When it's Hard to Feel Thankful

November 20, 2016 by Jeff Sebell, from his blog - http://www.tbisurvivor.com/

Many of us who have experienced a brain injury have to reach down deep to find anything to be thankful for during the holiday season.

We squint into our mirror, wanting to see a reflection of the smiling, carefree face we used to know. We search for the good in our lives, trying to be objective so that we can find gratitude and be thankful for what we have.

But it's hard.

We are told over and over again by society to keep our eyes open for the things that make living worthwhile, but words like that only tell us that the people who say these things don't see us. We think if they really saw us they would know not to say those kind of things.

Try as we might, many of us cannot see anything to be thankful for.

The Dark Knight

Brain injury is a thief. It comes in the night dressed in dark clothes and steals the existence we once knew, replacing it with confusion, doubt, anger and pain.

How do we get over that overwhelming feeling of loss long enough to see something we can be thankful for?

It's easy to be thankful when things are going well; when the job and the family are good. When there is food on the table. When there are vacations be taken and fun to be had.

Life is not always like that, and that is something we are all too well aware of.

This, however, does't mean we are off the hook and can wallow in self-pity. I have said before that we are responsible for our own life and our own well being. If we don't take care of ourselves, then who will? Taking care of ourselves means we have to not only provide for our everyday existence and for creature comforts, but it also means we need to take care of ourselves mentally.

Having our game face on and being mentally prepared is one of the most important things you can do after brain injury. A key part of this is being able to look outside of ourselves; at the world that seems to have forgotten us, and to look at it through eyes that see good and see possibilities.

This is hard, I know, but it is a key component. If we want to live a fulfilled life after brain injury, we are obligated to look for the good and the things we can be thankful for. In order to do this we need to learn to see good when there is no good to be seen.

Being Healthy, Mentally

Feeling gratitude is an important piece of being healthy, of striving, and of being the best you can be; even if we have to make up the stuff we feel good about and give thanks for.

When life seems to be kicking us in the teeth, not many of us have the ability to look up and say, ” Thank you for that. Can I please have another?”

You hurt, are confused and full of doubt. You have no money. Can’t work. Other people don’t treat you well. Things are not good. How do you turn things around so you see the good. so you see a life of possibility?

This is where the hard work comes in.

Somehow, as we work at creating a meaningful, fulfilling life, we have to construct the good out of the bad. We start very simply: by not letting the bad overwhelm us. That’s all: we don’t let ourselves get sucked in by the bad. We don’t let ourselves get ugly.

A Choice

The choice is ours: either we can be bitter and angry and make things more difficult and unpleasant for ourselves, or we can find a way to be thankful and put a little bounce in our step.

As bad as things are, we tell ourselves we can deal with it, even when we aren’t sure, and that we even feel thankful for these bad situations being thrown at us because in the end they are all just tests. The opportunity to pass a test is a gift. Make no mistake here, this is a tough and painful, but it’s the life we have been given. Success in this, the most difficult of all steps, creates more success as we move forward.

Find a way to be thankful, even when you don’t want to. In fact, do it especially when you don’t want to. You are in charge of how you choose to accept things in your

life. Choose to be positive. It may seem dumb and pointless, especially at first, and the reward is not immediate, but you are building a better person; a strong human being, capable of taking the worst your brain injury can dish out, and converting it to positive vibrations.

Have a great holiday.

Jeff