Survivor and Family Education Series

*Tuesday Evenings: April 4 – May 16*

A seven-week series presented by brain injury professionals at Parkwood Institute in London, Ontario, covers topics for people recovering from an acquired brain injury, their families, friends, and caregivers.

The series gives participants an opportunity to share information, meet other individuals and family members affected by brain injury, and gain peer support. This year the series will be broadcast in a webinar format to communities across Ontario. Participants can view the series and interact with speakers from home or from community locations.

- **When:** The series will run Tuesdays from 6:30–8 p.m., April 4–May 16.
- **Access:** Details on community locations and how to access the webinars will be available at [https://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/abi](https://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/abi). Registration is free.

**Topics will include:**
- Brain Injury 101 & practical strategies for managing your life
- Discussion about mTBI and concussions presented by a Parkwood Institute physiatrist
- Coping with vision issues and noise sensitivity
- Nutrition and wellness
- Financial issues such as bankruptcy, disability savings plans, and more
- Survivors’ stories

[More info is on the Ontario Brain Injury Association website: www.obia.ca](http://www.obia.ca)

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See page 9: Tips for caregivers, family, and friends of people with concussion/mTBI
St. Patrick’s Day at BIAOV:
Close to Kevin Dooley’s Heart

Kevin Dooley and friends play Irish music on St. Patrick’s Day at the BIAOV.

For Kevin Dooley of Ottawa, along with members of his family, the annual St. Patrick’s luncheon at the work centre of the Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley on Bronson Street is a very special occasion.

An Irish Canadian in Canada since 1977, Kevin and his daughter, Deirdre, are musicians and singers who together with friends played at the luncheon on March 16th.

The members of the work centre cooked up a delicious Irish stew with salad, rolls, and dessert. This reflects the integral nature of the centre. It is a place of support and fellowship for head injury survivors (HIS) and their families.

Kevin, too, is a HIS, on a permanent disability pension from WCB (B.C.). He lost his occupation as a machinist and marine engineer through a workplace accident. He survived through much toil and assistance to become a successful musician, author, and heritage activist.

At this very special event, Kevin can share his talents and offer encouragement to HIS peers. And here Kevin can dissolve with impunity, knowing here he will not face the stigmatization, the alienation, and social isolation so common to all HIS.

Kevin discloses his status whenever possible. His latest novel -- A Dog’s Breakfast -- is dedicated to all Head Injury Survivors everywhere, and his son set up a Facebook page for his novels. His other novels include: By the Hob and The Other Man. Check Kevin out on Google.

Submitted by: Onagh Dooley
( Kevin’s spouse)
St. Patrick’s Day Luncheon

Ready for the great meal: (from left) Stéphane, Gérald, Arlene, and Bob

Enjoying the Irish music: (from left) François, Ike, and Mark

Board members (from left) Kathy, Hélène, and Dave
In February, Rick P., Rick W., François, Ike, Stéphane, Gerry, Derek, Bev, Tania, Laurie, and Wendy toured Winterlude’s Crystal Garden. There was a multitude of sculptures there. These included ice sculptures of a large boat with sails, a swan, a castle (stone) wall, and also an angel playing a harp with at least three surrounding angels. The European Union carved a spiral structure with maple leaves and a flame carved on top. To celebrate Canada’s coming celebrations, a Canada 150 was also carved. There were also snow sculptures there, including a bear, two hands knitting a scarf, and more. (We also enjoyed sandwiches, hot chocolate, and beaver tails!)

Crystal Gardens

A grand surrounding of a beautiful scene,
Sparkles similar to multiple dreams,
Effort many together create,
Smooth curves and lines truly ornate.

Dimensional sculpted displays offered,
By those of origins and perspectives varied,
Fine detailed images both clear and white,
Carved with imagination to delight.

Tania M.
BIAOV members enjoy Ottawa’s winter festival. Back row: (L-R) Wendy, François, Gérald, Stéphane, and Jack. Front row: (L-R) Rick, Derek, and Tania.

Upcoming Events for Brain Injury Education

Join us for Brain Injury: A Family Affair. This Spring Education Session will be on Friday, May 26th, Room 222 at the Bronson Centre from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The focus will be on the impact brain injury has on everyone, including, family and our circle of friends, and how we move ahead together.

Brain Injury Awareness Day: June 14th, sponsored by Vista Centre Brain Injury Services. Registration opens May 1st.
Peer Mentoring Program Nurtures Hope

A few months ago, a valuable, long-standing Mentor in the Peer Mentoring Program passed away. It made me reflect on why I am doing what I do as a Peer Support Coordinator for BIAOV. Like everybody, I have my ups and down. Fortunately more ups than down ...

I do what I do because I love it: helping people having a purpose, sharing their experiences, their troubles, their similarities, their needs for each other.

Recently, a Mentor ended the conversation of their weekly phone call by telling her Partner in the program to “Keep Dreaming,” which left her with a sense of peace and hope.

A few days later, I got an email telling me that the Partner wanted a letter to be passed on to her Mentor which talked of a song she heard telling about dreaming and the long road ... this applies to humans’ quest to reach their stars (from the “Enterprise” series).

But everyone has their own star, she wrote; ours (the ABI Survivors) is about our recovery which can bring us to paths we couldn’t even dream possible before, maybe because those pathways were dormant before our incidents.

I needed to share this because it is so profound and inspiring: this is why I do what I do.

Hélène Richardson
Peer Support Coordinator
BIAOV
613-233-8303

P.S. If you ever need someone to listen and share and understand what you are going through, you might find it in the Peer Mentoring Program offered by the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) in conjunction with the Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley.

Please contact me ...
Get Set for the Annual Golf Tourney

JUNE 22

SAVE THE DATE...

For the 4th annual...

FLEMING FITNESS
Leading Fitness & Injury Rehab Specialists

Golf Tournament

All proceeds benefiting the Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley

...at Loch March Golf & Country Club

KEN EVRAIRE AS THE M.C.

“It’s going to be another great day at Loch March and I can’t wait to see you out there.”

CONTACT PAT FLEMING FOR SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
(2 PLATINUM, 1 GOLD, 1 WINE, 1 BEER, 2 SILVER, 1 BRONZE)

Patrick Fleming, R.Kin, CSCS
Fleming Fitness
613-882-8434
patrick@flemingfitness.ca
Brain Basics Delivers Helpful Information

The Ontario Brain Injury Association and BIAOV partnered to offer the Brain Basics Course on Wednesday, March 22\textsuperscript{nd} and Thursday, March 23\textsuperscript{rd} at the RA Centre. We welcomed John Kumpf, the facilitator, and his assistant, Steve Noyes, who represented the Ontario Brain Injury Association.

There were 19 participants in the course. Attendees were from various backgrounds including family members, survivors, PSWs, Social Work, and Lifeskills workers. Participants were given a pretest at the beginning of the course and wrote an exam at the conclusion on Thursday.

Goals of the Presentation:

- To understand the nature and role of the brain
- To appreciate the consequences of a brain injury
- To acquire practical strategies to work successfully with people living with the effects of brain injury
- To appreciate the role of the caregivers in the Support Team

The highlight of the course was a panel discussion on Thursday afternoon. An invitation to take part in the panel discussion was made both to survivors and to family members. Thank you to survivors Jane Foster-Clark, Melanie Gates, Tim Slykhuis, and Steve Noyes, and to family members Hélène Richardson, Kathy Warren, and Denis Charbonneau for sharing their stories.

Panelists (from left) Steve, Hélène, Denis, Kathy, Tim, Jane, and Melanie listen to facilitator John Kumpf.
Concussion Corner

Local Support for Caregivers

Concussions are challenging for everyone: not only the people who are injured, but also spouses, families, and friends. We all find ourselves in new roles, and the adjustments are often very difficult. Here are some resources that can help:

1. **Family Support Group**
   Meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the Brain Injury Association of the Ottawa Valley (BIAOV) office on Bronson Avenue. The group allows spouses, parents, and friends of people with brain injury to share their experiences and support others in the group who live with similar challenges.
   *For meeting dates, see the calendar on the last page of this newsletter or [click here](#) for the BIAOV calendar of events throughout 2017.*

2. **Support for Children: Karing Kids**
   This booklet was written locally by children who have a parent who has suffered a brain injury. It is intended for:
   - children of a parent with a head injury
   - parents from these families to help understand what their children are feeling
   - teachers who need to understand what these children are experiencing at home
   - health professionals who work with families of people with brain injuries
   - friends of children who have a parent with a brain injury
   - everyone else interested in the effects of brain injury on families and their children
   *The booklet is available at the BIAOV. Contact Wendy Charbonneau for a copy: 613-233-8303.*

3. **Ottawa Rehab Centre Resources**
   **Coping with brain injury: A guide for caregivers and family**
   This helpful guide is on the website of the Ottawa Hospital Rehab Centre: Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Outpatient Services.
Bringing home a loaf of bread post concussion

By Jane Clark

Those living with persistent concussion symptoms know that even mundane activities can go awry. A typical example discussed at a recent peer support meeting offers a glimpse into daily life with this condition and the perils of deviating from a careful plan.

One fine January day, I planned to dodge the taxing sounds of an in-home duct cleaning by visiting my Mom. I offered to pick up milk and bread since my husband, our main grocery shopper, was stuck at home with the duct cleaners. His hesitant look prompted my assurance that it would be okay. A local and familiar grocery store was en route.

My first mistake was adding this task. My second mistake was to do so without a list. I walked through the store pausing and collecting more items: classic manifestations of distractibility and impulsivity. I dumped the burgeoning pile into an abandoned cart. I made it through the cash register, a multi-level interactive activity.

At the exit, I opted to hand-carry my unwieldy load to avoid the rolling and clanking of the cart across the parking lot.

Alas, the bread – a baguette – slid out of its package and landed in the slush: a bust even for the most liberal adherents to the “5 second rule.”

I managed to buy more bread but by then, my mouth was hanging open: one sign of rapidly approaching overload fatigue, among others. A pacing break did not restore sufficient “energy points” to continue to my Mom’s.

With help from my husband, I spent the rest of the day recovering, first in our unheated back porch room where I lay on a couch bundled up, under blankets and with ear protection for the duration of the duct cleaning, and then in bed.

If only I had followed Natalia’s excellent coping tips (Brain Injury Awareness Day, June 2016) that included not doing things that were not on the list …

This is a common experience among PCS peers. Inordinate effort, inability to sustain activities, and aggravated symptoms are often the price of engaging in routine activities.

We are always choosing between priorities because we cannot do more than one. There is no second wind. On the contrary, pushing beyond the limit often results in a further setback.

On the bright side, I did get the bread albeit at the expense of the outing’s original purpose. The neighbourhood squirrels, recipients of the slushy loaf, certainly counted it as a win. And my husband later brought me a tasty sandwich made with the second loaf.

So, I chalked it up to another conditioning exercise and also took it as a win. Yum yum.
The Gruen Effect: Avoid the Shopping Traps

By Stephanie B.

Ever wonder why some stores are built like a maze; why you walk out of a shopping mall with what you saw, rather than what you needed? And why you can’t find what you wanted to buy in the first place? All three serve the evil purposes of a Mr. Victor Gruen. Born in Vienna in 1904, Gruen originally started out arranging storefront displays in the USA. He maintained that storefronts that “dazzle” would attract consumers to spend time and money in a shop they entered haphazardly, like fish following a lure. Eventually, he was commissioned to make one of the first shopping malls, and set out to create a sense of community in suburbia, or a “third space” in which people could safely gather outside of work and home. Somewhere along the way – and Gruen ironically went on to denounce what shopping malls had actually become – these spaces evolved into a distracting and disorienting shopping hell. All on the (correct) assumption that distracted and disoriented people are more likely to make impulsive purchases, the kind you make with an empty stomach at Loblaws. Welcome to the Gruen Effect: where someone stops shopping for something, and starts shopping in general. Bad news if you are on a budget; maddening if you happen to be concussed. You wind up tired and disoriented in even the friendliest of spaces. Still, soles wear out, pants become threadbare, and eventually you need food. So off you head to the nearest commercial space, despite traumatic flashbacks of overstimulation headaches, dizzy spells, and poor shopping decisions.

You start off strong, striking items off your list like a shopping ninja – until the moment you are hit with a wall of condiments to choose from. You waiver for just a moment, trying hard to hold on to the list, until you start wondering about summer barbecues. Before you know it, you are off to Aisle 3 in search of barbecue skewers. I am sure I am not alone in spending time aimlessly browsing the seasonal aisle, when all I really needed was eggs. However, while this is mildly frustrating for my waiting “chauffeur,” it is even worse when I finally stagger home and realize I didn’t buy any food. No more energy to cook, nor space to accommodate my new credit card purchases.

Store Survival Tips

So what can we do to help curb the overspending of money, time, and precious brain-space? Here are a few survival tips that have helped me overcome cognitive fatigue-fuelled distractibility, in cognitively hostile environments:

• Avoid places that are purposefully disorienting and overstimulating.
• Go small and local – avoid franchises that are more likely to have loud, flashing displays.
• Draw or print a map/layout of a big store and bring it along.
  ➢ Plan your shopping excursion with the map in hand. Organize the items in the order they are found: from produce, to dairy, to frozen foods.
  ➢ You could even write the items directly on a copy of the store layout, so that you need only glance at the map to see what to get in that aisle.
  ➢ Avoid the aisles that have nothing you need.
In bigger centres, you can use your GPS search/Google maps to find individual stores.

- Be wary of larger shopping carts, as they can encourage over-shopping and are often noisy and awkward to manoeuvre (though handy to lean on) when you are tired.
- Smartphone/timer: estimate how long you can be out doing things before you start to experience symptoms. Set the timer for five minutes before this. When it goes off, head for the checkout.
- Less is more: make smaller lists and shorter trips, more often. Trying to buy too much at once will only magnify the disorientation, and could lead to more impulse buys.
- Shop with vendors who have a lenient return policy.
- Don’t shop on an empty stomach.
- Bring earplugs, a hat, and sunglasses to try to cut out the sight and noise pollution.
- Bring a friend who can keep you on track with your purchases (not a shopaholic!).

**Online Shopping Tips**

The Gruen effect has become nastier with modern technology. I find the targeted Popup ads in Google search results particularly malicious.

So what do you do to curb the Gruen Effect if you’re online shopping?

- Use an ad-free search engine like DuckDuckGo.
- Put a reminder on your computer: Don’t touch unless your symptoms are low on a Likert scale.
- Set a smartphone/timer to limit your PC shopping sessions. Put it where you have to get up to turn it off.
- Use sites that let you save your “shopping cart” so that you can return when you are thinking clearly again.
- Avoid sites where you have a limited amount of time to make a purchase.
- Notice when you are becoming irritable or the page becomes blurry, or other signs that your symptoms are acting up and it’s time to take a break.

Ironically, many people with head injuries find it difficult to spend much time in a shopping mall/grocery store/online shopping site to begin with, let alone make it to the checkout aisle, or enter credit information. Sometimes I have abandoned my shopping cart and walked out, or closed my laptop, in the midst of frustrated debilitation – take that, Gruen effect! The effect rebounds against vendors, at least for the brain-injured.

When we finally, urgently need those soles or pants or food, however, trying to navigate this Gruen world in our lowest cognitive gear is challenging. This makes us even more vulnerable to the dazzling displays. But recognizing this vulnerability might stop us from bringing home solar-powered flashlights the next time we go out for eggs.

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