



ENDURANCE: WITH FAITH YOU CAN PERSEVERE PAST INJURY

By C. Rae Johnson

I was on top of the world as a personal trainer and nurse, about to open a training studio with my husband to enjoy working together in our shared passion. Excited about our joint venture, our plans were suddenly halted by a freak accident that caused a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to myself which led to a lengthy Post-concussion Syndrome (PCS), that rocked my world and flipped it upside down. As devastating as this was, I had learned to overcome victoriously and continue to still push through my current struggles into a wonderful new life ahead with an answered desire of my heart.

THE NEED TO BECOME BETTER

We all ultimately have a yearning to become better than we once were, atoning for past mistakes, researching for advice, furthering our education, while spending a great deal of time and money reaching our goals.

You may be like me and have looked to physical fitness to improve yourself, your health, self-esteem, strengthen your mind, uplift your spirits, increase your energy, and to set new goals to both achieve and enjoy. As we improve, we often invite others to do the same, boasting of our new-found strength and physique, admiring what we see when results appear. You know what I'm talking about, admit it, being excited that our jeans fit, continually flexing our brawn, and challenging others to beat our new PR (personal record)—secretly hoping they don't. This is exactly where I was at when my husband and I had just started our new personal training business, to further our shared and competitive passion.

However, my sudden injury brought shattered brokenness and dreams cut short, leaving me broken and lacking fulfillment, yet still striving for something more. Perhaps you can relate in your own life.

INVINCIBLE ME

I was invincible, on top of the world, knowing the hard work it takes; the persistence, dedication and discipline to sculpt my body and get to where I wanted to go. There evolved this elite sense of “self”, of “me”, and a camaraderie within the fitness culture, with others just like me; sharing a common bond.

Though this sounds all good, what happens if you suffer an injury? Can you handle a new set of challenges or limitations, while coping with the inability to do what you once did—still craving your intense fitness? It's extremely hard not being able to do what I long to, when my body and brain are unable to. One common truth I've learned is that an injury will drop our sense of pride immediately, no matter how invincible we've felt!



DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR CAN SET IN



It's very easy to fall into depression and despair, being discouraged feeling alone with an injury, not being able to do what I once did as others still could yet couldn't see nor understand my hidden injury within my brain.

I had a most difficult time adapting at first partly because it's hard for family and friends, let alone the rest of our fitness community to

fully understand what I was going through and still be encouraging and compassionate?

SUDDEN TRIALS

Injuries, depending on type, location, and severity of impact, really can have life-altering effects on everything regarding healing, pain, mobility, possible life-long challenges, and impaired cognitive capabilities. An injury can ultimately challenge us on every level—our activities, work, finances, relationships—everything!

For me, getting through this sudden trial required acceptance, forgiveness, perseverance, and hope! It meant that I would hold onto my Savior and trust in Him like never before.

Whenever you face difficulties, you truly do need hope to just keep going forward; that belief, knowing that something good will come out of them, surpassing all understanding. You can learn to view them as training sessions, where you will grow as a person, becoming stronger with mental fortitude and compassion for others—where God can use you in the lives of others hurting.

MY TRIAL

My sudden trial was a Traumatic Brain Injury, that developed into Post-Concussion Syndrome, that changed everything, impacting my brain and body—halting my life. I was injured on the left side of my head, from one of our dogs—large, full of power and running after our other dog.

I had inadvertently intercepted their fun with my head as I bent down. The forceful impact of the dog's hard head running into mine, resulted in damage to several brain lobes; Temporal, Parietal, and Frontal, with axonal stretching, shearing and neuronal damage.

I had difficulties affecting many bodily systems. Some physical symptoms I had were: Severe bone-crushing headaches, pressure, burning, wet sensations, fluctuations in vital signs, balance/walking issues, and proprioception difficulties.

Endocrine: Hormonal imbalances, Adrenal Fatigue, onset of an autoimmune disease and Fibromyalgia due to inflammation caused by the brain injury.

Sensory: Dream-like sensations, difficulty with touch and dexterity, Illusory Palinopsia (seeing after images of movements), heightened senses (smell, sound, etc) and hypervigilance with PTSD.

Behavioral: Highly emotionally sensitive.

Cognitive: Memory challenges, executive functions diminished (planning, reasoning, thinking, decision making), and trouble concentrating.

Communication: Reading, writing and speech were greatly affected. I had trouble thinking and formulating words, felt cognitively slow and foggy in the brain, slowed in speech and thought with stuttering, getting stuck on syllables as I tried to speak. Trouble concentrating on conversations and the person speaking as it all became jumbled noise and very overwhelming.

My life was suddenly flipped upside down, having to re-learn basic skills, as I also learned to trust God for everything— my marriage, my relationships, finances, health, career—everything; because He promises to supply all our needs. I had to not fight against but rather accept what had happened, adapt and get to know the “new” me. I could not give up, no matter how bad I felt, rather I had to be still, let go of control and just let God drive my life as I held onto hope.

WALK BY FAITH



As we learn to walk by faith, we trust in Jesus for everything, always looking forward to a hope filled future; a "good" coming out of a "bad". For me, the cascading "bad" was a sudden career halt not knowing what I'll ever do for a career again—having not worked since. I had financial hardships with fears of losing my home, relationship and marriage strains as this severely challenged my family and marriage like nothing I've ever experienced. I had health concerns with ongoing symptoms, the onset of Fibromyalgia as a direct result, and difficulty functioning daily,

just to get through each day. However, God was able to turn the "bad" in my life into a blossoming "good" via my writing— which was truly a rekindling of my heart's desire; to pen all I've experienced and what helps daily in the hopes of helping others, of helping you.

My need to become "better" has a whole new meaning now as I hope my story can shine light to always have hope. God is absolutely amazing! Think about it—He is using me, a brain injured individual to write books with my injured brain, to serve His children whom I may have never had the chance to; to share hope with others going through the same challenges I am, ultimately bringing God glory. Now, I have real purpose!

BROKENNESS CAN BLOSSOM BEAUTIFULLY

Jesus can use your brokenness, your weakness, and make something beautiful out of it! God knows the desires of your heart, your gifts, because He placed them within you. Once I truly delighted myself in Jesus, through my broken injured life, He awakened my heart's desire, giving me a new passion; and He will ignite yours too as you trust and delight in Him. Once I stopped focusing on "myself" and in what "I can't" do, due to my injury, but rather focused on what "God can" do, He turned my weakness into a strength to help others through my pain, ultimately giving Him glory. I realized I was never alone, and my help is always in Jesus.

Whenever you're faced with any trial or injury, suddenly losing that sense of control, it will open your eyes to Who is in control. For the endurance you

will now need, rather than allowing your emotions rule, just let go and “let God” as you hang onto hope and walk by faith, never giving up! Pushing through your pain of adversity, walking in Christ’s strength, helps you to endure, grow and persevere, enabling you to help others through your pain.

Trusting in Christ Jesus will help you to notice true gain in life: Acceptance, Patience, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Compassion, Joy, Grace, Endurance, Perseverance and the gift of Time to live with purpose!

God works through each of us to help each other, not pridefully compete against for selfish gain. You can be confident knowing, though you may feel alone and lacking in your times of weakness, God’s strength will shine through you sufficiently perfect. That is perfect hope! That is the fighting spirit to never give up.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."- 2Corinthians 12:9 It sure Is!

MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Carolyn Johnson is a former personal trainer and nurse who after suffering a Traumatic Brain Injury in 2014, went on to author several faith-based books, 3 of which deal with brain injuries. Carolyn’s book writing journey began during her recovery process with Post-Concussion Syndrome related to her TBI, as she placed her trust in Jesus and He placed upon her heart to write and share her story with others suffering from injuries, to offer hope and support during their healing.



Carolyn’s story has been featured in many radio interviews on WDCX, ESPN, as well as podcasts on Motivation & Muscle and Keys2Concussions. She is committed to sharing Christ through her experiences in new and exciting ways through her writing, continued health and fitness, and support groups, encouraging others to always have hope. Her pen name is C. Rae Johnson.

Additional Resources:

Website: <https://craejohnsonauthor.com/>

Facebook Traumatic Brain Injury TBI & Post-Concussion Syndrome PCS Support Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/951850348205135/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/craejohnsonauthor/>

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