

## Narrative Interventions for People with Acquired Brain Injury

It has been said that stories form the contexts of our lives and that we have the ability to affect reality through the meaning we assign to events. Stories are the collective consequences of scripts through which we experience ourselves in relation to others. The ability to shape reality through the meaning we assign to events is a process that many of us are sceptical of, if indeed we are aware of that capacity within our selves. An individual coping with the effects of an acquired brain injury (ABI) is very much aware of how reality can be dramatically changed in an instant, although he or she may not be aware of their power to affect that change.

Narrative intervention can assist individuals with ABI to create alternative stories about themselves that lie outside the restrictions imposed by problem-saturated, single-storied accounts of who they are becoming following an ABI. Through a guided exploration of self and identity, people struggling with redefining who they are after trauma can use Narrative to help understand how to move forward from seeing one's self as a survivor to inhabiting a new self, capable of being an active, vibrant participant in creating a rewarding lifestyle.

Although it may be difficult to appreciate recovering from trauma as an opportunity, people with ABI are in a unique position to redefine, or reconstruct their view of self and identity according to their own, very personal perspective. According to one client's reasoning, the pre-injury "old me" was just not able to handle the dramatic changes following his injury, so a "new me" was needed to anchor the rebuilding of his personality. This process of establishing a "new me" helped restore his sense of autonomy and empowered him to continue his quest to create a new life for himself; to make sense of the sudden, life-altering change that the accident forced on him; to form new relationships; to reaffirm existing relationships in a new light and to create new purpose for himself. Because it is the stories we tell about ourselves and each other that define who we are, who we are becoming and to a very real extent, how we remember who we were.

Daniel Morris is the coordinator of Moving On, an agency within Elements Support Services that focuses on forming partnerships with people through a Narrative process. It is for people who want to move past barriers to a new understanding of self that transcends limitations while respecting "old me" values.