



Types of Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury
Acquired Brain Injury
Anoxic Brain Injury
Hypoxic Brain Injury
Diffuse Brain Injury

The War that Never Ends

By Larry Jameson

Site Navigation

Home Page
Brain Injury Information
Brain Injury Attorneys
Brain Injury Associations
Brain Injury Resources
Veteran's Information
News & Events

Using this Site

Our Sitemap

SEARCH

Brain Injury Survivor's Guide now available as an interactive eBook for only \$7.99. [Click here to learn more about the BISG eBook.](#)

The eyes of the world have been watching Americans in Iraq since 2003. Many never believed the United States military and its coalition partners should have invaded what has become a Middle Eastern hotspot. At that time, about three-fourths of Americans agreed invasion was the right thing. Not so, now.

Americans are ready for the war to end. The world is ready for the war to end. November 11 is a national day of remembrance, Veteran's Day. It began as Armistice Day, celebrating the end of World War I. We point to May 8, V-E Day, as the day World War II in the European Theater ended and August 15 as the day World War II ended in the Pacific Theater, V-J Day.

We have other war-ending dates: July 27, 1953 when hostilities ended in Korea. Who can forget the image of that Air America helicopter filled with South Vietnamese civilians lifting skyward as the United States evacuated on April 30, 1975.

Poll numbers may differ in percentages but all of them show Americans are ready for an end date in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For thousands of military personnel, this will be a war that never ends. **Traumatic brain injury is the signature wound of the Iraqi War, and brain injury is a war that never ends.**

Brain injury is defined as physical damage to the brain caused by physical force, insufficient blood or oxygen supply, toxic substances, malignancy, disease-producing organisms, congenital disorders, birth trauma or degenerative processes.

The brain is made up of billions of cells (neurons) that resemble an octopus with arms (axons) sprouting outward in every direction. The cells work together through billions of electrical impulses firing across a tiny space (synapse) from an arm of one cell to the arm of another.

Physical damage inflicted by brain injury short-circuits some of those electrical impulses and interrupts that amazing communication network. Those interruptions lead to memory, cognitive and behavioral problems and, in many cases, physical problems as well.

Brain injuries are unlike more common injuries like a broken arm. Broken arms can be set and put in a cast; weeks pass and the broken bone mends itself. You cannot put a cast on short term memory that no longer functions correctly. Slowed cognitive processing cannot be returned to normal speed with a band-aid or field dressing.

Neither scientists nor the medical community has developed a procedure that will restore an injured brain cell. Even though there has been a recent success in this area using lab mice and stem cells, military personnel returning from Iraq will not find this to be an option.

An injured brain is an injured brain is an injured brain, and **brain injury is a war that never ends**. Almost two million people each year in the United States are victims of brain injury. The International Brain Injury Association lists it as the number one cause of death and disability in the world.

Beth Jameson has been a brain injury survivor for over seventeen years. Many friends, acquaintances and co-workers have no idea she has an injured brain because she has developed numerous strategies to compensate for *things* her brain no longer performs.

D. J. Fierce sustained a brain injury in a car accident in 1984. Like Beth, he developed his own therapy program he likes to call *Fierce Therapy*. In May of 2007, DJ met Joey, who was to become his fiancé. Joey recently said, "He has made so much progress that if I hadn't read the book and heard stories from friends, I'd scarcely believe it. I can tell when he gets tired because he slurs his

words slightly and drags his right foot...but other than that it just seems surreal that he's come so far."

Beth and DJ are only two examples that brain injury is a war that never ends. They have learned how to live successful lives after brain injury, even though both are still plagued with problems. Both have also dedicated themselves to helping others who are now walking in their shoes.

Brain injury rehabilitation is not a procedure you can learn from a manual. Each person's brain is different. Sure, all brains basically look alike and weigh about the same, but a brain contains memories, personalities, and information that no other brain can claim.

All brain injuries do not affect the same parts of the brain. Some injuries affect both physical and mental processes while others affect only memory, cognitive and behavioral issues. Common among brain injury victims are times of confusion, frustration and depression.

'Why can't I remember what I did this morning?' 'Why can't I remember what's-his-name?' 'What should I do today?' These questions are not only common; they are questions on the mind of an injured brain every day.

When Beth was discharged from Intensive Care, she did not remember being married. She did not know where she lived, and she did not remember having children. She also did not remember how to cook or, even, how to put on makeup.

DJ did not remember that he was ending the relationship with his girlfriend and married her! A few years later he ended the marriage. There is no medical professional or rehab counselor who would have known DJ's intentions. That is but one example of why brain injury rehabilitation relies heavily on **informed family members**.

Dr. Glen Johnson, clinical neuropsychologist, estimates that seventy-five percent of persons with known brain injuries do not have sufficient insurance coverage to provide rehabilitation treatment. For those who are insured, most brain injury rehab programs last only four to six months for a problem that lasts a lifetime. Professional counseling is but one battle in a war that never ends.

It is imperative that caregivers, whether they are professional or family members, arm themselves with information about brain injury. Equally important is the need to learn strategies and methods that will help brain injury victims compensate in areas where their brains no longer function as they once did.

For this reason, Beth Jameson and her husband Larry have authored the recently published *Brain Injury Survivor's Guide*. In it, they outline problems Beth faced and step-by-step strategies developed to deal with her brain injury. Over two dozen how-to lists are explained, and the couple has created downloadable versions of the lists on a [brain injury support website](#).

Brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder have similar symptoms, and both can cause considerable disruption in a person's life. The Jamesons identify this **Cycle of Response**: mental fatigue, confusion, frustration, guilt and depression. While the Cycle is a normal response pattern among brain injury victims, it is one that needs to be recognized and dealt with.

Seventeen years after her injury, you could find a copy of the Cycle in a drawer at Beth's office. When work pressures begin to build, she can pull it out, identify where she is on the cycle and take appropriate steps to back away from the stress.

The Northeast Center for Special Care, a rehabilitation facility in New York, chose the Jamesons' website as their January 2008 Site of the Month, calling it, "a new website and a companion book created by a TBI survivor and her spouse. A great and practical web resource with tools that you can use."

"When you click-into the actual site and read the introductory section you will see that the Jamesons have written their site in clear, direct language and provide directions on using the site in order to make it useful to the many survivors who visit," the article continues. The full article is available at the rehab website: <http://www.northeastcenter.com/website-of-the-month-jan08.htm>.

The [Brain Injury Guide](#) website is Safe Surf rated and has received ICCS certification as being safe for people of all ages. The Learning Foundation has designated the website as a Learning

Foundation, and the American Association of Webmasters presented it a 2007 – 2008 Silver Award for excellence.

Victims of brain injury, their family members and professional caregivers have also commented on Brain Injury Survivor's Guide and its website. J from Colorado wrote, "What a great website, thank you for dedicating yourself to get us the information!"

Another person wrote, "I think your site is a wonderful tribute to a problem so few even think about. In a moment my world changed too. One night I woke up and realized something was wrong. 39 days later I woke up from my COMA in an ICU in full isolation. In the twinkling of an eye it can all change."

A Mississippi pastor wrote, "I received your book in the mail yesterday and read it last night. I couldn't put it down. I really enjoyed it. You and Beth did a wonderful job. I ordered two more copies and plan to give them to (family members). This book will be a tremendous help to a person who has suffered some type of brain trauma and to his/her family. This book is 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 in action."

A person from Connecticut wrote, "My significant other is a brain injury survivor. We read this book together and found it extremely helpful. Larry and Beth have put into words a very difficult struggle and given practical advice, suggestions and different ways to look at things. My survivor went through so many of the things Beth describes such as confusion in the grocery store, and stepping off curbs without looking, in addition to the need for independence. For families, friends and survivors this book really walks you through what to expect and how to get through it!"

Another victim wrote, "As a survivor of a brain injury myself, this book has incredible, practical insights into dealing with and overcoming the day-to-day struggles of regaining your life after head-injury.

Written in easy flowing, sometimes humorous language, the authors communicate critical advice to readjusting expectations and coping with brain trauma. Not only will this book be helpful for the significant others of the survivor, I think the perspectives portrayed with humorous anecdotes and the emotions communicated will speak encouragement and hope to the survivor. Every survivor of this trauma will see themselves in Beth's struggle. Two thumbs up guys!"

When asked why the book was written seventeen years after Beth's injury, Larry said, "We were finally prompted to action by the **Traumatic Brain Injuries being suffered by our soldiers in Iraq**. We know firsthand the new life they and their families are entering. We know the best information about dealing with this new lifestyle comes from those who have been there. We know that knowledge is power to a brain injured patient."

The book's Dedication contains these words, "A special dedication goes out to the thousands of soldiers victimized by traumatic brain injury while serving in Iraq and other areas of the world: men and women who have chosen to risk their lives for a more peaceful world."

Brain Injury Survivor's Guide Table of Contents

- Welcome to Our World
- Code Blue!
- Beth's Message to Brain Injury Victims
- Larry's Message to Family Members
- Dealing with Doctors
- Dealing with Your Brain
- Cycle of Response
- Dealing with Getting Organized
- Dealing with Common Problems
- Daily Strategies
- Dealing with Behavioral Issues
- Little Ol' List Maker, You
- Sources of Information
- A Special Thank You from Beth
- The Beginning

From The Beginning, "You have reached the conclusion of this book, Brain Injury Survivor's Guide, and also the beginning of your new life as a Brain Injury Survivor family.

Welcome to Our World. It is a world of hope, and it is a world of frustration. It is a world of opportunities, and it is a world of confusion. It is the world in which we have lived for seventeen years and, now, it is your world."

Yes, brain injury is a war that never ends, but it is a war that can be fought like any other. An injured brain is the opponent, and it will perform thoughts and actions that are both unwanted and unexpected. To be successful, intel is needed.

Shortly after World War II began, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall asked Hollywood director Frank Capra to produce a series of films to be used during orientation for America's soldiers. The last film of the series was appropriately titled, **Know Your Enemy**. It is equally important that families affected by brain injury learn about the many facets of brain injury.

Beth insisted that the back cover of Brain Injury Survivor's Guide include the words, "**Knowledge is Power to a Brain Injured Person**." Knowledge also empowers families, friends and co-workers of those affected by brain injury.

Family members will be the boots on the ground. These are the people, the heroes, who will deal with the everyday issues of brain injury. These are the people who will help their loved one improve memory skills, cognitive skills and those moments of erratic behavior.

On pages 132 – 133 of the book Larry writes, "One of the reasons we are writing this book is to provide support for soldiers coming home from war zones with brain injuries. The War in Iraq, or any other war for that matter, consumes the news. The newspaper is filled with articles, magazines feature war photos on front covers, and television news reports story after story after story about the fighting. How much do you see about those soldiers in support units?"

Those support units travel dangerous roads taking supplies to the front line troops. They take fuel, food, ammunition and much, much more to enable the 'fighting' troops to persevere. Those pulling the trigger would not be able to do so for very long without the support troops doing their jobs."

Family members, the boots on the ground in this war that never ends, need support from outside groups and other people who have fought battles in the same war. The brain injury community is fast becoming a close-knit one. People ask questions and find answers from others who have experienced those same issues.

The **Brain Injury Guide** and **Brain-Injury-Online** websites provide updated lists of resources that provide such support.

There is a problem about this War that Never Ends. Many of the soldiers in the war do not know, or will not admit, they're in the war. Brain injury victims, their friends and family members tend to deny the existence of brain injury.

You may hear things like, "I'll be okay once I shake away these cobwebs." Or, you may hear someone say, "You just need a few days rest; then you'll be back to normal."

Word-finding is a common problem. In mid-sentence, a brain injured person will draw a blank when searching for the next word to say. Someone will say, "Oh, that happens to me all the time."

Short-term memory problems are also very common. A brain injured person may ask, "Did you go to the bank today?" Five minutes later they may ask, "Did you go to the bank today?" Ten minutes later they may ask, "Did you go to the bank today?" He or she truly does not remember that the question has been asked and answered. And it can really grate on the nerves of the person being asked.

It is so important that family, friends and co-workers know the symptoms and issues surrounding and embedded in brain injury. What if you had a list of "Things to Do Today"? What if that list contained "Go to the Bank?" What if that list had a checkmark indicating that you had indeed gone to the bank?

What if you said to the questioner, "Did you check the list?" There are many, many strategies like this contained in **Brain Injury Survivor's Guide** and on the websites.

The publisher's press release was titled, "What Everyone Should Know About Surviving A Traumatic Brain Injury." Why? Because everyone should learn more about this condition that affects over 5 million families in the United States. Because everyone should know more about this unwanted and unexpected event that happens to 2 million people in the United States each year.

Because brain injury is a war that never ends; you may be called into the fight at any time. You could be a victim. You could be a family member of a victim. You could be a friend of a victim. Or, you might wish to learn more so you can help others.

Brain Injury Guide website: <http://www.braininjuryguide.org>

Brain-Injury-Online website: <http://www.brain-injury-online.com>

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