

HeadSTRONG

The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado is the go-to resource for help and services for survivors of an injury to the brain, their families, and providers.

A Survivor's Story

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Written by Jesus Sanchez, *Survivor*

When I was 14 years old, I liked to go swimming in a public pool near my house in Zaragoza, Spain. Most Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, I would get home, put on swimwear, and walk to the facility. One Thursday afternoon, I was swimming the backstroke style when I hit the back of my head which made me lose consciousness and start drowning.

The lifeguard did not notice, so I was underwater for a long unknown period of time. It was another swimmer who spotted me wondering why I had been diving so long. He saved my life that day. Next thing I remember was waking up in the hospital where I was told that they took me out of the pool and performed CPR. When I finally responded, I had a seizure right there next to the pool. The brain injury that almost killed me in the pool that day left me with seizures during sleep.

Almost ten years have passed since the accident, and thankfully I have not had a seizure for eight years. I have seizure sensitivity, which has caused me to have a shift in my life, limiting my actions to some extent. For instance, I cannot be exposed to bright blinking lights for a long period of time; during some movie scenes I close my eyes and I avoid events where lights constantly shift. On the bright side, other limitations have caused me to live a healthier life than I would have had otherwise. For example, I cannot drink alcohol or smoke tobacco products. My family has always been there for me and supported me through the struggle to accept the consequences of the accident.



"...consistency and commitment leads to great results..."

Aside from the brain injury I had ten years ago, before that I also had a benign tumor (craniopharyngioma) right above my optical nerve. This is a story for another day, but in brief, after four surgeries, the tumor was controlled and reduced almost entirely. The tumor caused permanent damage to my optical nerve resulting in visual impairment. When I took the driver's license eye test, I failed. To get a driver's license, I would need visual therapy and then Drivers Rehabilitation to get a restricted license. I was committed to getting one because it is essential in this U.S. society, so I started the process.

After doing some vision therapy with Boulder Valley Vision Therapy (BVVT), I started my driving rehab lessons with Health Promotions Partners (HPP).

I reached out to BIAC in one step of this process to find out whether they could support me and how it was possible. I am extremely grateful BIAC supported me with the financial aspect of my HPP lessons. I received my learner's permit at the beginning of October 2021 and now I can take the driver's license exam whenever I'm ready. It is amazing to see how consistency and commitment leads to great results and getting the learner's permit is one of them.

Both my vision impairment and my seizure sensitivity condition have shown me that all of us have limitations in life. No matter how hard we try to excel at everything in life, there are some circumstances we cannot control. I have learned it is crucial to have a positive mindset and believe in oneself and one's capabilities while acknowledging one's limitations.

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Don't Sweat the Small Stuff continued

People around me admire my positive attitude around challenging situations and sometimes question how I am so happy or unstressed about things. There is a phrase I love to remember when I feel like my positivity is not enough, “Don’t sweat the small stuff, you are alive and that’s all it matters”. I am entering a different life stage now since I got my Bachelor’s in Business Administration a couple months ago. As I enter a professional life surrounded by different people, I am learning how to spread my positivity to those who need it. In conclusion, my limitations and accident have taught me not to “sweat the small stuff”, and now I am learning how to help others do the same.

Finally, I am grateful to all the people around me who have been there to support me since the beginning. When I state “beginning”, I am referring to when doctors discovered I had a tumor on top of my optical nerve. Five years after the tumor issue seemed under control and I was starting to acknowledge my visual limitation as a part of me, I had the pool accident. My loved ones were very impacted as it seemed my journey of struggle was never ending. I am 23 years old now and since I was eight years old, my family and friends have been there to support me and encourage me to move forward and not let my limitations define me. In addition, I am grateful to BVVT, HPP, BIAC, and all my doctors because they have always had a positive attitude towards my situation and have helped me surpass all the challenges.

Program Spotlight

Financial Assistance Programs

Driver Rehab Scholarships

Individuals who have suffered a brain injury, need driver re-training, and require financial support for the retraining are invited to apply to the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado for financial assistance.

Utility Assistance

The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado is able to assist individuals and families with utility bills (heat & electricity). Our ability to assist individuals and families in Colorado is made possible through a generous grant from Energy Outreach Colorado.

Note: Before accessing our Utility Assistance Funds, Individuals are required to apply for the Low Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) FIRST if applying between November 1st – April 30th of each year.

You may contact LEAP by calling **1-866-432-8435**. LEAP applications can be accessed through their website: **Colorado LEAP**.

For more information, contact Resource Navigation at **303-355-9969**, toll free **1-800-955-2443** or email **Info@BIAColorado.org**.

Upcoming Classes and Events

Classes and Workshops

Some classes will be in-person at BIAC's Denver office at 1325 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste B300, Denver, CO 80222 and some are virtual. Please check our website BIAColorado.org for more details.



Virtual classes and workshops will be held via Zoom. Click [here](#) to register. Please provide email during registration to receive the Zoom link. For questions, contact Michael Zavala at

Michael@BIAColorado.org or 720-907-1455.

Grief & Loss Group

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month through December
1:30 – 3:00 pm
In-person and Virtual

The Mindful Brain

1st Wednesday of the month every other month through December
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
In-person

The Mindful Brain

1st Tuesday of the month every other month through December
10:00 – 11:00 am
Virtual

Social Wellness

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month through December
2:00 – 3:00 pm
Virtual

Music Therapy

Every 2nd Thursday of the month through December
10:15 – 11:15 am
In-person and Virtual

Art Therapy

Every 3rd Thursday of the month through December
2:00 – 3:15 pm
In-person and Virtual

Tai Chi & Breathwork

Every 3rd Tuesday of the month through December
2:00 – 3:00 pm
In-person and Virtual

Let It Out Poetry

Every 2nd Monday through January
3:00 – 4:00 pm
Virtual



Recreation Programs & Social Activities

For registration and questions, contact Michael at Michael@BIAColorado.org or 303-562-0401. Visit the [Recreation Programs](#) page for updates.

Frozen Assets Ski Outing

A five-day retreat is open to all levels for adults living with a brain injury in partnership with the Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC). Activities include skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and tubing. Based out of BOEC's accessible Scott Griffith Lodge, this retreat include meals and plenty of time enjoy the beautiful mountain scenery. Adaptive ski and snowboard lessons will be run through the adaptive ski program at the BOEC.

January 3 – 7
Cost: \$1,840

Brain Injury Professional Networking (BIPN)

BIPN groups seek to "improve the availability of services and supports for individuals with brain injury, promote the ongoing sustainability of community support systems, and share resources". BIPNs offer an opportunity to identify the needs of survivors and develop a support system for yourself as an individual or organizational provider.

BIPN meetings are currently meeting over Zoom.

For more information visit the [BIPN](#) page or contact Mikalia Gray at Mikalia@BIAColorado.org or 303-223-0824.



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
C O L O R A D O

Clinical Therapy Services



Injury to the brain can cause upsetting changes to your mental health. You may find that new mental health concerns arise or preexisting mental illness worsens after injury, such as:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood Swings
- Anger
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Changes in Personality, & More

Here to Help

It's very common to experience emotional struggle after a brain injury, and with the right help, you can feel better. BIAC understands how difficult it can be to find behavioral and mental health counseling from professionals who understand the relationship between mental health and brain injury.

We are here to help you understand the challenges you encounter as a person with a brain injury and we can work together to create your best quality of life.

What We Offer

- Therapists who are specialized in brain injury and various treatment modalities to help meet our clients particular needs and goals that are unique to individuals with a brain injury.
- Counseling services to caregivers and family members of survivors.
- In-person or telehealth sessions are available.

Schedule a Consultation

Getting the right kind of support can help you achieve your best quality of life. We are here for you.

 303-900-5232

 Counseling@BIAColorado.org

Medicare, Medicaid, & Private Pay accepted.



1325 South Colorado Boulevard
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Denver, CO 80222

BIAColorado.org



@BrainInjuryCO

Banishing Caregiver's Remorse

By Rosemary Rawlins, *Caregiver*

No matter how much time you spend caregiving, you may feel like you are not doing enough ... that you can never do enough. I certainly felt like that many times. It was easy to beat myself up when I felt I dropped the ball on caregiving to work or tend to other family matters, but sometimes I just dropped the ball because I was tired of holding the ball!

All kinds of caregiving situations can produce remorse — full-time care in the home or long-distance caregiving if a loved one lives elsewhere. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines remorse as a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs; self-reproach. Caregivers can get lost in remorse because caregiving usually combines difficult and complex circumstances with intimate relationships, a combustible combination!

In cases of day-to-day caregiving, you may feel that you are too emotional, or unable to keep up with all the information and treatments that are available. In long-distance caregiving, you may feel torn, like you should make more time to be with your loved one, when in reality, there is no time that works out if you want to pay the bills and responsibly handle your own life.

Why do caregivers feel this way?

Here are just a few reasons:

- ❖ **Isolation** — A caregiver is usually the primary person with the individual he or she cares for and not frequently out socially. Even if a person is a long-distance caregiver, he or she may feel emotionally isolated and trapped in a state of guilt and constant worry.
- ❖ **Many caregivers are not trained in caregiving, nursing, or psychology** so they face a long learning curve. If a caregiver happens to be a nurse, doctor, or psychologist, he or she may feel particularly inadequate when treatments or remedies don't work.
- ❖ **Caregiving is intimate** — Caregivers often see what the rest of the world does not see and that can create feelings of disconnection. When a loved one is sweet to outsiders but nasty to the caregiver, confusion and resentment can build. Each caregiving situation is vastly different depending upon both the person being cared for and the caregiver. Each has its own set of unspoken rules between the two parties based on past history and personality.

Five ways to Banish Caregiver's Remorse

- 1. GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT** for showing up, for taking responsibility, for being there.
- 2. ASK YOURSELF IF YOU WOULD JUDGE SOMEONE ELSE** as harshly as you are judging yourself.
- 3. ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE THINGS YOU DID RIGHT.** List them in your mind — remember the smiles you coaxed, the emergencies you handled, the comfort you provided and know that you made a difference to a loved one in need.
- 4. IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY CAREGIVING, LIGHTEN UP!** When you make a mistake, turn it into a joke: "It's so kind of you to let me practice on you! Just ten more times and I'll get it right!" Remember, there is a learning curve and not everything you do will be perfect the first time. Laughter is a great diffuser.
- 5. IF THE PERSON YOU CARED FOR IS GONE,** admit your shortcomings in prayer or in writing, offer your heartfelt apology, and **LET IT GO.** If you can't forgive yourself, and this affects the rest of your life, seek counseling.



Staff in the Spotlight

Zach Hudson

Program Manager - Peer Mentorship

What is your role at BIAC?

My job is to enroll interested clients into the Peer Mentorship program, a state-wide program that connects a peer living with a brain injury to a volunteer mentor who is also living with a brain injury. I work with individuals to identify their goals and match them with a volunteer mentor to help them reach those goals. I also help coordinate state-wide brain injury support groups by working with support group leaders and individuals interested in joining a support group based on their location and needs.

What has been your favorite experience working at BIAC?

My favorite experience working with BIAC has been the Peer Mentorship Program retreat at Easter Seals Rocky Mountain Village. It was wonderful to get to spend time with clients involved in the program in a beautiful outdoor environment. The retreat was a great way for myself and program participants to network and build community with one another, and it was just plain fun!

What three traits define you?

Creative. Energetic. Insightful.



Program Spotlight

Peer Mentorship

Our volunteer-driven Peer Mentorship program is comprised entirely of survivors of a brain injury. Mentors provide 1:1 mentorship and guidance to peers and help them obtain goals, explore characteristics of resilience, and define what it means to thrive.

- ❖ 1:1 mentorship matches go for up to one year in length
- ❖ The mentor will establish weekly contacts with the peer
- ❖ Peers and mentors are matched based on lived experience, general background, interests, injury history, location, and more.
- ❖ Goals set by the peer are carefully considered & the Program Manager will make matches based on these goals.

How to join

Schedule a phone call with Zach Hudson at **303-223-0731** or **Zach Hudson** to learn more and receive the program application.

"Not only do I have newfound confidence and inspiration as a mentor that I can help another brain injury survivor/thriver but I am also finding in myself my increasing confidence, inspiration, and inner strength."

- Peer Mentorship program participant

Colorado Gives Day

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Each December, Coloradans come together with the common goal to strengthen the community by helping to power nonprofits.

Donating through the CO Gives Day website will stretch the value of your donation. Go to ColoradoGives.org and search for Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado to support our organization or click [here](#). Under "Make a Donation", select "Schedule for Gives Day".

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Brain Injury Research

University of Colorado Colorado Springs: Activity After a Stroke

Researchers at UCCS are studying the challenges and successes of engaging in physical activity and exercise after a stroke. Qualified participants may receive a \$25 Amazon gift card upon completion of a phone interview.

Please contact Amy Silva-Smith, RN at [719-255-4490](tel:719-255-4490) or by email at asilvasm@uccs.edu to learn more.

University of Washington: Chronic Pain Study

Researchers at UW are evaluating chronic pain therapy for employed individuals with physical disabilities such as multiple sclerosis, brain injury, spinal cord injury or amputation. Participants are randomly assigned to attend eight weekly treatment sessions via telephone over the course of 8-10 weeks or continue with usual care-no in-person visits are required. Compensation of up to \$125 is provided upon completion of four online surveys before, during, and after treatment.

You may qualify if you are

- 18 years or older
- Currently employed
- Have a self-reported physical disability
- Experience chronic pain
- Have daily access to a phone and the internet

Please call [1-855-887-9384](tel:1-855-887-9384) or email tipstudy@uw.edu to learn more.



CRAIG | NEUROREHABILITATION
& RESEARCH HOSPITAL

Advancing brain injury care and research since 1976

At Craig, we're dedicated to empowering the lives of the people we serve. We achieve some of the best results in brain injury neurorehabilitative medicine by providing a comprehensive, individualized team approach to rehabilitative care.

Our physicians and caring staff work with patients and their families to achieve powerful results together. We're committed to helping our patients return home with higher levels of independence and life quality.

craighospital.org

    @craighospital



Recreation Programs Nurse Spotlight



Shondra Black, RN

What is your favorite part about being a Craig nurse?

Being a Craig nurse means having a front row seat to some of the most inspirational acts of human strength and resilience. The Craig culture inspires and unites.

*Thank
You*

What is your favorite experience/memory with BIAC?

My experiences at BIAC will stay with me forever. I witnessed the conquering of fear, the free expression of self, the true loving kindness of strangers that quickly became friends, the wisdom of beautiful souls, and the most impressive stick fish ever pulled out of Sawmill Reservoir.

Recreation Programs Nurse Spotlight



Ana Perea, RN

What is your favorite part about being a Craig nurse?

My favorite part of being a Craig nurse is getting to make connections that become friendships with my patients. It's a place where I can see patients and coworkers as family.

Thank You

What is your favorite experience/memory with BIAC?

I have a lot of memories from BIAC, but my favorite was seeing a camper doing the high ropes course in a wheelchair. I never thought this would be possible until I was part of this BIAC experience. I was encouraged and motivated to tell all of my patients about this because it definitely opens doors for people with disabilities to do fun activities.



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