Jordan's Artful Wellness

THE HIDDEN INJURY, THE REAL RECOVERY

A survivor's guide to healing after a brain injury

Dear Reader,

If you're reading this, chances are you or someone you love is navigating life after a brain injury whether it came from a fall, accident, illness, treatment, or something else entirely. No two TBIs are the same, but many of us share a common thread: **the world feels different now, and healing can be confusing, lonely, and often misunderstood.**

This booklet was created to offer something I wish I'd had earlier: gentle guidance, honest insight, and hope grounded in lived experience. Not from a place of perfection but from the messy, nonlinear, deeply human process of recovery.

Inside, you'll find symptoms many people never knew were related to their brain injury, pathways others have taken toward healing, tools to try at home, and reminders that what you're feeling is real. There are also voices of others who've walked this path because validation is healing too.

If you've been dismissed, misdiagnosed, or told "you look fine," you're not alone. **Healing from a brain injury is real work. And you deserve to be supported in it.**

With care and solidarity,
Jordan

MY INJURY STORY: WHEN TREATMENT HARMS

In June 2023, I received Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) at a clinic in Vancouver, Washington a treatment I was told was safe, non-invasive, and without systemic or meaningful side effects. I was vulnerable and seeking support. I trusted the doctor. I trusted the science I thought backed it.

But after just one session, my brain and body began reacting in ways I could not ignore. I was told I was "overly sensitive" and was convinced to continue for two more sessions before I stopped.
I developed sudden and disturbing symptoms:

- Intense head pressure and a feeling of internal swelling
- Disorientation, dizziness, and loss of balance
- Vision changes like light sensitivity, trouble tracking, double vision
- Cognitive disruption such as slowed thinking, word-finding issues, memory lapses
- Emotional changes of panic, flattening, a profound sense of disconnection, and uncontrollable crying
- A strange detachment from my own body that felt like dissociation

When I reported these issues, I was told to "stick with it" that I was "just sensitive." That phrase still haunts me. It delayed the care I needed and dismissed what was, in fact, a traumatic brain injury.

Unlike a sports injury or a car crash, my TBI wasn't caused by an external blow. It was iatrogenic, caused by a medical procedure. And like many who suffer less visible forms of brain trauma, I had to fight for acknowledgment. I had to push for diagnostic imaging, specialist referrals, and treatment that respected my experience.

Eventually, a diagnosis came and with it, the long road of rehabilitation:
Neuro-optometry. Vestibular therapy. Cognitive retraining. Trauma support. Physical therapy. Nervous system regulation.

What I've Learned and What I Want Others to Know

- Not all TBIs come from impact. Electrical or neurostimulatory procedures can also destabilize the brain.
- Symptoms are often misunderstood or dismissed as anxiety, hypersensitivity, or somatization.
- You can have a real brain injury and still be told it's "just in your head."
- Recovery is nonlinear, exhausting, and deeply personal but it is possible.

This story is mine, but it's also one of many. I've connected with thousands of others who were injured by treatments they thought were safe and found themselves on a brain injury journey they never saw coming.

If you're on that road of recovery: **You are not alone. You are not making it up. Your brain is asking to be believed.**

Recognizing a Possible Brain Injury

Not all brain injuries come from a fall or a car crash. Medical procedures, toxins, infections, or even emotional trauma can affect the brain and the symptoms are often misunderstood or overlooked. If something changed in your mind or body after an event or treatment, it may be worth considering whether a brain injury occurred.

- Cognitive Changes: Trouble with memory, focus, or processing speed, Word-finding problems or slurred speech, Difficulty reading, following conversations, or multitasking
- Physical Symptoms: Head pressure or headaches that feel different from before, Dizziness, imbalance, or vertigo. Noise sensitivity or tinnitus, Nausea or motion sensitivity, Neck or midline instability
  - Vision changes: light sensitivity, double/blurry vision, trouble tracking
- Emotional + Psychological Changes: Emotional blunting or mood swings. Panic, fear, or anxiety that feels physiological. Feeling detached from your body or surroundings (derealization/dissociation). Flat affect, crying spells, irritability
  - Nervous System Dysregulation: Overreaction to light, sound, or sensory input. Feeling "on edge" or in fight-or-flight. Easily overstimulated or needing to isolate. Poor sleep, sudden fatigue, or crashing after small exertion
- Progressive or Delayed Onset: Symptoms that worsen over time. New issues appearing days or weeks after the initial event. A sense that something is "off" or "wrong" even if scans look normal

You are not overreacting. You are not imagining it.

These symptoms may be signs of real brain disruption even if others don't understand or recognize it right away.

Navigating the Medical Hardships

If you've ever walked out of an appointment feeling dismissed, doubted, or even shamed — you're not alone. Many brain injury survivors who present with "invisible" symptoms, experience medical gaslighting.

This can sound like:

- "It's all in your head."
- "That's not a known side effect."
- "You're just anxious."
- "The treatment couldn't have caused that."
- "You're too sensitive."

These comments can undermine your confidence, delay care, and worsen your healing. You deserve to be heard, believed, and supported.

Tips for Advocating for Yourself

- Document everything. Bring a written list of symptoms, timeline, and triggers. If possible, track patterns with photos, videos, or journals.
- Bring a witness. A friend or loved one can offer backup and help you feel grounded.
- Name what's happening. If you feel dismissed, say: "I'm concerned that my symptoms are being minimized. I'd like to be taken seriously."
- Know your goals. Before the appointment, clarify: What do you want out of it: a referral? A specific test? A diagnosis ruled in or out?

Reminder

You are not too sensitive. You are not making this up.
Being harmed by a treatment or misunderstood by a provider is not your fault. Your symptoms are real — and your story matters.

Healing Pathways

These are the things that helped me the most in navigating and recovering from a traumatic brain injury. It hasn't been linear and it's taken time, advocacy, and trial and error. If you're just starting out or haven't had access to care, I hope this offers a roadmap.

What Helped Me

- **Getting a Proper Diagnosis:** It took over a year for me to receive a formal diagnosis of brain injury. Even though I had clear symptoms, I was often dismissed because my injury didn't come from a car crash or fall. Once diagnosed, I finally started receiving better referrals and support though I still advocate daily for my care. **You are your best and strongest advocate.**
- Brain-injury-informed care: Working with providers who specialize in brain injury changed everything. The earlier you access proper care, the more you can support long-term healing and manage symptoms before they snowball. Don't settle for being told "it's anxiety" or "it's all in your head. **Your symptoms are real.**
- Scans**:** It's important to know that up to 80% of brain injuries don't show up on standard imaging like CT, MRI, or MRA. That doesn't mean your symptoms aren't real. **A normal scan doesn't mean you're fine, it just means the tools aren't sensitive enough.** Many people with TBIs are misdiagnosed or dismissed simply because their scans are "normal." I eventually had a SPECT scan, which showed clear signs of dysfunction and gave me some validation but it didn't change my symptoms or the long road of healing that followed.
- Neuro-optometry: Roughly 70% of brain injuries involve visual disruption, yet this is rarely screened for in initial evaluations. I had double vision, dizziness, tracking problems, and sensitivity to light all of which stemmed from disrupted brain-eye connection. Vision therapy became a turning point for me. I now use prism lenses, tinted glasses, and daily visual retraining to help rebuild the pathways that were affected. **Vision rehab isn't just about your eyes, it's about retraining your brain to see, move, and feel safely again.**
- Physical therapy: PT helped rebuild coordination, address neck and midline instability, and support balance between the brain, body, and eyes. With the right therapist, these exercises can ease pressure, reduce fatigue, and improve daily functioning.

Healing Pathways

This page continues the list of therapies, tools, and approaches that have made a difference in my recovery. If you're still searching for answers, or if care hasn't been accessible to you, I hope this part of my story offers a few starting points and some hope.

What Helped Me

- Vestibular therapy: Dizziness, motion sensitivity, and feeling unsteady were daily issues. Vestibular therapy helped my brain re-learn how to process movement and stabilize input from my inner ear, eyes, and balance system. This was key in reducing vertigo and improving my tolerance to motion.
- Speech therapy: Word-finding issues, memory lapses, and slowed thinking are common after brain injury. Speech-language therapy supported my cognitive function, executive skills, and confidence in communication. I also focus a lot on advocacy in moments that I struggle.
- Somatic + trauma support: Living with a brain injury is traumatic. Nervous system dysregulation, dissociation, and emotional blunting often follow. Somatic therapy helped me reconnect to my body, gently release stored tension, and feel safe in myself again.
- Nutrition + Deep Rest: Healing a brain takes massive energy. Anti-inflammatory foods, quality hydration, and frequent rest periods gave my brain what it needed to begin repairing. Listening to my body — even when it asked for stillness — was key.
- **Supplements:** The right supplements helped support neuroregeneration, reduce inflammation, and restore depleted systems. These are the ones I use consistently:
  - **Magnesium Threonate** for neuroplasticity and calming the brain
  - **Omega-3s (DHA/EPA)** for brain cell repair and reducing inflammation
  - **B-Complex** supports energy, nerves, and mood
  - **NAC** increases glutathione, a major antioxidant for brain healing
  - **Lion's Mane** supports neural growth and clarity
  - **BodyBio PC** restores cell membranes and supports cognition
  - **Mitochondrial support** for improved energy production at the cellular level
  - **BCQ** a natural anti-inflammatory blend for nerve and joint pain
  - **Ashwagandha** for nervous system balance and reducing stress reactivity

Note: This isn't medical advice. It is just what has worked for me. Always consult a trusted provider when exploring supplements or new therapies.

Healing Pathways

After a traumatic brain injury your nervous system can stay stuck in survival mode. The fight-or-flight response becomes overactive, and it takes time, safety, and the right tools to help the body learn how to feel safe again. Through trial and error, I found a few therapies that were deeply supportive in calming my autonomic nervous system (ANS). These weren't quick fixes, but each one added a layer of regulation that made healing more possible. Here's what helped me most:

What Helped Me

- Syntonic Light Therapy (Color Light Therapy): I did a trauma-specific protocol using Syntonic phototherapy, a gentle treatment involving colored light filters directed into the eyes. While it's often used for visual processing issues, this particular protocol helped in a surprising way: **it soothed my overactive stress response more than anything else I'd tried.** I didn't expect it to reach so deeply into my nervous system but it did. Within a few sessions, I noticed subtle but real shifts: less hypervigilance, easier breathing, and a quieting of that constant internal buzzing that had defined my post-injury state. It helped bring my brain and body back into better communication.
- Craniosacral Therapy (CST): CST is a gentle hands-on technique that works with the rhythm of the cerebrospinal fluid and fascia. I knew that I wanted to try CST because I was trained in level one and immediately I noticed it helped release deep patterns of tension held in my neck, jaw, and head from the trauma. I would leave sessions feeling softer, clearer, and a little more at home in my body. **For anyone recovering from head trauma or nervous system dysregulation, I found CST to be one of the most restorative, non-invasive therapies.**
- Acupuncture + Meditation
  - Acupuncture was another powerful ally. By targeting specific points to calm the vagus nerve and support the liver/kidney/adrenal systems, I felt my body slowly begin to drop out of constant alert. My sessions were always paired with deep breathing and guided meditation, which helped reinforce the message: you're safe now.
  - I also developed a simple home meditation practice even 5–10 minutes of mindful breathing, body scanning, or listening to calming music helped rewire my brain toward safety and softness

Note: This isn't medical advice. It is just what has worked for me. Always consult a trusted provider when exploring supplements or new therapies.

Healing Pathways – It's a Layered Approach

No single therapy did it all. But layering these modalities especially those that worked gently with the nervous system, fascia, and energy flow helped me move out of freeze, calm the inner chaos, and rebuild from a place of regulation.

You don't need to do them all. You just need to find what supports your system in returning to safety.

What Helped Me

- The Power of Words: Positive Affirmations: As I layered in therapies that supported my body and nervous system, I also began working with positive affirmations inspired by Marisa Peer's compassionate, heart-led approach to healing. At first, it felt unfamiliar. After so much medical trauma and invalidation, speaking kindly to myself didn't come naturally. But slowly, things began to shift.
  - When I repeated phrases like:
    - **I am lovable**
    - **I am safe in my body**
    - **I am worthy of rest and connection**
    - **I deserve to heal**
  - I began to notice a quiet response from within. My nervous system softened. The pressure in my chest eased. And over time, those words became more than phrases, they became truths I could begin to believe.
  - Affirmations became a kind of bridge helping to rewire my inner dialogue and create emotional safety from the inside out. They didn't erase the pain, but they gave me a new language to meet it with.
  - Even now, when I feel triggered or unsteady, I return to them. Sometimes I whisper them. Sometimes I write them down. They're woven into my healing and they are gentle reminders that I am not broken, and that healing is not only possible, but deserved.

Note: This isn't medical advice. It is just what has worked for me. Always consult a trusted provider when exploring supplements or new therapies.

Healing Pathways

These approaches are not one-size-fits-all, but they reflect what many in the TBI and post-concussion communities have tried in their healing journeys. Some of these require access to specialized care, while others can be self-directed with care and research. As always, proceed gently and listen to your body as what helps one person may not work for another.

What Others Report Helping

- Functional neurology or chiropractic neurology: Some have found targeted, brain-based care helpful particularly with providers trained to assess and support mild traumatic brain injuries. This often includes balance work, oculomotor retraining, and nervous system calibration. Success depends heavily on the provider's experience with brain injury.
- HBOT (Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy): Some individuals report improvements with HBOT breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized chamber to increase oxygen delivery to healing tissues. Research is mixed, but results are promising for some TBI-related inflammation and neural repair.
- Light therapy (for those not light-sensitive): Low-level light therapy (LLLT or red/infrared light) has shown promise for brain healing in some studies. **Important note:** those with light sensitivity must proceed with extreme caution. For others, it may reduce inflammation and support mitochondrial function.
- Neurofeedback (mixed results, but gentle forms only): A form of brainwave training that can help regulate brain function. Results vary as many report success with gentle, trauma-informed approaches like infra-low frequency neurofeedback. **Avoid protocols that feel overstimulating or generic.**
- QEEG Brain Mapping + Targeted Therapies: A quantitative EEG can reveal brainwave irregularities and help guide individualized treatments. Some find success combining brain mapping with gentle neurostimulation or neurofeedback tailored to their specific patterns.
- Microdosing: Tiny, non-hallucinogenic doses taken on a structured schedule (often every 3 days) may help neuroplasticity, mood regulation, and emotional healing. Many harmed individuals have reported benefits, though this is still experimental and ideally done with guidance or peer support.
- Craniosacral Therapy: A gentle, hands-on technique that works with the cranial rhythm and fluid dynamics of the nervous system. Many with TBI report reduced head pressure, improved sleep, and nervous system regulation. Especially helpful when traditional PT or massage feels too stimulating.

Healing Pathways

There's no universal roadmap for healing after a brain injury — what supports one person might overwhelm another. The tools and therapies shared here come from lived experience within the TBI and post-concussion communities. Some involve professional guidance, while others can be explored independently with caution and care. Healing is deeply individual. Go at your own pace, stay curious, and above all, honor your body's signals along the way.

What Others Report Helping

- Cold Plunges or Contrast Showers: Used cautiously, alternating hot and cold water exposure may stimulate vagus nerve activity and support autonomic regulation. Especially used for resetting after overstimulation or to reduce inflammation. Always test tolerance gradually.
- Aqua Therapy: Water-based movement or floating in warm pools can be supportive for sensory regulation, gentle vestibular retraining, and muscle relaxation. The low-impact nature of water helps those with physical or balance limitations.
- Feldenkrais or Alexander Technique: Movement-based therapies that help rebuild awareness between body and brain. These modalities support retraining posture, reducing tension, and improving nervous system coordination often overlooked after TBI.
- Water fasting: This is a polarized topic, so please do your research. Some people have reported reduced inflammation and mental clarity during carefully monitored fasts. This is not for everyone especially if underweight, chronically ill, or without medical support, but has been explored in some TBI recovery paths. Please research if this would fit your healing.
- Adaptive Movement Practices (e.g. Tai Chi, Qigong): Gentle, rhythmic movement systems that promote balance, body awareness, and nervous system resilience. These practices often help calm the system while slowly reintroducing mobility and coordination.
- Vagus Nerve Support: Tools like humming, gentle breath holds, gargling, and specific neck and jaw movements aim to stimulate the vagus nerve and promote parasympathetic tone. This can help manage overstimulation, digestion, and emotional regulation challenges post-TBI.
- Therapeutic Journaling or Art: Expressive practices can support emotional processing and help restore a sense of agency after injury. Some people find clarity or relief through visual art, poetry, or structured writing like gratitude lists or symptom logs.

PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN + NERVOUS SYSTEM AS YOU HEAL

Understanding the Impact of Brain Injury

A traumatic brain injury can disrupt multiple systems in the body, often in invisible but deeply felt ways. It's not just a "bump on the head." Even mild TBIs can cause lasting changes to brain function, especially when the injury affects areas involved in balance, vision, memory, and autonomic regulation.

One of the most affected systems is the autonomic nervous system, which regulates survival functions like heart rate, digestion, blood pressure, and stress response. When dysregulated, this can lead to symptoms such as:

- Panic and anxiety surges
- Light and sound sensitivity
- Dizziness and balance issues
- Digestive disruption
- Sleep problems or extreme fatigue
- Dysautonomia (when the nervous system misfires in regulating basic body functions)
- Akathisia (a severe inner restlessness often caused by psychiatric medications, making it nearly impossible to sit still and deeply distressing both physically and mentally).

Living With Limited Energy: The Spoon Theory

For many people with a brain injury, especially when the autonomic nervous system is affected, daily life takes far more energy than it once did. This is where the Spoon Theory becomes a helpful metaphor. Originally developed by Christine Miserandino to describe life with chronic illness, it has become a widely used way to communicate what it's like to live with invisible disabilities and energy-limiting conditions.

Imagine that you wake up each day with a limited number of "spoons," the units of energy you can spend. Healthy individuals may have dozens of spoons and not even notice how many they use. But with a brain injury, you might only have 5 or 6 to get through the entire day. And tasks that once took one spoon might now take two or three. This theory helps explain why people with brain injuries might cancel plans last minute, need extra rest, or seem "fine" one day and completely depleted the next. Their nervous system is constantly working harder behind the scenes just to maintain equilibrium.

PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN + NERVOUS SYSTEM AS YOU HEAL

What to Avoid (Especially Early in Recovery)

- Pushing through worsening symptoms: If you feel an increase in pressure, dizziness, fog, or disconnection—listen to your body. These are signs your brain is overwhelmed, not signs of progress. Rest is not weakness; it's necessary.
- Dismissive providers: If a provider says, "Your scans are normal" or "It's just anxiety," and ignores your real, neurological symptoms, it may be time to seek a specialist trained in TBI or concussion care. You deserve to be believed and supported.
- Overstimulating environments: Bright lights, loud spaces, screens, and fast-paced social interactions can all trigger setbacks. Use sunglasses, ear protection, and pacing strategies when needed.
- Sudden medication changes: Brain injury can alter how medications are metabolized. Many people become more sensitive or reactive. Make any medication adjustments slowly and with careful medical guidance.
- Additional stimulation-based therapies: Until your nervous system is stable, it's wise to avoid intensive interventions like neurofeedback, TMS, or ECT unless recommended by a TBI-informed specialist. Your brain needs calm, not more input.
- Intense exercise or "push through it" mindsets: While movement is important, overexertion can worsen symptoms like dizziness, nausea, and crashes. Focus on restorative practices—gentle stretching, slow walks, or mindful body awareness.

PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN + NERVOUS SYSTEM AS YOU HEAL

Additional Notes for Navigating Recovery:

- **Healing is nonlinear.** You may improve, then backslide, then improve again. This is normal. Setbacks are not failure — they're often part of how the nervous system rewires and recalibrates.
- **Your injury may be invisible, but it is real.** Many TBIs don't show up on CT or MRI scans. Lack of visible damage doesn't mean your symptoms aren't valid. 80% of mild TBIs have no radiological findings — this is a limitation of current imaging, not a reflection of your experience.
- **Rest is an active part of healing.** Deep rest, sensory breaks, and doing "less" are sometimes the most powerful interventions. This is especially true early in recovery, or during flare-ups.
- **Track patterns with curiosity, not judgment.** Some people find it helpful to gently track symptoms, triggers, and small improvements. This can build awareness, self-trust, and guide pacing — but only if done compassionately.
- **Seek trauma-informed care when possible.** TBI can disrupt emotional regulation, memory, and feelings of safety in the body. Many survivors benefit from nervous-system-aware providers who address both physiological and emotional aspects of recovery.
- **You're not alone.** Millions of people live with TBI, even if their symptoms aren't obvious. Building community — even virtually — can ease the isolation and help you feel understood

CREATING A DAILY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Healing from a brain injury isn't linear. Some days feel manageable, while others are deeply hard. Having a supportive framework in place can make the difficult days less isolating and the good days more sustainable. This isn't about doing everything "right." It's about creating rhythms, people, and tools you can lean on, especially when you feel unwell, overwhelmed, or misunderstood.

What to Do on Hard Days

On tough days, simplify. Your only job is to get through — and that's enough.

Here are a few gentle options to ground yourself:

- Reduce demands. Cancel or postpone anything non-essential without guilt.
- Choose one calming thing. A warm shower, gentle music, a favorite blanket, nature sounds.
- Use body-based regulation. Try slow rocking, deep breathing, humming, or holding a warm compress at the base of your skull.
- Repeat reminders. "This will pass." "I'm allowed to rest." "I've survived worse."
- Use a pre-written "bad day" note. Something like: "Hi, today's a hard day. I may be slower to respond, need extra quiet, or skip things I care about. It's not personal, it's just my nervous system asking for care."

How to Explain Your Needs to Loved Ones

- Your needs are real even if they're hard to explain. Many people want to support you but don't know how. Here are ways to help them understand: Try saying:
  - "My brain is still healing, and I have to budget my energy carefully."
  - "Even things that seem small can take a lot out of me right now."
  - "If I cancel plans or go quiet, please know it's not about you. I'm just trying to recover."
- You can also share practical ways they can support you:
  - Offer to run an errand or Sit quietly with you or Text simple check-ins
- Avoid overwhelming stimuli (e.g., loud spaces or fast conversation)
- Celebrate small wins with you. They matter.

CREATING A DAILY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Brain injury recovery is full of ups and downs — progress one day, setbacks the next. It's unpredictable and often exhausting. That's why having a daily support system matters. Not a rigid routine or a checklist to "fix" things, but a gentle foundation: rhythms that calm your nervous system, people who understand, and tools you can turn to when things feel overwhelming. The goal isn't perfection — it's support that helps you move through the hard days and find steadiness in the small moments.

Routines That Help Regulate Your Nervous System

Regulation means helping your body and brain shift out of survival mode. These aren't cures but they're anchors.

Try building small routines like:

- Morning: Light stretching, warm drink, soft light
- Midday: Gentle movement, hydration, sensory break
- Evening: Dim lighting, screens off early, warm bath or weighted blanket

Supportive habits:

- Nature time (even a few minutes)
- Slow breathing or alternate nostril breathing
- Safe touch (self-massage, hugging a pillow, or a weighted blanket)
- Predictable rhythms (meals, sleep, and quiet times at the same hour each day)
- Positive Affirmations

Somatic Reset

Reconnect with your body in safe, small ways

- **Butterfly hug**: Cross your arms over your chest and gently tap each shoulder, left–right–left, like wings. Do this slowly for 30 seconds to 1 minute.
- **Orienting practice**: Slowly look around the room and name 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you can touch. Let your nervous system know you are safe here and now.
- **Vagus nerve breath**: Inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 6–8 seconds. Let the exhale be longer than the inhale. Repeat for 2–3 minutes.
- **Grounding touch**: Press your feet into the floor or your hands against a surface and notice the sensation. This helps anchor the nervous system.

Integrative Regulation Tools

Support your nervous system with simple, brain-calming practices

- **Rocking**: Gently rock your body side to side while sitting or lying down. This can regulate your vestibular system and bring soothing.
- **Light movement:** Gentle walks, stretching, or yoga poses like child's pose or legs-up-the-wall can help move stuck energy and reduce agitation.
- **Sound and music**: Try low, steady sounds like binaural beats, nature sounds, or calming instrumental music to reduce overstimulation. Or block stimulation with noise-canceling headphones and an eye mask.

Memory + Cognitive Repair

Support your brain function with small, steady exercises

- **Daily journaling:** Write 2–3 sentences per day about how you feel or what you notice. This supports memory and self-awareness.
- **Card sequencing game:** Lay out 3–5 playing cards (or number cards) face up. Look at them for 30 seconds. Flip them face down. Now try to reorder them in ascending or descending order from memory.
- **Category naming challenge:** Have a friend or caregiver say a letter and a category (like "B" and "places"). Then try to name 12 things in that category starting with that letter: Boston, Baton Rouge, Brazil... This builds verbal fluency, cognitive speed, and creative recall.
- **What I did today" list:** At night, write or say 3–5 things you did that day (even small ones). This can strengthen recall and build confidence.

Soothing Eye Reset

For calming the nervous system — not for vision training
These gentle practices help reduce overstimulation, quiet the visual system, and signal safety to the brain.

- **Eye Mask Time:** Lie down or recline and place a soft eye mask or folded cloth over your closed eyes. Rest for 5–10 minutes in a dark, quiet space. Let your body soften and your breath slow.
- **Palming:** Rub your hands together to warm them. Gently cup your palms over your closed eyes — without pressing. Breathe slowly and feel the warmth. Stay here for 2–5 minutes.

Soothing Eye Reset

Creating a calming visual environment can prevent daily overwhelm.

- **Gentle Eye Cover + Music:** Put on an eye mask and play soft instrumental or nature sounds. Let yourself just listen while your eyes rest.
- **Reduce Visual Clutter:** Dim the lights. Keep rooms minimal and soft-colored. Reduce screen time when possible.

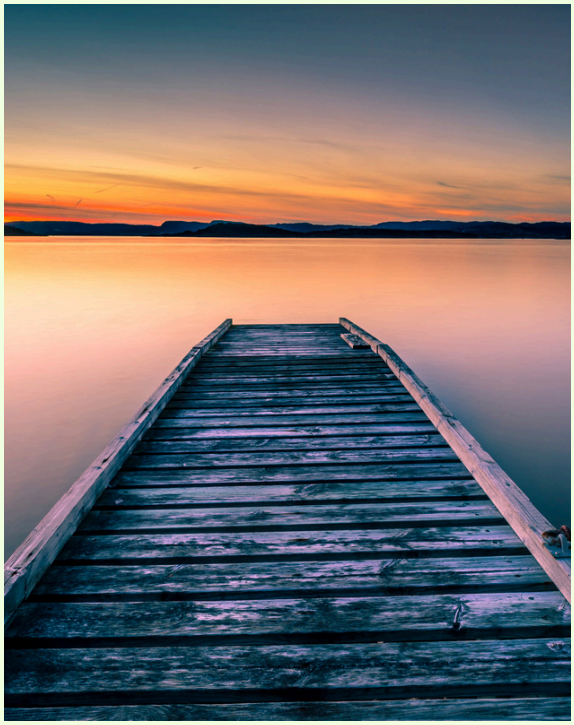
Breathing for Calm

Gentle ways to reset your system — if it feels okay for you.

Note: Not all breathing exercises feel calming for everyone — especially if you're recovering from trauma or brain injury. If any exercise increases discomfort, stop or try something softer. Always listen to your body.

- **Ocean Exhale:** Inhale gently through the nose. Exhale with a soft "Haaa" sound — like fogging up a mirror. Make your exhale longer than your inhale. Imagine your breath washing over you like waves.
- **Hand Tracing Breath:** Hold one hand out. Use your opposite finger to trace up and down each finger. Breathe in as you trace up and out as you trace down. Go slowly, one finger at a time.
- **Color Tracking Breath:** Pick a color that feels soothing or safe to you like blue, green, teal. Gently scan your space and find one object in that color. Let your gaze land softly on it. Inhale slowly. As you breathe in, gently notice the details of the object. Exhale and settle. As you breathe out, keep your eyes on the object. Let your body relax. Look for another object in the same color and repeat on the inhale move your gaze, exhale as you rest.

Resources for Brain Injury Healing + Advocacy



You don't have to do this alone. Whether you're looking for information, connection, or advocacy, the following resources can help you feel more informed, validated, and supported.

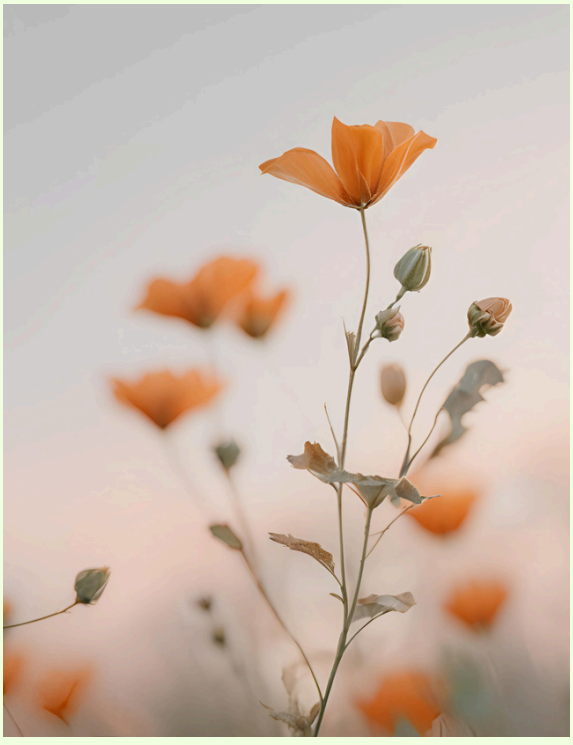
Books, Websites & Podcasts

Books:

- The Ghost in My Brain by Clark Elliott
- You Look Fine, But... by Carol Head
- The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk
- Healing the Broken Brain by Dr. Mike Dow

Podcasts:

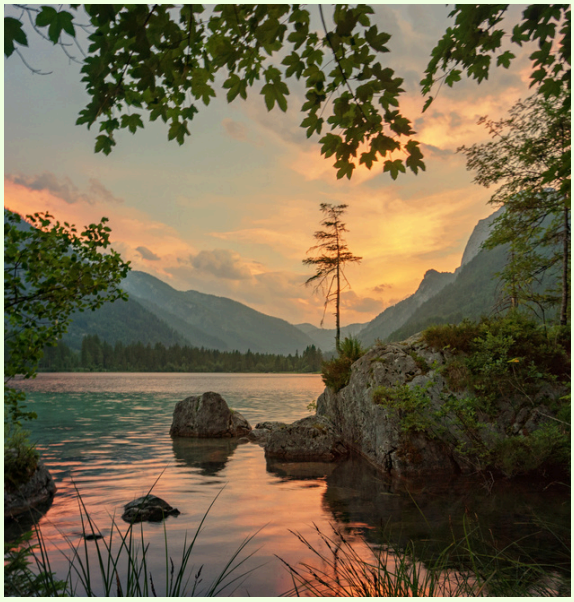
- Hope Survives | Brain Injury Podcast by Cristabelle Braden
- The NeuroNerds: A Brain Injury Recovery & Pop Culture Show by Co-hosts Joe Borges and Lauren Manzano
- Invisible Not Broken (chronic illness + disability stories) by Monica Michelle
- A Battle Within by hosts Terry and Drew Niemann



Websites:

- Brainline.org - Offers survivor stories, clinical info, treatment tips, and caregiver guidance.
- LoveYourBrain.com - Offers free yoga and meditation for TBI survivors. Grounded in neuroplasticity, trauma-informed, and community-oriented.
- ConcussionAlliance.org - Science-backed info on post-concussion syndrome, with a focus on underdiagnosed issues like vision and vestibular dysfunction.
- Biausa.org
- Braintrauma.org
- Thebartfoundation.org

Resources for Brain Injury Healing + Advocacy



Finding others who get it can be life-changing. Whether you're seeking emotional support, shared resources, or just a space to feel less alone, these communities can help.

Support Groups (Online + Local)

Local support groups:

- Check with your state's Brain Injury Alliance chapter
- Hospital-based neuro rehab centers often host monthly meetups
- Google local support groups

Online:

- r/TBI – A large, active forum for people recovering from traumatic brain injuries. Offers shared experiences, coping tools, and validation.
- Brain Injury Services (BIS) offers a diverse calendar of events designed to support and empower individuals affected by brain injuries, as well as their caregivers.

Practitioner Directories

For finding specialized, trauma-informed care:

- Neuro-Optometry: COVD.org
- Vestibular Therapy: VEDA Directory
- Trauma-Informed Therapists: TherapyDen or Psychology Today – filter by "brain injury," "trauma," and "neurodivergence"
- Functional Neurology Clinics: Search IAFNR or "post-concussion rehab" near you

Reminder

Healing takes community, clarity, and courage. You deserve informed care, trustworthy support, and to feel believed. This list is a starting point. Explore what resonates, and leave what doesn't.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

If you're reading this, you've already taken a brave step to seeking understanding, support, or simply the reminder that what you're going through is real. Living with a brain injury, especially one that's invisible or misunderstood, can feel incredibly isolating. But please know: there is a growing community of people who do understand. People who believe you. People who are walking this path too.

You don't have to explain yourself to be worthy of care.

You don't have to push through pain to be strong.

And you don't have to heal alone.

Even on the hardest days, connection and validation can be lifelines. Keep reaching for small moments of calm, for voices that uplift, and for spaces where your story is seen.

For a comprehensive list of brain injury resources including books, websites, podcasts, support groups, and practitioner directories, please access the full spreadsheet with this QR Code.

Brain Injury Resources Spreadsheet

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Stay Connected

Blog: Jordan's Artful Wellness

Instagram: @jordansartfulwellness

Email: jordansartfulwellness@gmail.com

Healing is possible. Awareness is powerful. You're not alone.

Let's build something that lasts.