INSIDE —
• ATV Safety
• A Few Feet From the House
... and More
EVERY AGE, EVERY STAGE

WE’RE HERE FOR YOU AFTER TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Emergency care, acute, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

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MISSION
The mission of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is to raise awareness and enhance the quality of life for all people affected by brain injury.

Editorial Policy
Mind Matters is published triannually by the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted materials for style and space. The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance does not endorse, support, or recommend any specific method, facility, treatment, program, or support group for persons with brain injury and their families. Please call for advertising rates.

Letters to the Editor Policy
Letters to the Editor should be limited to 300 words. Letters may be edited for spelling, grammar and length. In order for letters to be considered, please include your name, address and the daytime phone number of the author. The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance reserves the right to refuse letters for publication, and submission of material does not guarantee publication. Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are solely those of the author and do not represent the opinions or positions of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance.
Welcome Mind Matters readers,

The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance has many different services and programs, but they can be divided into two basic groups: things that happen in the office and things that happen out in the community.

In the office you’ll find our Resource Facilitators, our Case Managers, our administrative staff, Public Awareness, Volunteer staff and anyone who needs to be at their desks that day. Out in the community, you’ll find our ECO staff attending events, hosting educational sessions and raising awareness of brain injury across the state. You’ll find Public Policy and our Citizen Advocates attending rallies at the State Capitol, meeting with elected officials and holding advocacy trainings. Our Public Relations team travels the state, meeting with our community partners to ensure people with brain injury don’t fall through the cracks after hospitalization.

All of this is to say that if you’re looking for opportunities to join us in person, we’re going to be out in the community a lot this year.

For instance, March is Brain Injury Awareness Month and the month of our Consumer and Family Conference. This free conference is an opportunity for individuals with brain injury, family members and loved ones to participate in workshops and sessions that focus on innovations in the world of brain injury care, therapy and rehabilitation. Join us on Saturday, March 11, beginning at 12 p.m. at New Life Presbyterian Church in Roseville, Minnesota. Tickets are free but visit braininjurymn.org to register. here is no cost to attend, but we ask that you register with us at braininjurymn.org.

Our Annual Conference for Professionals is April 27 and 28 at Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. The Annual Conference is a great opportunity from brain injury professionals to meet and exchange ideas while observing presentations by some of the top speakers in the field. Take advantage of early registration at braininjurymn.org

The Minnesota Stroke Association Strides for Stroke walk is Saturday, May 20 in Duluth and the Twin Cities during Stroke Awareness Month. We look forward to seeing our stroke community members in person at Long Lake Regional Park in New Brighton. Team registration is at strokemn.org. You can register and donate at strokemn.org.

And, it’s never too early to start thinking about Walk for Thought on September 16 in Duluth and the Twin Cities. We’ll have more information on that soon, but you may want to prepare your teammates and brainstorm team goals for the coming fall.

In addition to these events, we have the summer Lunch and Learn seminars being held by our ECO team; Brain Injury Basics classes are going strong over Zoom; and our Public Policy team is working with citizen advocates on their 2023 Public Policy Priorities. Information on all of these can be found at braininjurymn.org as well as links to resources and other opportunities to get involved.

You’re going to see a lot more of us in 2023!

Enjoy the magazine,

David King, CEO
In my TBI life I find that my opinions have no currency. Nobody takes what I say seriously, at least not as seriously as I do. The only person who doubts what I’m saying more than anyone else, is me.

Unless we’re talking about living with a Traumatic Brain Injury. Then I’m the expert. Then I can speak without fear of contradiction.

No one would, or should, care about what I have to say about the meaning of life, unless I tack brain injury on to it. Like I have done with the title to this piece. I’m okay with that. I can speak to finding the meaning of life after brain injury.

I don’t think it is really any different without a brain injury, except it may be more clear. It is clearer because it is less clouded by alternatives. Life with a brain injury certainly can’t be about making money. In fact, being able to support oneself after a brain injury is more a matter of luck than anything a person could take credit for. It can’t be about benefitting society either. Again, I am lucky if I am not too much of a burden.

Many believe it comes from a higher power. God bless them, but I do not possess the gift of faith.

What can the meaning of life be for me, as a person living with a severe brain injury?

Life is all about building nurturing relationships. All this, and nothing more.

When I came out of my coma, nothing I had before was mine any longer, my intellect, my physical abilities, my career, my whole identity was gone. All I had left were the people in my life.

All I had left that was me, were the people in my life. I treasured that. I was grateful for that. They had busy lives. Lives that did not easily accommodate spending time with me. All I could do was be grateful that they came at all.

My life didn’t begin until they walked into my room. My face would light up. I was glad to see them. Who doesn’t feel good when they light up the face of a person they’re coming to see? It’s magic, it’s visceral, it’s real.

Nietzsche wrote, “It is not sympathy in sorrow, but fellowship in joy, that makes true friends.” In other words, any decent person will cry with you, but your friends will smile with you.

These words apply even to people without brain injuries. To labor alone, to create that which is seen by, and appreciated by, no one else, is a supremely selfish act. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with living that way, but it often leads to one asking, “What is the meaning of life?” Whereas, if you can go about your day, surrounded by people who know you and enjoy your good company, you cannot but conclude that you are living a good life.
Scott Ehalt isn’t the first person to appear in this magazine whose brain injury came about as a result of an ATV accident. Over the years, we’ve met men, women and children who encountered misfortune behind the wheels of these incredibly popular vehicles. Make no mistake, ATVs are popular but they are also incredibly dangerous.

Like snowmobiles, ATVs are deceptive. Their ease of use and small learning curve can lull users into a false sense of safety. But, take a turn too sharply, drive over the wrong terrain, lose visibility for a few seconds and an ATV can throw a rider, flip or crash. When unhelmeted, the results are, frequently, brain injuries.

Scott Ehalt was fifty-seven when his ATV accident occurred in 2020. A physical man, used to living an outdoors lifestyle, Scott estimates he’d put in about 1,200 miles on his Suzuki 750 KingQuad. So, he was by no means a novice rider and when he decided to chase his extended family out on the ice one Sunday morning, he assumed he’d be able to keep the sliding and drifting under control. Unfortunately, he hadn’t taken his recent surgery into account.

“I’d had my hip replaced only 60 days beforehand,” he says. “So, should I have been on the four wheeler? No. I understand all that now. I was sliding off my seat and went to push myself back on and, I wasn’t able to push myself over there because that muscle had just been cut like 60 days before. So, I was caught on the outside of a spin and I was just kind of waiting for the wheels to catch on something and roll over. And that’s what happened. And I hit my head on the ice.”

Scott’s ATV rolled over on the lake at about 25 miles an hour. His head smashed into the ice and he was knocked out for about a minute and a half. When he came to, he rolled over and threw up blood. On the way back up to his house, Scott’s family noticed that he was unable to answer their questions and quickly got him to the local hospital where he was diagnosed as having a brain bleed. In order to better address his bleed, he was transferred to the ICU at a larger hospital.

“I spent 22 hours and $25,000 at two different hospitals,” he says. “And then that was it. They did all these scans and I was out by eight o’clock that next morning. They sent me home. And I went back into work the next day because they didn’t give me any directions or tell me to stay home or nothing.”

Scott being left to address his post-brain injury symptoms on his own is, unfortunately, a not uncommon outcome in post-brain injury care. Although the presence of a brain bleed would indicate a greater level of care needed in Scott’s case, the lack of, or missed, communication on the part of the hospital resulted in Scott’s early return to work and the exacerbation of his brain injury issues.

“My wife, MartiLynne, believes that I never should have went back to work,” Scott says. “But for my job, I’m like, the only person that does that job. I work facilities maintenance for a nutraceutical company.

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And, you can’t just hire someone to come in and keep the machines running. I’m an electrician, I’m a plumber, I cut holes in buildings and put air conditioning in. So I do all the big stuff. Plus, I’m the guy who’s designing the job and having to go out buy the stuff. So I’m kind of a one man band. So half of me is obligated to feel like I need to be a good employee and keep the company going. And then my wife was like, ‘Nah, you should have taken a week or two off and let the swelling go down and stuff.’”

Back on a labor intensive job with a fresh brain injury, Scott soon started noticing that he wasn’t operating at 100 percent. His memory wasn’t functioning properly. He also noticed his temper growing shorter as the physical exertion of his work, the bending down and getting up, were causing pressure in his head and a feeling of lightheadedness.

Fortunately for Scott, by the end of 2020 he was connected through his hospital with the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Resource Facilitation program. At intake, he expressed frustration with his memory and personality changes.

He also discussed the financial strain his injury was putting on his family. The Facilitator recommended several support resources, including the possibility of remote care. It was important that Scott receive the support that would best fit his personality and mobility.

“You know, I seem to have some things to say and my mouth can’t keep up with where my brain’s at,” he says. “I used to be pretty much an intellectual, you know, as far as getting into deep conversations about things. But, I tend to just kind of back off now and stay quiet.”

Eventually, after a second hip replacement, Scott applied for permanent disability. His job wasn’t keeping pace with his physical needs and it became too demanding to expect him to install $200,000 roof air conditioners by himself. He hit another roadblock, however, when attempting to get on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). He Facilitator was able to offer him many resources to help with the SSDI application process, including advocacy groups and legal help to see him and MartiLynne through the long application process.

Today, Scott spends his time at home with his family on the lake in Zimmerman. His stepson lives in their house and his granddaughter stays with them every couple of weeks. And, MartiLynne has been understanding and supportive through the whole recovery.

“She knows I forget things,” he says. “I say I’m gonna do something and you know, two minutes later, I won’t remember. But, she understands that I forget. She’ll leave for work in the morning and she’ll say, like, make sure you get the power up on that light switch, you know, so the girl doesn’t get electrocuted and this and that and the other thing. And, I’ll be lucky if I remember one of the five things! So she’s constantly got to write things down. And she’ll leave a list for me.”

Scott’s recovery can at times seem like an uphill climb, but it’s one he and his wife are sure they’ll succeed in. They feel abandoned by a system that they’ve been forced to navigate. But, Scott has his family behind him and the Resource Facilitation program to guide him through any deep bureaucratic waters.

“And,” he says, “I’ve got a beautiful view here in Zimmerman. We have snow out on the lake and it’s beautiful all down the hill.”

Scott fully intends to continue being as active as possible. He’s not afraid to get back up on his ATV and try again. Maybe next time, though, he’ll take it a little slower on the ice.
Although not as popular as they were at their 2001 peak, snowmobiles remain a part of many Minnesotans’ winters. In fact, after years of decline, snowmobile sales are back on the rise. And, with rising sales comes rising injuries. This winter has already seen a death toll surpassing that of the 2021-22 winter. And, the number is likely to climb.

But, fatalities aren’t the only risk from snowmobile accidents. Brain injury is common in any vehicle accident where the person can be thrown from the vehicle, run over by the vehicle, or have the vehicle roll over on top of them. When the rider isn’t wearing a helmet, the chance of brain injury is compounded.

So, ride safer, right? Keep an eye out for obstacles, maintain a safe speed and everything will work out, right? Unfortunately, it’s not that easy. Justin Storlie learned this on his son’s birthday in February of 2020. Sometimes, accidents just happen.

“It was my son’s birthday and we had some people over,” Justin says. “And I was giving them snowmobile rides. The party was basically over, and I was going to put the snowmobile away in the shed, which was maybe 200 or 300 feet away. I’m not sure how or why it happened, but I evidently went down to the shed and kind of turned and looked back up towards the house. And, somehow I must have hit the throttle too much or more than was necessary. And I hit our windmill. Actually, I went through the windmill, and underneath the windmill is our well casing and one ski hit the well casing and actually made the snowmobile turn. And, of course, it threw me off of it. So I went off the snowmobile and I hit my head at some point on some cross bracing or something like that. I’ve really no memory of how or why it would have happened. But that’s what happened.”

Just a few hundred feet from the house, driving at a low speed, Justin had an unexpected accident. Making matters worse, he wasn’t wearing his helmet, which he’d loaned to his nephew. He felt it was safe; he was just putting the snowmobile away. And, Justin, while no pro, was an experienced snowmobiler. Fortunately, he was close to the house and when he didn’t return...
his family came out to look for him. Justin’s brother-in-law was trained in field medicine in the military and was able to keep him stable until Justin could be airlifted to North Memorial Hospital from his rural home in Montgomery.

The first thing he remembers is waking up in the hospital. “I can remember cutting the cake and doing drinks and stuff for us,” Justin says. “But that would have been probably three hours before the accident.”

Justin works in the agriculture industry, for a major frozen foods company, setting up relationships with growers and supplying them with seed and determining when and how they plant. Agriculture has always been a part of his life and Justin loves living out on a large plot of land with his wife, Andrea, and their three children. Although his brain injury was taken seriously, he was well enough to return to work in April. This return to relative normalcy was helpful for the family’s health.

“My youngest, it didn’t hit her as hard as the other two,” Justin says. “But, it definitely affected them. When I got released from the hospital and was home, it was like ‘Daddy can’t do this. Or, Daddy can’t take you there.’ I couldn’t drive for a couple of months. And probably my second, my middle son, was the one most affected because he is the one that found me from the second accident.”

In January 2001, Justin was doing some work laying flooring in the rafters of his garage when he fell from the rafters and hit his head on the concrete. Andrea sent their middle son to go see if Justin needed any help with his work and his son found him on the floor.

“It really affected him, probably more than anybody else, for that reason. He’s the one that found me and of course my wife felt guilty, and still does, for sending him out because she didn’t think anything was wrong.”

Justin was rushed by ambulance to the hospital. This time, part of his skull was removed for three months to help with brain swelling and bleeding. Even so, Justin was able to once again return to his job, drive and be an active participant in his family.

“I guess I like to think I’m still going to be okay,” he says. “But, I suspect there’s some lingering effects. According to my wife, I don’t have patience anymore. I just don’t tolerate things like I used to. Everything just kind of gets to me. One of the kids will do something and, to her, it’s nothing and to me it’s something. So, I’m quick to say something or discipline more than what she thinks is necessary. So, yeah, the patience thing is affected.

“Problem solving in general is probably slowed somewhat. It definitely takes an extra step to just think things through in a different manner. But, I guess I feel pretty lucky with how things have turned out because we’ve heard of other accidents not turning out that way.”

Today, despite some fatigue and trouble sleeping, Justin feels he’s functioning pretty well. He no longer snowmobiles, but that’s partly a matter of no longer having a snowmobile. The friends he used to go riding with have parted ways over the years, as friends sometimes do as the years go on. But, he still sees people out on their vehicles and thinks he’d like to do it again.

But, this time when he puts it away, he’ll wear a helmet.
Support the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Today

If you believe in a Minnesota where everyone recognizes brain injury and its effects; where all individuals living with brain injury are encouraged to realize their full potential; and where the greater community recognizes the intrinsic value of all people living with a TBI, we hope you will give to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today.

Over the past three years, the MNBIA has expanded its reach by offering online options for many of its services. Our teams worked hard to make sure that Minnesotans had access to opportunities and supports whether they were in our offices or at home.

We would like to make sure these opportunities remain available across Minnesota and, to help ensure that, we need you more than we ever have before.

Please donate to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today. A gift of $50, $100, $250, or whatever is meaningful to you, can help us continue to offer educational opportunities, advocacy training, and volunteer training. YOU make a difference when you include us in your gift giving. Please, donate online at braininjurymn.org/donate.

Thank you for your commitment to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and for your continued support!

Scan here to donate!
Upcoming Events

Consumer & Family Conference
Saturday, March 11, 2023

April 27 and 28, 2023
Heritage Center of Brooklyn Center
Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

STRIDES FOR STROKE
Saturday, May 20, 2023 • 10 A.M.
Duluth • Twin Cities

Saturday, September 16, 2023
WALK FOR THOUGHT
Duluth • Twin Cities

Minnesota Stroke Association
MINNESOTA STATEWIDE STROKE CONFERENCE
Fall 2023
Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center, MN

www.BrainInjuryMN.org • 612-378-2742 • 800-669-6442
www.StrokeMN.org • 763-553-0088
Staying safe in winter can be challenging for everyone in Minnesota – even trickier for those of us with special challenges. Does anybody else remember two straight days in February four years ago when the Twin Cities turned into a sprawling skating-rink: spring-like thawing, melting, and “raining cats and dogs” – but plummeting temps and re-freezing overnight? Yikes! The first day, on my way to the mailbox at the curb, I slipped and fell on the transparent ice-sheet that covered the driveway. I saw concrete, not ice! On the second day of warm rain, avoiding that treacherous driveway, I walked on what looked like an April lawn, but (how did you guess?) down I went again. I saw spring-green grass, not the clear ice-sheet blanketing it. I lucked out both times, avoiding a brain injury (as far as I can tell).

“Our Resource Facilitation team, led by manager Wendy, began to notice people in the program had taken falls on those days of invisible ice. We put our heads together to think of resources for these icy days.” Our colleague May suggested, “Try Trellis.” Good idea. Trellis is an area agency on aging in the Twin Cities (trellisconnects.org). I spoke with Vice President of Communications and Advocacy Julie Roles, who recommended their Juniper program.

“Juniper offers a full range of programs to help people live well, stay well, and manage chronic conditions,” Julie said. “Our e-newsletter covers all sorts of topics.” One program relevant to us is NO|FALLS Minnesota which can be found at yourjuniper.org/no-falls.

“Minnesota has the fourth-highest number of deaths from falls in the country,” Julie said. “One big reason, of course, is winter. We quit moving. We limit our activity because we fear falling. Through the long winter, we get into a cycle of weakening our muscles and losing our balance. The biggest thing to keep in mind is don’t stop moving because it could have unhealthy effects on your well-being for the whole year.”

Julie recommended an article by Sara Lindquist, M.D.: “6 Tips for Reducing Falls in Winter” at yourjuniper.org/be-well/6-tips-reducing-falls-winter.

When I went to my barber the other day, I parallel-parked, stepped out on a scary slope of ice, and faced iced snowbanks plowed two-to-three feet high on the curb. “How am I going to manage this?” I wondered. I would have been biting my nails if I hadn’t been wearing gloves. Just then, someone drove away, opening a narrow tunnel between the street and the sidewalk. Lucky for me, the sidewalk had traction – no slipping, no sliding, a sigh of relief – and I made it safely inside, bones unbroken and muscles unpulled.

“We have northern exposure,” Barber Jon explained. “The sun never hits that sidewalk.” I asked him what he had sprinkled outside. Whatever it was sure worked. “Little chips of rock,” he replied. The bags he showed me read “Traction Grit” one made of crushed quartzite, the other of crushed concrete. These sharp little pieces grip the ice and get embedded when stepped on, staying put and creating traction. Beats salt, which melts holes and can create an uneven, unsafe surface besides dissolving concrete. Sand and kitty litter can create traction, too.

My brother’s father-in-law, one lovely summer day in Virginia, led our long-tail-tuxedoed wedding party in walking like penguins for merriment. “Penguin-walking” in parkas can be safer in Minnesota winters, too. Take short slow steps with your knees relaxed and your hands outside of your pockets. Web-footed penguins seldom fall on ice.

Our colleague Carla suggests Yaktrax and trekking poles, especially for seniors, and working with physical therapists on how to fall.

“It sounds odd,” she says, “but learning things such as tucking your head can be helpful. If people are struggling with dizziness or balance, they could ask their doctors for referrals for ear-crystal, vestibular, or vision evaluations and the proper therapies.”


Let’s safely enjoy Minnesota’s “Theater of Seasons – Act IV: Winter”!

Resource Facilitation is a free, two-year telephone support program that provides education and connection to supports and services to assist people throughout Minnesota in navigating life after brain injury. Participants receive scheduled calls over a two-year period to help problem-solve issues and identify resources to help them transition back to family life, work, school, and the community while achieving the greatest level of independence as possible. Individuals can be referred by a professional or self-refer at any time. Call us at 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.
Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance
2023 Legislative Priorities

July 1, 2023 marks the beginning of a new two-year legislative biennium at the Minnesota State Capitol. The elections of November of 2022 gave the Governorship and House and Senate majorities to the DFL while bringing in record numbers of new and diverse legislators. The first major order of business for our new group of policymakers will be setting Minnesota’s next budget.

Minnesota currently has a large surplus. The last legislative session crashed and left the money sitting there and many people with unmet needs. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in services for people affected by brain injury in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Board of Directors recently approved the following policy priorities to guide Public Policy’s work over the next two years:

1. Improve Qualifying Standards & Remove Barriers to Employment in Minnesota’s Medical Assistance (MA) Program
   Many people with brain injury and other disabilities rely on MA to help them live healthy independent lives in the community. The qualifying standards for these programs are unfair and allow people to have very little income and personal savings. This goal will reduce qualifying requirements that impoverish low-income individuals with brain injury and bring more equity to Minnesota’s MA Program:
   
   A. Increase Qualifying Income Standard to 133% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG)
   B. Increase Qualifying Asset Standard to $20,000 for individual/$40,000 married couple
   C. Reduce Disincentives to Work that are unintentionally built into the Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MAEPD) Program

2. Increase Transit Safety & Reduce Interpersonal Violence
   The effort to improve transit driver training is being led by one of our own Citizen Advocates who was injured getting off a Metro Transit bus in Minneapolis.

3. Increase Investments in Affordable Housing & Transit
   We hear time and time again from people affected by brain injury that stable housing is their biggest concern and the biggest risk factor toward building a stable future. Transportation concerns follow closely as isolation and lack of activity can create unhealthy conditions for people. Our goal is to promote funding increases for affordable housing and transit in Minnesota’s budget:

   A. Support Coalition efforts to increase funding and bonding for affordable housing and support state funding to create more affordable housing for people with brain injury and other disabilities.
   B. Support an Increase in Transit Funding for people with disabilities in both Metro Mobility for the Metro area and the Minnesota Department of Transportation for Greater Minnesota.

In addition, we’ll work in partnership with others to increase research, prevention and education regarding Interpersonal Violence (IPV)

   A. Enhance Bus Driver Training requirements regarding safety for people who use walkers on metro transit, especially in inclement weather situations
   B. Pursue Policy Options that increase effectiveness of efforts to reduce Interpersonal Violence

If you would like to get involved in helping advocate for these policy changes please contact Cynthia Callais cynthiac@braininjuyrmn.org or Jeff Nachbar jeffn@braininjuyrmn.org

Minnesota Legislative Session
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### Lifetime Members

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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Richard Duerre</td>
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<td>Mr. Paul Godlewski</td>
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<td>Ms. Ellie Hands</td>
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<td>Ms. Elizabeth A. Jensen</td>
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<td>Dr. Robert L. Karol, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Mr. Jason Peters</td>
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<td>Mrs. Terri Traudt</td>
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<td>Mr. Tim Traudt</td>
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### Organizational Donors

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Before the pandemic, we wrote about the opportunities and challenges that come with winter. For those with a brain injury, the difficulty in safely navigating snow and ice; waiting for transportation; fewer visits from friends and family; and the general feeling of isolation, can make winter even more challenging. The possibility of a fall on the ice is not appealing to anyone but it’s especially unappealing for those afraid of another blow to the head after a brain injury. Plus, slips and falls during the winter months are one of the leading causes of traumatic brain injury for the elderly living in Minnesota.

Winter can also present a trigger for the anxiety of the past experience of a painful or debilitating fall. Overcoming the fear of this very real risk is difficult but there are simple things we can do to help. For example, don’t be afraid to ask for help shoveling and salting your home’s steps and sidewalks; and remind your landlord to do their part to make sure everyone can safely access their ride or vehicle. When conditions are slick and you need to go out, make sure to have ice/snow cleats for your shoes or boots to give you extra confidence outside.

Hopefully we are at the tail end of winter and can begin to enjoy the outdoors soon. If you are still hibernating at home, make arrangements for visits with family and friends you enjoy. Spending time with others is crucial to feeling connected; fighting off feelings of depression; enjoying a higher quality of life; and, yes, even getting help when you need it. Start looking now to what your community provides and don’t be afraid to meet new people. Even planning for future activities can boost your morale and help finish the winter strong!

— by Dr. Erwin Concepcion, MD

When I was told the theme for this issue’s column was winter related injuries, I knew I’d have a lot to say in 300 words or less.

My injury happened in February of 2014 when I slipped on a patch of black ice. Because I was carrying my five-pound Yorkie at the time, and was on a steep incline, I landed full-force on the back of my head. Nine years later, I still get anxious when there is snow and ice in the forecast (and can we all just agree that this winter in particular has been full of icy conditions).

My PTS (post traumatic stress) has gotten better over the years, but I still have a hard time dealing with ice. It triggers something inside me and I do my very best to avoid going outside; but, alas, I have to get to work or Tuesdays at the Capitol, so I have no choice.

Fortunately there is this neat invention called YakTrax (they also go by various other names). These slip over the bottoms of your boots and have little cleats to prevent you from falling on ice. They work great and every single Minnesotan should have a pair (or two). While they give me a lot of peace of mind, I still feel that anxious feeling creep in when it’s time to go outside.

I want to take a moment to assure you that it’s completely OK to have big feelings around the season of your injury. Your injury was incredibly traumatic, both physically and mentally. It’s important to take the time to allow yourself to feel these feelings, but it is also equally important to seek help if these feelings start to get in the way of your everyday life.

—Amy Zellmer