

Gray Matters

Brain Injury: The Inside Perspective

Heidi Lerner

Imagine this: the sun's shining and you're crossing at the light. Out of nowhere, a car comes racing through the red light and...WHACK! You go flying through the air and land on the sidewalk. Your head hits the concrete. Immediately, you go into a comatose state... When you come to, what are things like? What are YOU like? Have you ever thought of such things?

Silent Epidemic

What would it be like to have a brain injury? Such a dilemma it is for brain injury survivors that others simply don't have a clue, what they are going through. They don't comprehend the devastation or how comprehensive the affects are in a survivor's every day world. This lack of awareness is a strong factor that drives survivors further and further into isolation; this silence makes life hell for brain injury survivors. This is what motivated Heidi in writing *Gray Matters*.

The goal of *Gray Matters* is to give its readers the sense of what it is like to walk in the shoes of a brain injury survivor. Heidi completed her Masters degree in Special Education, specifically for brain injury and she felt the need to communicate the knowledge that she obtained. She expresses a way that anyone can understand it! Though she does present a professional understanding of brain injury, you don't need a medical vocabulary to grasp what she expresses. *Gray Matters* is a book of poetry; the understanding you gain from her writing is personal, it is not just cognitive information.

The author touches on serious issues, but not in a distressing tone. She believes that laughter can be an expression of "emotional medicine". The aim is to help survivors see objectively the problems they're going through and glimpse the lighter side of these otherwise troublesome issues. Such insight and humor can cause attitudes to adjust, leading to acceptance and a better coping with problems brought about by brain injury.

The chapters of the book address the topics of Brain Injury, the Sequelae (i.e. meaning symptoms of injury), Rehabilitation and The Brain. Sequelae is a particularly educational chapter where there are poems that describe many of the symptoms of brain injury. The last chapters are on the topics of Academic Rehab, Recreational Therapy (i.e. how the ocean served therapeutic for the author) and the healing of Peer Support.

Audience of Gray Matters

The target audience is multi-faceted. The primary aim is to educate those personally affected by injury to the brain. This includes survivors, their friends and family members as well as caregivers and other therapeutic professionals. The aim is to be an intellectual, psychological and emotional support. The secondary purpose is to educate the general community about what it's like to have an insult and compromise to the brain, our master organ, for those who have been spared the drama of brain injury.

In a review in the Journal of Neurosciences Nursing, Marie Lasater states "Gray Matters will give survivors of TBI hope and reassurance that they are not alone in their rehabilitation process. It will help family members understand the thought process of the brain-injured patient. It will also guide the health care provider in giving optimal rehabilitative care."

Silent Epidemic

Lets break the curse of silence!
You need to know on the inside
What it's like to walk in my shoes.

Pick up my book,
Listen to my rhyme,
I'll have you captivated in no time!

This is a call to awareness...
Pass on the word of what you hear,
We are breaking the silence
Thanks to your receptive ear.

Enter and you can feel.
IT'S OK TO CARE,
Because empathy heals!
We're paving the way for knowledge,
We are the pioneers...

Gray Matters!

Heidi Lerner

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Support Group Facilitator

Trainer of Mentors

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