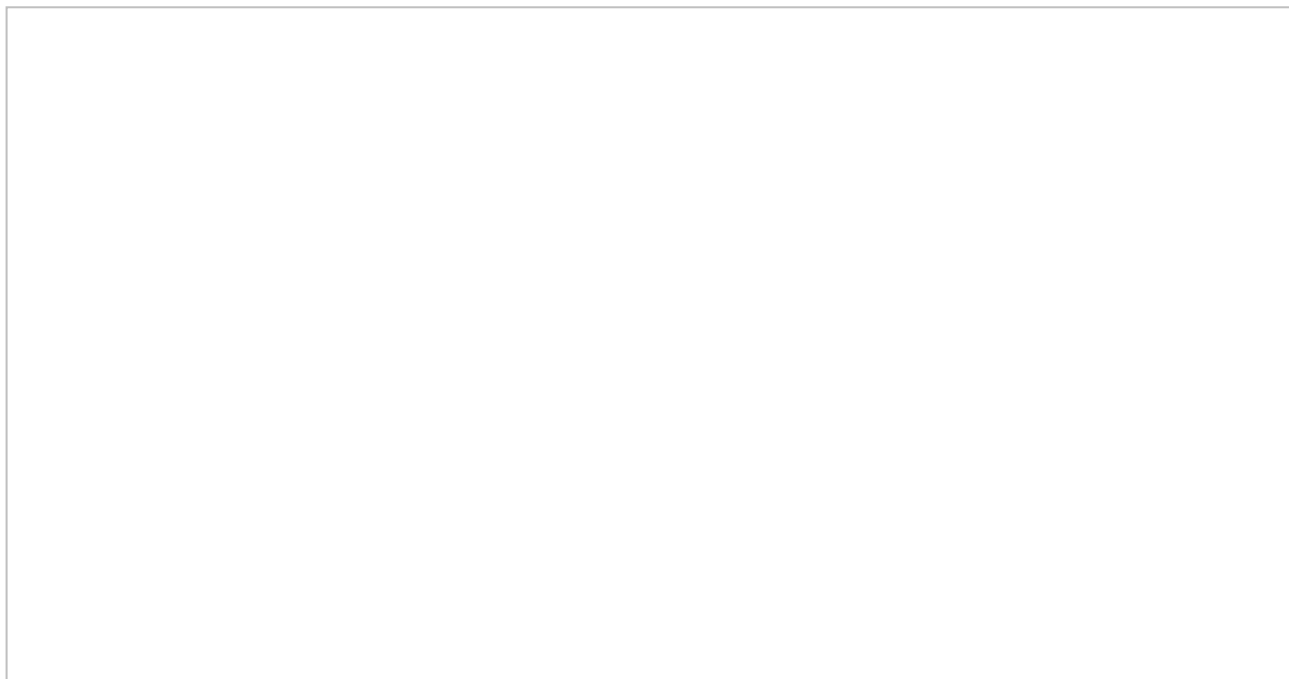
Lloyd Fischer @ 877.539.0433 x 100 (Grande Prairie)

More information to follow—stay posted!!

Drawn By: _____ Date: _____



Each and every ASLS client can enter 2 different designs for consideration. Designs are to be made within the boxes. (The lines indicate where the design will be cut). Give your designs to an ASLS staff member by September 16th 2011 – you may just have a winner!



Winners will be notified in October. Clients and/or Guardians must sign an Informed Consent Form in order for us to use the winning designs on ASLS Christmas Cards.

For more information on this fantastic contest, please contact Michele at michelec@asllimited.org
Designs will be returned at the end of October

Chris Bruce

“If everyday you take the smallest step toward your goal, nothing can stop you from reaching it”



Chris was born in British Columbia, Canada, and has been a Ferrier for over 30 years. Chris says that “the old English dictionary describes it as being a farm animal veterinarian” or more simply as “horse shoer that works with animal that need pedicures”. Chris has survived two acquired brain injuries over his life-time, one a traumatic brain injury and the other a non-traumatic brain injury.

Chris’s first brain injury occurred on April 13, 1990, which was “A good Friday, and Friday the 13th”. A Semi-truck “jumped out of oncoming traffic” and hit Chris while he was driving.

Chris was admitted to the Royal Columbian Hospital and was in a coma for 18 days. He re-

Survivor's Corner

Tips for the Survivor

- Don't give up!
- Remember to ask for help when you need it
- Set small, realistic goals
- Scheduled mental and/or physical challenging tasks during peak times of energy
- Stick to a regular sleep schedule
- Give yourself plenty of time to do things
- Plan small breaks between tasks
- Make a list of tasks and rank them in order of importance
- Keep a planner and schedule your tasks

Tips for Caregivers

- Take time for yourself every day
- Decide your priorities and revise your top three priorities every few weeks
- Avoid labelling or catastrophizing—that is, calling yourself names or assuming the worst down the line
- Start identifying personal goals and dreams. Then take small steps towards your goal(s).

ceived 140 stitches in his head, and suffered other extensive physical damage. When Chris became conscious he says “I didn’t understand what was happening because of the amount of time I was in a coma. I didn’t even know that my truck was wrecked and that my heel and ankle were shattered”.

During recovery, Chris completed assessments at the Fraser University and says “I was written off as unemployable and untrainable”. He was diagnosed as having higher brain function processing problems and describes it as “I take in new information 3 seconds slower” whereas, people without a brain injury “process the same information in a millisecond”. He was told “that I can’t learn in a class room setting. They never expected me to work, ever again”.

After a while, Chris went back to work as a Ferrier despite that fact that the doctors “didn’t think I would ever shoe horses again. But I’m stubborn and went back to work”.

Chris moved to Alberta a little while after he began working again. Many of his customers moved to Alberta and asked him to come for a holiday, and “to bring his tools with him”. After Chris’s “holiday” in Alberta, he moved to the Grande Prairie, where he has lived since. Chris was working from 6 am to 11 pm, 6 to 7 days per week and now says that this was “not good”. “The last thing I was thinking of was a Stoke. Then I ended up with one”. Chris’s second brain injury was due to a stroke which occurred January 2010. The stroke left Chris unable to work. He tried to shoe a horse just after the stroke, but says “I would recommend not trying it again” because “there is a lot of physical strain” involved and it took a “huge physical effort”.

Chris currently lives in a farm setting approximately 20 minutes out of town. His daily routine includes feeding and general upkeep of some of the animals on the farm. He describes his currently living situation as a type of therapy because the animals keep him going.

Since having the stroke, Chris says that “I have been told that I have made tremendous progress”. Immediately after the stroke, Chris was unable to perform basic daily tasks, such as shaving or showering. “It was embarrassing and definitely not dignified, because assistance was always needed.”

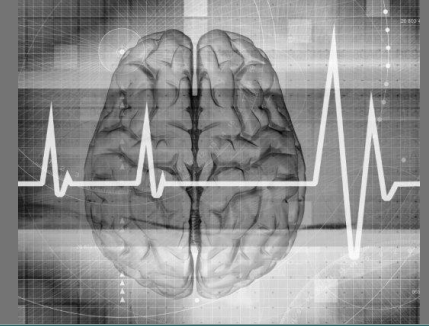
Chris can now perform daily tasks independently. “I sit and think “oh, ok, I can move buckets of water around, I can clean stalls... I deal with it every day, so I don’t notice the changes I have made”.

Chris admits that he still grieves because “No one else can understand that I was a Ferrier for 30 years and now I am not. I used to be able to say ‘I’m Chris the Ferrier’, and now I’m not that anymore”. He goes on to explain that “I probably will never accept it because I will always fight to do more”.

“I accept that I had a stroke that there is a Brain Damage. I am aware of other things the brain can do to compensate.”

Risk to the Rider— In 2004 there were 56 bicycle fatalities in Canada, 36% were 19 years old or younger and 64% were over the age of 19. In contrast to 1984 which saw 138 fatalities, 64% 19 years old or younger and 36% over the age of 19. A dramatic change which can be attributed to several possibilities, such as, purpose of bike ride, more adults riding bikes today, child safety programs working, differences in location bikes being used by children/adults, bike maintenance, legislation requiring helmet usage by children, rider attitude, weather conditions experienced, usage differences in road conditions or adults being allowed the choice of helmet usage. Of the 2004 fatalities roughly 80% were not wearing a helmet, 90% involved an automobile. Injuries from riding bicycles numbered in the multiple of thousands with approximately 20% of the injuries requiring an overnight or longer hospital stay.

Helmet Safety



ATTITUDES TO MAKE YOU THINK

Adult vs Children

Overall: If the parent does not wear a helmet their children usually will not wear a helmet.

People developing a “can’t hurt me” or “they’ll have to stop for me” perspective towards riding.

Riders believing it’s the other person’s fault if an accident occurs.

Children: believe the safety training the from an early age until they see someone do the opposite.

They have to wear a helmet because the law says so.

Will follow the examples shown by the adults they are around.

Adults: believing if they’re careful they won’t get hurt.

“Why do have I have to follow a law designed to protect a kid...It’s my right to have a choice.”

Peoples attitudes are developed by the experiences they have, but can be enhanced by the education and training available to them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RIDING

- Use road smarts, know the rules of the road and realize you must obey the same rules a car.
- Ensure your bike can be heard when riding on the road and in traffic.
- Ride defensively, think of where you are riding, the road or off-road terrain where you are travelling .
- Whether it’s dawn, dusk or night make sure you can be seen by others.
- Wear CSA approved equipment and follow manufacture instructions to ensure proper fit and comfort.

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN...IT’S THE ONLY ONE YOU GET!

Over half of Canadian Adults (52%) who ride bicycles never or rarely wear a helmet when they bicycle, while fewer than (40%) wear one always or most of the times.

The majority of parents report that their children wear a helmet when bicycling (84%), in-line skating (79%), riding a scooter (73%) and skateboarding (69%).

The list of suggested reasons why Canadians do not wear sporting helmets are as follows,

Can’t bother	14%
Cost	3%
Appearance	14%
Not Cool	13%
Uncomfortable	11%
Inconvenient/Cumbersome	10%

Those who never wear a helmet are most likely to be male, under 34, rural and low income wages.

Greater usage of helmets is created through safety education and user experiences.

In Alberta 85% of children wear a helmet

In Alberta only 3% of those kids parents wear a helmet

Don Black

Hi there,

I have worked with the Brain Injury Program since Oct. 2007. I believe strongly that clients in a rural setting should have access to services available in the urban communities. I hope that by working with BI survivors, we can create a better service to meet their needs, awareness of brain injury prevention and its causes, and an increased understanding for our government representatives.

I can be reached at 780.624.3316 ext 104 or by email at DonB@ASLSLimited.org



Meet the Staff



Kyla
Ouellette

Hi! I have been working in the Brain Injury Program since March 2008. I am looking forward to creating more issues of this newsletter to connect our Caregivers and Survivors to current Brain Injury news and events. I would like to invite you all to provide any input for ways that we can better support you.

I can be reached by phone (info above ext 107) through email: KylaO@ASLSLimited.org

Brain Injury Program

Office Locations

Peace River Office

Phone: 780-624-3316, ext.104

Box 5006, 9604-96 Street

Peace River, AB T8S 1R7

Grande Prairie Office

Phone: 780-539-0433,

ext. 107 / 121

#205, 10006-101 Avenue

Grande Prairie, AB T8V 0Y1



Okeremute
Okoro

Hello, my name is Mute' and I started working in this program in July . Working with our brain injury survivors and their caregivers has been a great experience for me. I look forward to working with you and anticipate your input in providing tips on topics that will meet your goals in your journey of recovery and rehabilitation. I hope you will enjoy this news letter and as you know, feedback is always welcomed.

You can also reach me via phone (ext 121) or by e-mail: Okeremute.Okoro@ASLSLimited.org