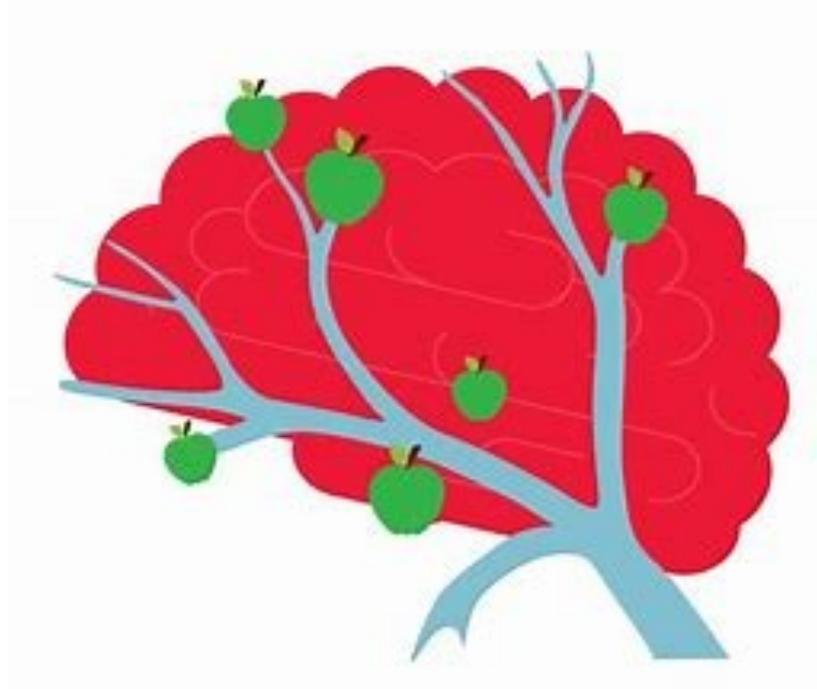


# On the Sunnier Side

Volume 5, Issue 3

2018

Brain Injury Association Quinte District



It does not matter how slowly you go  
as long as you do not stop.

Confucius

## Presidents Note



It has been a busy summer for our Association. We had a number of events in June, which is Brain Injury Awareness month in Canada. On June 1<sup>st</sup> we unveiled our members' masks at our candlelight vigil. This was the first time that we held the vigil at the Quinte Mall and I think it was well received and created more awareness about brain injury to the general public. On June 9<sup>th</sup> there was the first Cassidey Ouellette Memorial Colour Run in Brighton. This event was organized by our board member, Christine Milligan with proceeds being donated back to our Association. On June 12<sup>th</sup> there was the Open House for caregivers, who provide support for our members. We also had our annual members golf tournament and most of our regular programs for members.

Some exciting news, our Association has been nominated as one of the Best Brain Injury Associations of the Year. The voting continues until September 6<sup>th</sup>. We will hopefully be successful in the voting as our members, board, volunteers and staff have done so much for brain injury awareness and programming.

We finally have our new website up and running. If you haven't had a look check it out at [www.biaqd.ca](http://www.biaqd.ca).

We have the following upcoming events in the coming months:

- September 13, 2018 our AGM at the Core Centre, 223 Pinnacle St., Belleville
- September 29, 2018 BIAQD Craft Sale
- December 1, 2018 Uncorked Fundraising Dinner

Our Association does so much on a very tight budget. We truly "punch above our weight class" when it comes to providing quality services and programming. We are always in need of donations and funding as we don't receive any financial support from the Provincial or Federal government. If you are able to join us on December 1<sup>st</sup> for our Uncorked Fundraising Dinner, please make an effort to join us. We need your support.

Finally, thank-you to our summer students, Mallory, Dakota and Autumn. Your help was invaluable and best of luck with your studies.

Keep well and always strive to be better.

Kristian Bonn  
President, BIAQD

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# Uncorked 2018

## **Fundraiser Dinner / Holiday Party**

Saturday December 1, 2018  
Urban Hall  
70 Harder Drive  
Belleville, ON

Join the Brain Injury Association Quinte District for a fantastic Evening filled with great food, musical entertainment, live and silent auctions, dessert auction, and more. Tickets are \$100.00 each. All proceeds go to Programming, and Supporting Individuals in our Community living with the effects of Acquired Brain Injury.

For more information contact the Brain Injury Association by calling 613-967-2756 or email [info@biaqd.ca](mailto:info@biaqd.ca)

**Sponsorship Packages Available**



# BIAQD Market Place

The members of the Brain Injury Association have been working very hard at stocking up their Market Place. They have a wide variety of handmade cards, wreaths, seasonal decorations, quilted items, and personalized items.

There is no rest for this group of people. They are always coming up with new ideas, and crafts to make. Their items can be seen on display at the office in the New Chapter Bookstore and Craft Room, as well as on their Facebook site "BIAQD Market Place".

If you are looking for something unique for that someone special in your life, check out what BIAQD has to offer. There is something for everyone!



# The New Chapter

The Brain Injury Association is proud to announce the opening of The New Chapter. This space has combined the Beverly Richmond lending library with a book store, and a market place.

There are over 100 books on brain injury, recovery, and managing life with a brain injury for our members to sign out at their convenience. There are also over 300 books available for sale. There are books for children, teens, and adults with a variety of genres available. There is also a nice display of the Market Place items that are for sale.

Every week you will find a new featured book. All books by this author will be discounted for the week. There is also 50% off Wednesdays.

The hours are Monday - Friday Noon to 2:30.

Be sure to stop in and see what we have.



# Cassidey Ouellette Memorial Colour Run 2018





# The Influence of Visual Triggers on Symptoms in Brain Injury and Concussion

Stress, both good and bad, is something that we all deal with. For many, managing stress is possible even though we may need help from supportive family, friends, coworkers, doctors, and therapists. The trauma of a brain injury, however, can cause a drastic change in our health, increasing the stress in our relationships, employment, finances, and lives in general. What was once manageable, may now be too overwhelming to manage.

It can be hard to identify everything contributing to this sense of overwhelm. This article aims to point out some of the environmental influences that may be contributing to stress and provide suggestion on how to modify these influences, so recovery and rehabilitation can be improved.

## Too Much Information

Our brains are subject to a non-stop barrage of information - what we are sensing, what we are feeling, and what we are thinking about both. Visual information accounts for approximately 80% of the sensory information we take in, so if the brain is injured and becomes sensitive to visual information, too much energy can be used dealing with the results of this sensitivity, and there may not be enough left to work on recovery.

Tolerance to visual information often decreases following a brain injury and it may be difficult to pinpoint the specific visual information that is uncomfortable and triggering symptoms. Initially following a brain injury, it is recommended to briefly avoid stimulation, bright lights, and computers. Many people are fine to get back to their regular lives shortly after a concussion. But for those who aren't, changes to the visual environment are necessary to decrease sensitivities and encourage healing.

**Mary-Ellen Thompson, Ph.D.**

CCC(SLP), SLP(L), Regd. CASLPO

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## Visual Stress and Uncomfortable Images:

Visual Stress is the term used to describe the overwhelm (hyper-excitement) the brain experiences in the presence of uncomfortable visual triggers. Uncomfortable images have been identified as those having a high spatial frequency such as those that are patterned and of high contrast. (Perception. 2008;37(7):1098-113. Uncomfortable images in art and nature. Fernandez D1, Wilkins AJ.) In addition, images that flicker or move quickly have been reported to be uncomfortable in those with hyper-excitabile visual cortices (migraine, epilepsy, autism, head injury). (Wilkins et al. 1989 and Kowacs et al., 2004)

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has been used to demonstrate that "Most uncomfortable visual stimuli will reduce the sparseness of neural activity according to models of the visual cortex; and increase the amplitude of the haemodynamic response" (Arnold Wilkins, Discomfort and Hyper metabolism, Project October 22, 2016 RsearchGate)

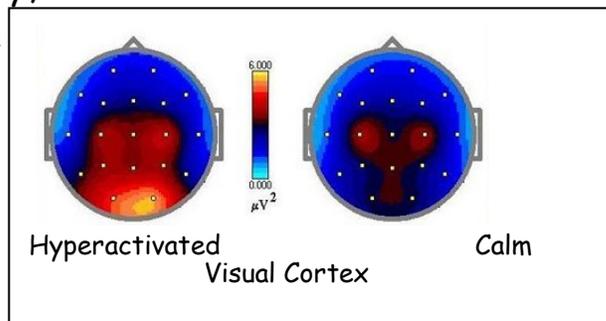
Simplified, images that our brains find uncomfortable will:

- 1) increase the density of our brain activity, and
- 2) increase the energy (blood) sent to the area in response to the visual stimuli.

This increased density and energy can lead to difficulty focusing, headache, and perceptual distortions as the brain is overwhelmed with too much activity in one area. If the trigger to the hyperexcitement is not stopped and this

brain activity and energy is not reduced, the effect then cascades into other areas of the brain. These same results have been shown using other brain imaging techniques including Near infrared spectroscopy and QEEG, shown here.

I often use the analogy of blushing to explain - when triggered by something embarrassing, our cheeks fill with blood, become red, burn with heat, and the skin can actually sting as the blood makes the area firm. Until we remove ourselves from the trigger experience and start to calm down, this can be very uncomfortable. And the same goes for our brain.



## So what can be done?

Start by evaluating the visual environment, look for images that are uncomfortable that you avoid looking at. The idea is to find these items/ images and make changes where possible, even if the changes are only temporary until the original environment is more tolerable. A good rule of thumb is things that are similar to those found in nature will be comfortable and anything unnatural will likely be uncomfortable.

And, while wearing dark sunglasses may be a go-to solution, consider this, wearing dark sunglasses will block out almost all the visual information leading to eye strain. This is similar to having to strain to hear something through noise cancelling headphones.

### 1) Reduce High Contrast Images

Find and remove items in your visual environment with high contrast. This is not just black against white, but also colours that are opposite like red/green, purple/yellow, and blue/orange. Also remove dark/light contrast images as they have the same effect that black/white has on hyperactivating the visual cortex.

2) Difficulty reading is a commonly reported post-concussion symptom. To reduce the contrast of black text on white paper select a comfortable colour of paper and write on it with a similarly coloured pen or print on it with a closely coloured font. Reducing the contrast on your computer screen or phones is possible with specific software and apps that tint screens and change font colours.

### 2) Reduce Patterns

Repetitive narrow patterns like stripes are one of the most uncomfortable images, and the biggest triggers to visual stress. Look at patterns around you in artwork, clothing, carpets, flooring, fabrics and window coverings. Text is also a pattern. Things that were liked and

tolerated before injury may now be causing discomfort simply because of the pattern.

The more these items are present in the visual environment, the more the visual stress accumulates. Change out highly patterned artwork, cover patterned carpets or flooring with solids, soften items with sharp corners and edges with plants, blankets, or curtains. Think soft curves of nature.



A local rehabilitation centre changed their high contrast tile flooring because of complaints from patients who felt uncertain walking on it and afraid they would fall. Similarly, a local physiotherapy clinic with a highly patterned carpet must lay towels over the carpeting to reduce nausea of clients looking down from the therapy beds.

### 3) Reduce Flicker

Flicker is the on/off presentation of an image. It could be the flicker of a computer screen, fan blade, light reflecting off moving water, images moving past the car window, etc. Think about how you feel when looking at these flickering images and do what you can to avoid looking at them. There are specialty filters for computer screens and bladeless fans. As well, there are specific filter lenses that can be worn to reduce the effects of visual images that cannot be changed.

Another source of flicker is lighting, specifically fluorescent. For those who have experienced a brain injury, sensitivity to this flicker may be heightened and can be perceived even if others around do not notice it. The CFL (compact fluorescent lights) bulbs that were put into lamps and lights when incandescent bulbs were phased out are fluorescent and can be contributing to discomfort. Look instead for dimmable and tunable colour LED bulbs to replace them. These bulbs can also be used at the office for task and ambient lighting if the overhead fluorescent tubes can be turned off.



Pathways to Independence specializes in providing services and supports to adults with an acquired brain injury (ABI). These services could be a place to call home or day services designed to support a person living with a brain injury to reintegrate into their community.

Pathways Service Plan supports a person's rehabilitation and reintegration to the community following a brain injury. In addition to assisting with activities of daily living, Pathways employees actively work with the person to access social networks and community partners to develop and support the implementation of a person's individualized service plan.

Pathways ABI programs and services are tailored to accommodate individual needs and provide a continuum of care.



#### Depending upon the nature of the brain injury, these supports may include:

- ❖ Physiotherapy
- ❖ Occupational Therapy
- ❖ Behaviour Management
- ❖ Speech Therapy
- ❖ Dietician
- ❖ Nursing
- ❖ Adult Education, Vocational Training or Upgrading
- ❖ Legal Services
- ❖ Family support

1 in 26  
Canadians are  
living with a  
brain injury

Brain injuries  
can be a non  
visible  
disability

There will be  
18,000 new  
brain injuries  
this year

Men  
experience  
brain injuries  
twice as often  
as women

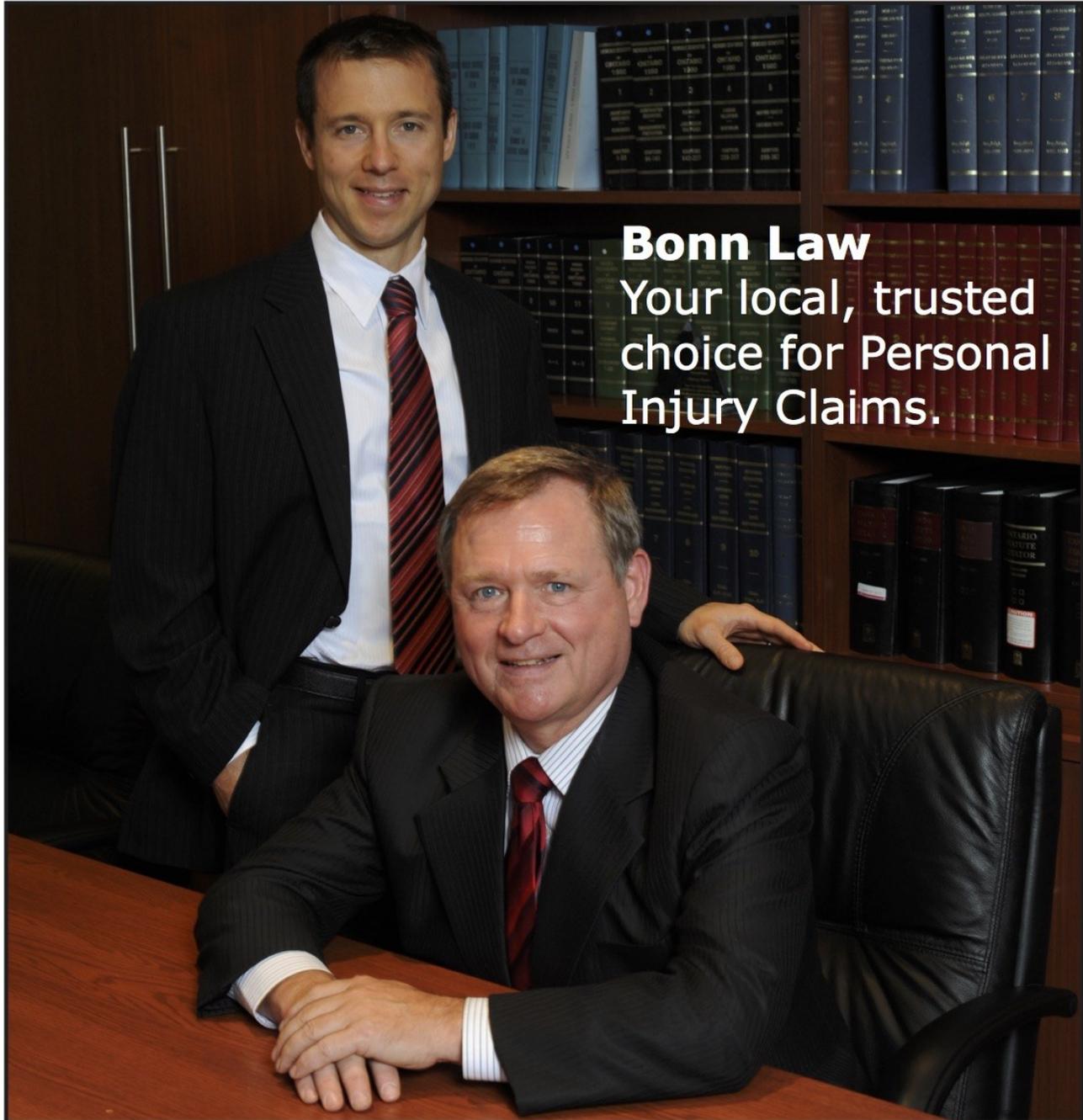
ABI is damage  
to the brain  
that occurs  
after birth

ABI is not a  
developmental  
disability or  
autism

ABI affects  
cognitive,  
emotional,  
behavioural, &  
physical  
functioning

#### Reach out to us to find out more about Pathways ABI Services :

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## The Influence of Visual Triggers on Symptoms in Brain Injury and Concussion Continued

Blinds are both patterned and create a contrast with the bright light coming through the darker blind. When the windows are open, the breeze may move the blinds, causing flicker, and creating a three pack of uncomfortable. We suggest keeping blinds all the way closed or all the way open to reduce this trigger or use unpatterned drape or roll blind material instead.

### 4) Wear precision tinted filters

While you can make modifications to your own environment, you can't change the world to suit your needs, so an important option is to get tested for visual stress and have your unique visual filters identified. Everyone has a different optimal filter to improve visual perception, just as everyone has a different prescription to improve vision refraction.

### Experience a reduction in symptoms

Making these changes can reduce commonly reported symptoms of Post-concussion syndrome or ABI such as:

- Visual sensory problems: light/glare sensitivity, movement sensitivity
- Visual Processing Problems: reading difficulties (word movement, intermittent blurring), and balance difficulties (world appears off balance)
- Cognitive difficulties: fatigue, concentration, comprehension
- Physical difficulties: headache, eye pain, nausea

These modifications should provide a more tolerable visual environment and reduce symptoms, leading to an increased ability to focus on other important aspects of recovery and rehabilitation. It is important to continue with other visual and physical therapies as these will help your brain get back to tolerating life and all the stresses that were managed before brain injury.

Hopefully, therapists and other healthcare practitioners have learned how their visual environment can be uncomfortable to those with acquired brain injuries and have made some of these modifications for their clients.

For more information on this subject, please contact Karen Monet, Founder at Opticalm. [kmonet@opticalm.ca](mailto:kmonet@opticalm.ca), 613-294-6437 or visit their website at [www.opticalm.ca](http://www.opticalm.ca)

# Get Prepared for Back to School Safety!

## It's back to school time!

As school doors open, traffic gets a little heavier on our streets. People are back from holidays, school buses and public transit are on regular routes, and more people are walking, cycling or driving to school.

To help with the transition and share the roads safely, read our safety tip. Help everyone stay safe this school year!

### 1) Observe School Zone Speeds

Although you should always obey posted speed limits, it is especially important during the school year. Children crossing the road on their way to and from school can easily get distracted and step into harm's way. Slowing down and being vigilant is crucial to keeping kids safe. Children are often out throughout the day at recess, lunch, and for certain classes, so it's important to drive slowly throughout the day.



### 2) Obey the Crossing Guard

A crossing guard is there to keep children safe. If you come up to a set of lights, and the light turns green, but the crossing guard still says stop, follow his/her direction and not the traffic light. There might be a child still crossing the street that you can't see.

### 3) Watch for Darting Children

Kids are small and easily distracted, and for drivers, this can create dangerous situations on the roads. Be vigilant and alert behind the wheel. You never know when a small child might step out from between parked cars or off a sidewalk. Your fast reflexes might be needed to prevent an accident.

### 4) School Buses

Most mishaps take place outside the bus. Make sure children don't arrive too early at the bus stop where they can wander or get into mischief. Make sure children wait well away from the road and stay back until the school bus makes a full stop and the doors open. Explain that they must walk at least three metres (10 feet) away when crossing in front of the bus so the driver can see them. When driving your car near a school bus please note that extra caution is needed. You shouldn't pass a school bus when the signal lights are flashing (as children are often crossing the road at that time), and drive





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# The Benefits of Artistic Expression Following Traumatic Brain Injury

Following a traumatic brain injury (TBI), individuals often experience a variety of physical, cognitive, behavioural, social, and emotional impairments as a result of their injury. These deficits can impact one's daily life by affecting their awareness, communication, judgment, executive functioning, and numerous other essential skills. In particular, TBI survivors often report a lack of self-identity and a great amount of frustration coming to terms with their abilities post-injury. In addition, many TBI survivors experience aphasia (a language disorder ranging from word-finding difficulty to speechlessness), therefore lacking an outlet to express their emotions.

Artistic expression has been found to be an exceptional rehabilitation tool that promotes a holistic approach to recovery. A holistic approach is one that addresses all seven dimensions of health which includes: social, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, environmental, and occupational wellness. This is unique as many rehabilitation programs focus solely on physical health rather than encompassing all dimensions. Artistic expression has been found to have many benefits to survivors of TBI including the ability to facilitate brain plasticity and improve emotional, social, mental, physical, and occupational health (Kline, 2016).

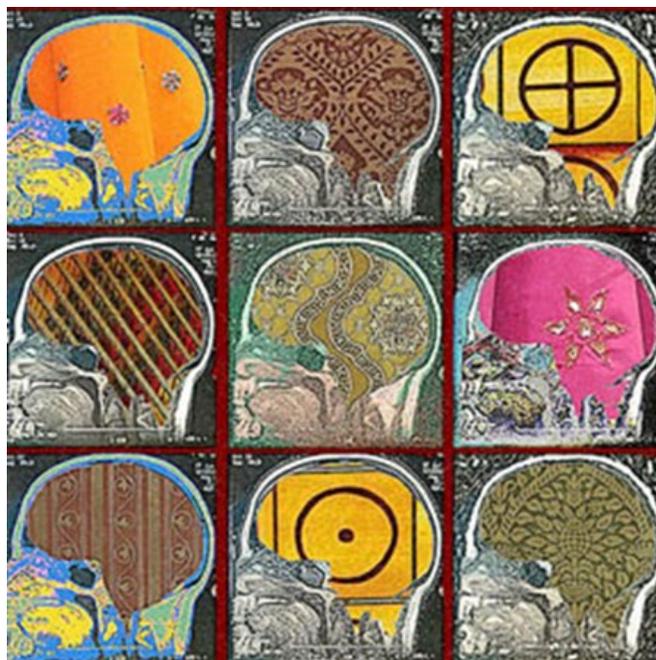
Art making provides the opportunity for TBI survivors to re-develop fine motor skills that may have been lost as a result of their TBI. Activities such as pottery, quilting, knitting, and painting are fun ways for individuals to improve coordination and fine motor skills. Art therapists Galbraith, Subrin, and Ross (2008) also found that the creative process involved in art making can assist TBI survivors in re-learning lost executive function skills. In addition, art classes and shows help to fill the occupational void that many TBI survivors struggle with post-injury. Creating works of art transfers the individual's focus towards their abilities instead of their disability, and fosters personal growth.

In regards to emotional and mental health, artistic expression has been found to be an outlet for TBI survivors to release negative feelings such as anger and pain that they may be holding onto post-injury (Masterson *et al.*, 2008). The kinesthetic aspect of art making provides survivors with a non-verbal tool to express their emotions. In addition, artistic expression presents the opportunity for survivors to re-build self confidence as they discover new talents post-injury.

Overtime, art making has been found to increase self esteem and self validation. Specifically, the process of creating art aids survivors in accepting their new self and abilities following TBI, and cope with any changes they may be experiencing. Artistic expression allows survivors to experience joy and has been found to relieve depression. Generally, the creative process of art making is relaxing and has been described a stress relieving by many individuals.

Artistic expression is also a powerful tool to increase the social health and well-being of TBI survivors. In particular, art groups provide survivors with the opportunity for community engagement and social integration. Many TBI survivors are fearful to socially engage in the community after their injury, and artistic groups ease this process. Specifically, the social aspect of art groups have been found to increase self-concept, quality of life, and social skills while decreasing experiences of social isolation and lack of social ties (Douglas, 2013; Sell and Murrey, 2006). Activity-based groups such as art making also provide opportunities to increase essential life skills such as decision making, cooperation, problem solving, organization, follow-through, and planning (Douglas, 2013).

Creating art facilitates the beginning of the healing process. Specifically, artistic expression has been found to aid TBI survivors in replacing feelings of loss with new areas of growth (Art Therapy Program, 2018). The creative process of expressive art engages neural networks across the entire brain. As a result, new neural connections are constructed through a process called neuroplasticity (Art Therapy Program, 2018). Interestingly, both parietal lobes are activated during creative activity (Makuuchi et al., 2003) which supports the idea that art making can spark and support plasticity in the parietal lobes. The parietal lobes are known to be responsible for sensation and perception, as well as integrating sensory, primarily with in the visual system. Researchers believe that some specific aspects of creativity are responsible for promoting neuroplasticity through art making (Jung et al., 2010). In particular, the creative process encourages divergent thinking, fluid intelligence, insight and flow.



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## The Benefits of Artistic Expression Following Traumatic Brain Injury Continued

Shari Lynne Beame of Miami is a great example of how artistic expression can be essential for recovery for some individuals with TBI. Beame had a debilitating car accident at 17 years old, receiving a brain injury that left her paralyzed. She had to relearn to talk and walk all over again, "I was 17 years old wearing diapers" she states. Beame then turned to art as a form of communication and expression. "[Art] gave me the outlet for all my emotions. I was just so tense and had so much anger. After I painted a picture, I was feeling relieved". Now at 40 years old, Beame is a certified mental health therapist specializing in art therapy. She says her injury ignited a love for therapy, and motivated her to want to help others find the same sense of relief she feels. Beame states that artistic expression facilitates a sense of accomplishment for many TBI survivors. "When they finish a picture, they become totally transformed" she states. To read more about her story and other TBI survivors that have found relief through artistic expression, see the website in the references (Brain injury ignites passion for art therapy, 2010).

These recent discoveries demonstrate how artistic expression can be used as an essential rehabilitation tool to facilitate a holistic recovery. Artistic expression can facilitate brain plasticity and improve emotional, social, mental, physical, and occupational health (Kline, 2016). The benefits of artistic expression provide hope for TBI survivors, and support it as a fun, engaging way to improve quality of life post-injury.

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# THANK YOU FROM BIAQD



The Brain Injury Association Quinte District is excited to announce that, thanks to the support of the City of Belleville Community Arts and Culture Fund, we will be hosting an art show at the Core Centre in the Gallery room from September 24-28, 2018.

This show will feature art made by our members, highlighting the different techniques that they have learned from various artists in our community. Be sure to stop by and have a look at the wide variety of pieces that will be on display from paintings, to pottery, and even some quilting projects.

Our art classes are held on Wednesdays from 1-3 pm in our office. If you have any questions about this program please feel free to contact the BIAQD office at 613-967-2756 or [info@biaqd.ca](mailto:info@biaqd.ca)

## Service Providers\* in our Community

Special thanks to the service providers of our community

Who support our local organization

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Mary-Ellen Thompson, Ph.D.,  
Speech-language Pathologist

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### Support Services for Brain Injury

*helping individuals living with the effects of brain injury achieve a better quality of life*



[www.mindworksgroup.ca](http://www.mindworksgroup.ca)  
1-800-559-8323

# Upcoming Events

## Save the Date!

### **BIAQD Annual AGM**

September 13, 2018

BIAQD Office

### **BIAQD Art Show**

September 24 - 28, 2018

Core Centre Art Gallery

### **BIAQD Craft Sale**

September 29, 2018 1 - 4 pm

East End Belleville

### **Uncorked Dinner Fundraiser**

December 1, 2018

Urban Hall Belleville

If you are interested in any of the events please contact the office for further information!



We're On the Web! Check us out  
to keep up to date between  
magazines!  
[www.biaqd.ca](http://www.biaqd.ca)

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