

“Let it begin with me”

Emily Ptacek, M.S. CCC/SLP Brain Injury Survivor

Introduction

Many people in this room understand brain injury.

You may be:

- Living with a brain injury
- Caring for someone who has one
- A professional helping survivors regain independence

Today I'd like to share part of my journey.



Who I Am

Before my accident I was:

- A young mom
- Working full-time at a job I loved
- A wife to my husband, Will

I expected to spend the next 40 years living that life.

But the universe had other plans



My Life Before



November 6, 2020

November 6, 2020 started like a normal day.

- Took my girls to school and daycare
- Went to work
- Saw patients
- Planned a quiet weekend with my family



The First Five Weeks

After the accident:

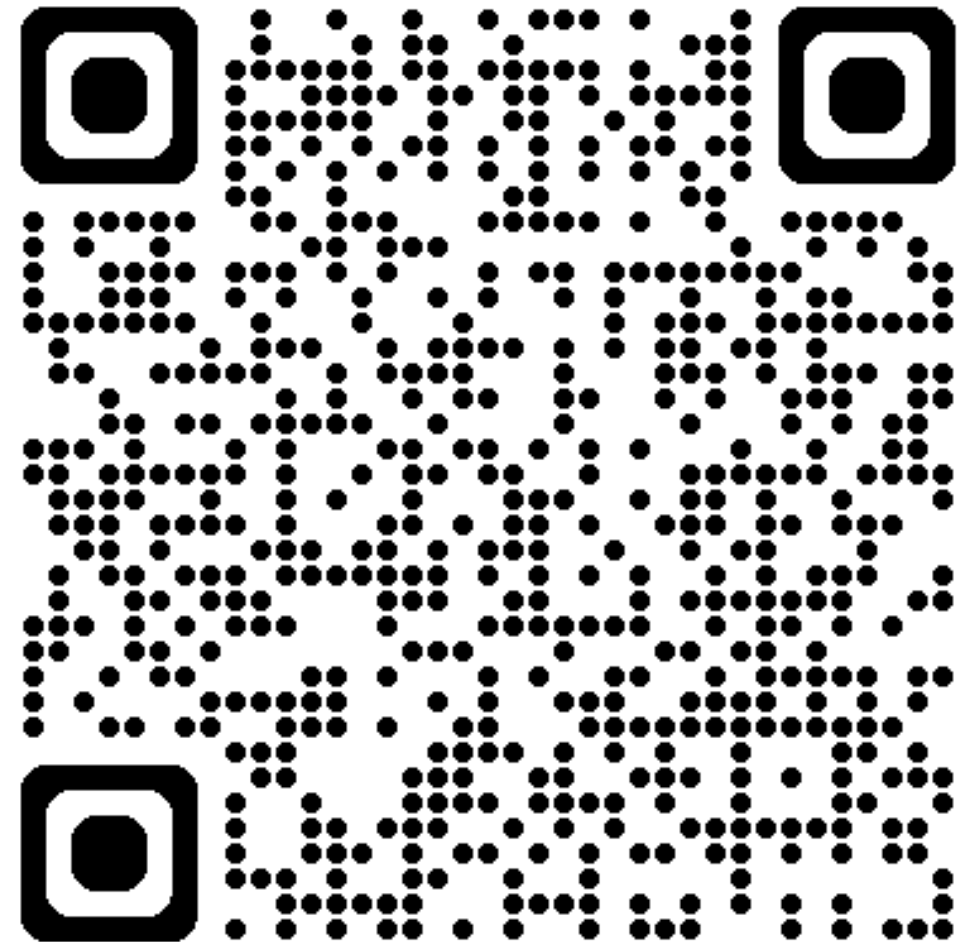
- LifeFlight to Wesley Hospital in Wichita
- Stabilized and transferred to Madonna Rehabilitation Center in Lincoln, Nebraska

Five intense weeks of recovery.



“That Podcast In Hutch”

By Jason Probst



My Husband

This year we celebrate **16 years of marriage**

After my accident our roles changed.

He stepped in to manage:

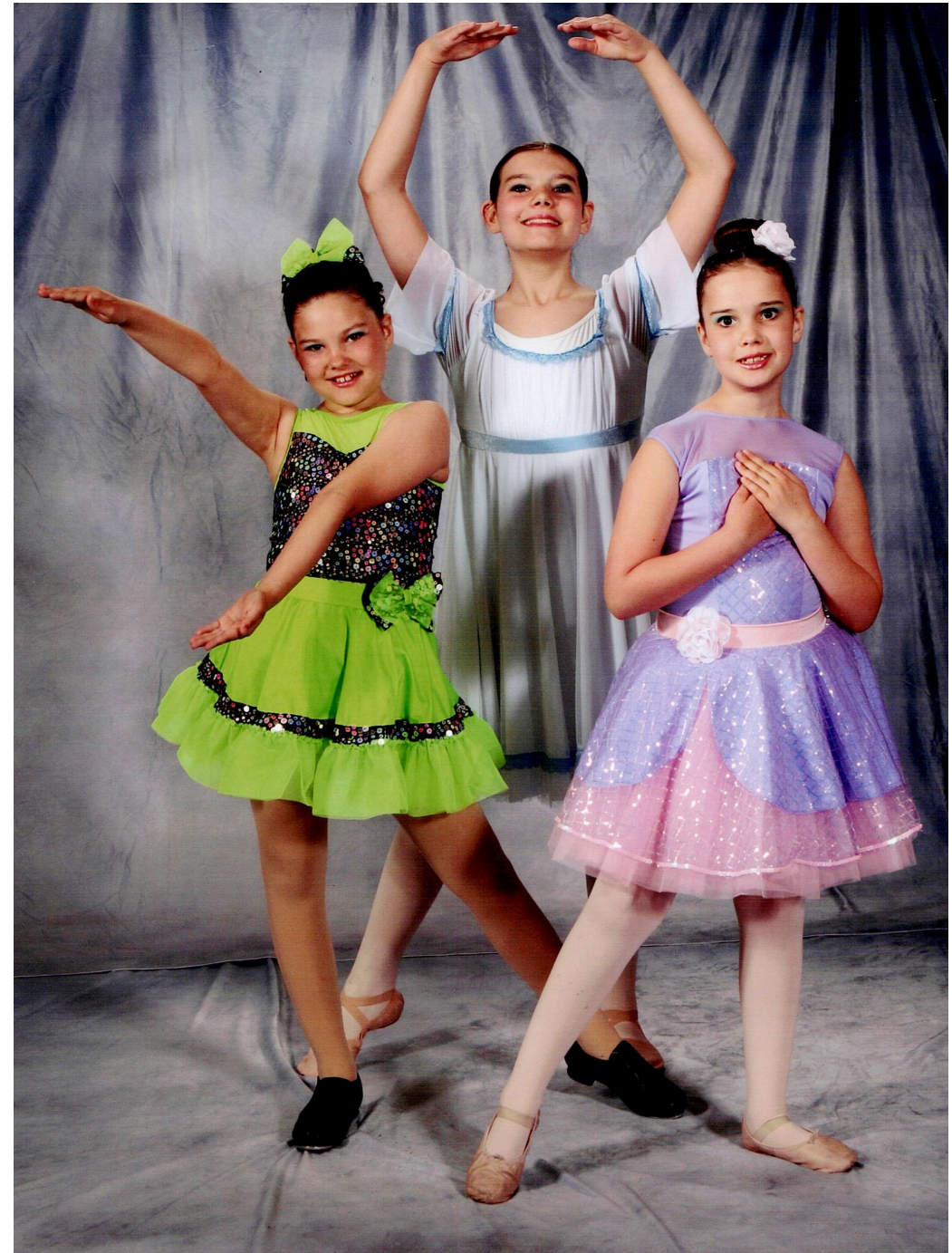
- Finances
- Meals
- Appointments
- The girls' schedules



He became even closer
with our daughters.

He's my person.

He's OUR person.



My Mom

My Mom- Carol

- With me at Wesley Hospital
- With me at Madonna Rehab
- Helped with appointments
- Advocate for my care



Support like this makes recovery possible.

The “Gold Standard”

The “Gold Standard” of Care

- Nurse case manager
- Coordinated appointments
- Transportational support
- Tracking recovery



But many survivors do NOT get this.

The Hardest Parts

Some of the hardest challenges:

- Fatigue
- Memory struggles
- Loss of independence
- Depression and anxiety



Recovery is not only physical.

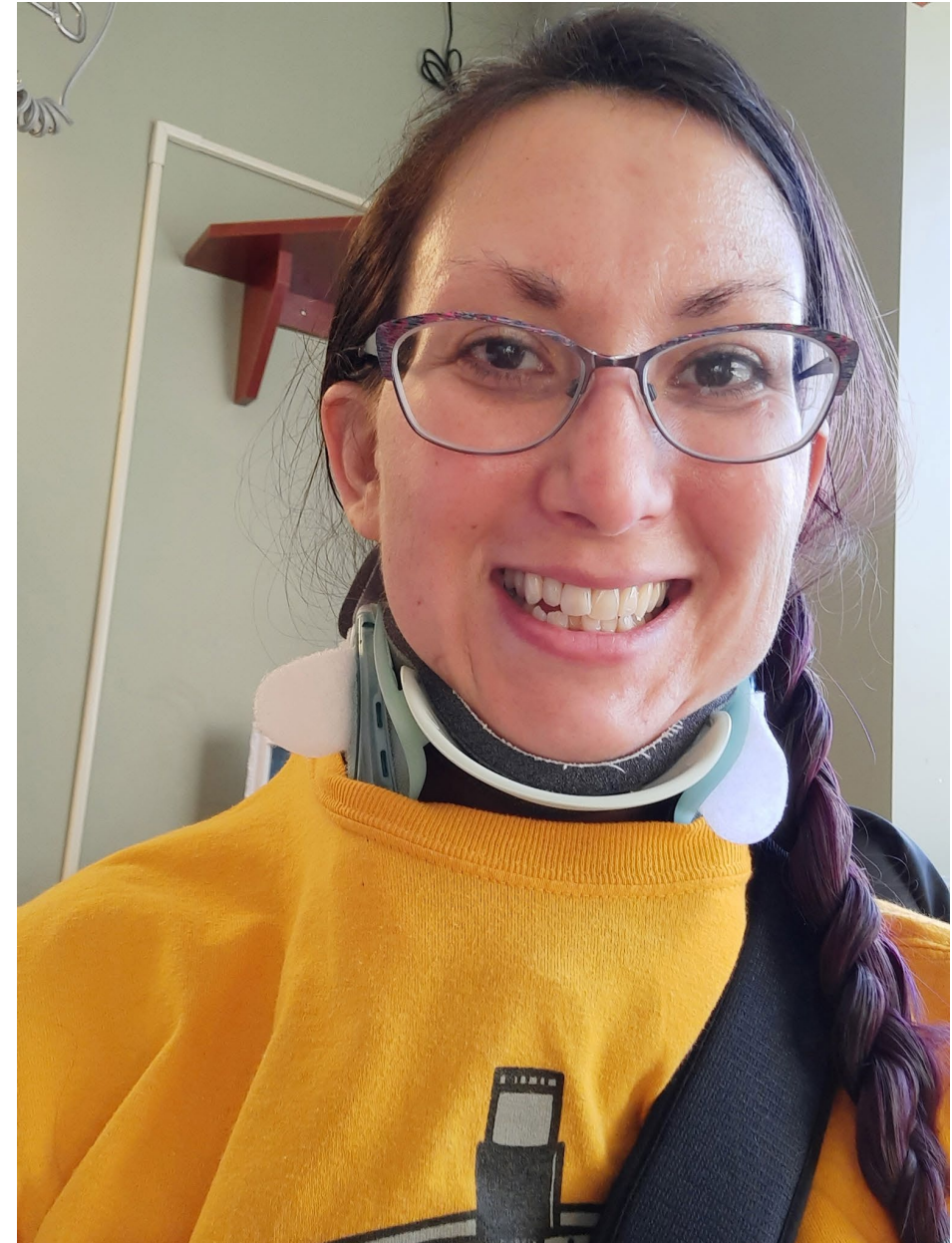
A Turning Point

A therapist suggested I attend a brain injury support group.

But the only one available did not fit my schedule

So.....

I started one.



Let's make it official!

- Contacted the Kansas Brain Injury Association and they listed our group on the website



Our First Meeting

Our First Meeting- August 2023
Hutchinson Regional Medical
Center

Our first meeting was in August
of 2023.

Attendance:

- My mom
- My mother in-law



Spreading the Word

To find members I:

- Made flyers
- Posted them around town
- Shared them at clinics and therapy offices
- Talked to anyone who would listen

Sometimes you just have to start small.

Brain Injury Support Group



We meet **every 2nd Wednesday**
at **1pm at the Hutchinson**
Public Library meeting room 4

All are welcome! Whether you are a caregiver or a brain injury survivor! For questions, contact Emily Ptacek 620-680-0508

Christian Found Us!



Community Outreach

We hosted a booth at Hutchinson's **Third Thursday** event the past two years.

- Posters
- Brain games
- Community conversations



BrainInjuryMatters.org

Toolkit for TBI Support Group Facilitators

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Depression

Tips for Caregivers

- **Take care of yourself.** Taking time to meet your own needs will help you cope with the emotional challenges of the TBI survivor. Doing activities you find relaxing, even for a short time, can be helpful in keeping your life balanced. Allow yourself to take breaks from care-giving. Let your family and friends help you when needed. Look for classes and caregiver support groups where you can learn more about effective problem-solving and coping strategies needed for care-giving.
- **Help the TBI survivor develop healthful habits.** Encouraging the TBI survivor to get up and go to bed at reasonable times, limit naps, eat healthy foods, and get outside for some sunlight and fresh air can help promote a more positive frame of mind. Monitoring alcohol and smoking intake can help prevent unhealthy coping strategies. Helping the TBI survivor take the correct dose of medications at the right times will maximize their benefits.
- **Implement relaxation strategies.** Deep-breathing techniques, massages, meditation, and listening to relaxation tapes can help a person calm down, reduce stress, and feel better overall.
- **Consider professional help.** Letting a professional help with the more difficult emotional problems can help maintain or improve your relationship with the TBI survivor and prevent you from becoming the therapist. Don't hesitate to ask the physician for a psychotherapy referral.

Mindsourececolorado.org



A.H.E.A.D.

**Achieving Healing through Education,
Accountability, and Determination**

A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM
FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

CELEBRITY PROFILES

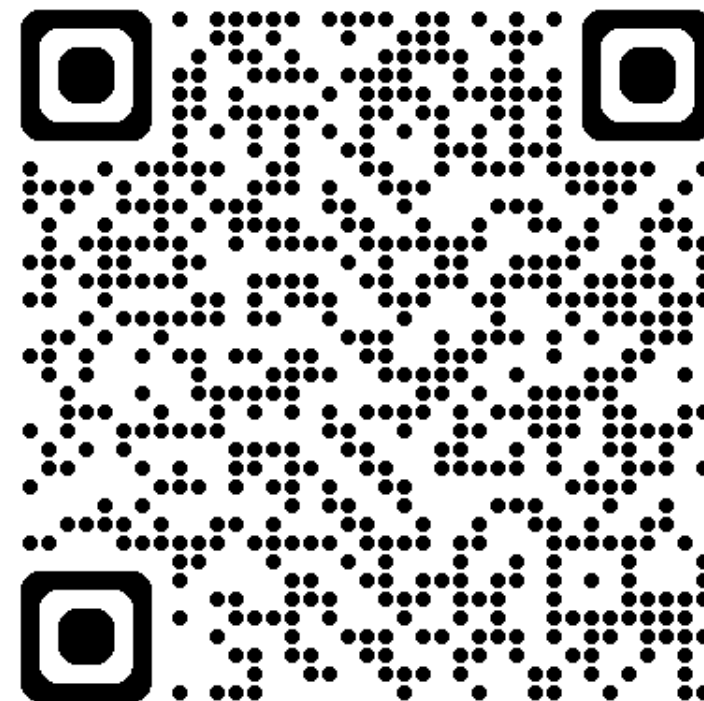
Olympic Bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor Is Changing the Conversation About Concussion

One of the most decorated bobsledders in US history shares her new outlook while preparing for the 2026 Winter Olympics, and how recovery from a concussion led her to advocate for better care.



Brain&Life Magazine

It's FREE!!



Books by Brain Injury Survivors

- **“I’ll Carry the Fork: Recovering a Life After Brain Injury”** by Kara Swanson
- **“Brain Injury Rewiring for Survivors: A Lifeline to New Connections”** by Carolyn Dolen
- **“Headstrong: Surviving a Traumatic Brain Injury without Losing My Mind”** by Donna Valentino
- **“Finding True Purpose: Life Beyond the Castle”** by Terri Mongait
- **“Sex with a brain injury: On concussion and recovery”** by Annie Liontas
- **“Where is the Mango Princess: A journey back from brain injury”** by Cathy Crimmins
- **“Left Neglected”** by Lisa Genova

Educational Books about Brain Injury

- **“The Traumatized Brain”** by Vani Rao, MBBS, MD and Sandeep Vaishnavi, MD, PhD
- **“Brain Injury Rewiring for Survivors”** by Carolyn E. Dolen, MA
- **“The Mind Electric: A Neurologist on the Strangeness and Wonder of our Brains”** by Pria Anand
- **“Head Cases: Stories of Brain Injury and It’s Aftermath”** by Michael Paul Mason
- **“The Hilarious World of Depression”** by John Moe
- **“The Mini ADHD Coach”** by Alice Grendron

Podcasts

- “Hope Survives” Christabelle Braden
- “Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center” mskctc.org
- “Brain Injury Speaks The Podcast” OntarioBIA
- Neuro Pathways: A Cleveland Clinic Podcast for Medical Professionals
- “Depresh Mode with John Moe”
- “ADHD for Smart Ass Women with Tracy Otsuka”

Speaker

- **Jennifer Vaughn, SLP and
Regional Director of “Minds
Matter”**



minds matter

• Anna Woods,
**ACE Certified Personal
Trainer and Aging
Specialist and Crossfit
Level 1 Coach
SheStrength™**



- **Lindsey Henry**
M.A., CCC-SLP
“Abundance
Speech Therapy”



- **Mindy Manning, Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse- “Sunflower Mental Wellness”**



This is **Our** Group

Future Topics &
Speakers

Therapy · Mental Health ·
Fitness · Resources

This is **OUR** group.



Recovery vs Improvement

Brain Injury Survivors Can Improve



Why Support Groups Matter

Support groups provide:

- Understanding
- Shared experience
- Practical advice
- Hope



Find or Start a Group

Find a Support Group

Biaks.org

If you don't find one.....



Let it begin with.....

YOU!!

Thank You! Emily Ptacek
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