

Amanda's Story: A New Life Brings New Beginnings

Amanda wrote her own story.

My name is Amanda and I have been living with a disability for the last ten years. I am 46 years old, married and have two daughters. Back in 2001—the 10th of July to be exact—I was feeding two horses, one of which I owned and that is all I can remember of that day.

I woke up in hospital four days later, after being on life support with my head heavily bandaged, and was told I had suffered a traumatic brain injury when I was kicked in the head by my own horse and had lost the sight in my right eye.

Strangely enough, what I was being told never really sunk in until I was at least eight weeks into recovery. I still to this day don't really know why it happened or how I even survived such critical injuries, I just thank God that I did. Throughout the first few years of recovery, my family and close friends were a tremendous support. My girls, who were aged six and ten at the time, must have felt their worlds had fallen apart when this all happened, but luckily my husband, brothers, sister and parents were there to help, even though it was just as hard for them too.

Yes, life has changed quite dramatically but most of it for the good, not the bad. My personality has changed now for the better and I am a more relaxed person with an extra good sense of humour too. I do suffer from short term memory loss, tiredness and the occasional migraine, plus of course I have to wear glasses to lessen the strain on my only working eye.

But, I have always been strong willed, level headed, organised and independent and I know that these are the qualities that have got me through so far. In the beginning I had a strict roster from the therapists at the Hampstead Centre and even though I hated it at the time, I now thank them for helping me gain confidence in everyday activities. Without them I would not have been as good as I am now.

In fact, even now ten years on I make myself do as much as I can and try to be my own therapist by pushing myself to overcome certain obstacles that I know will help me gain confidence. I even managed to get my full driver's license back after two years.

As part of my home therapy I was enrolled in local art classes and I haven't stopped since. Now I produce all types of paintings using different subjects and have even sold a few in the open categories at art exhibitions around Adelaide. I call it 'my gift from God' because I had never painted prior to the accident and now I even have a part time job helping a group of people living with disability paint. I have always had

an urge to work in the sector and now I do, I really enjoy being a role model for them and others by working with them and doing also what I love best—to paint.

I have taken the tragedy that happened to me and turned it into something good and have realized that my goal in life is to help others with their new found abilities. After all, we should celebrate what we can do and not focus on the things we can't.

The long term results of my brain injury do still show to the people that know me well, but I am proud to say that any new people I meet find it hard to believe that it all happened. Sometimes I actually wonder if it was me that went through all of that! If you ask me what living with an acquired brain injury is like, my answer will always be: "Life is good and better than it was before! I have been given a Gift from God and my aim is to share it with others."

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