Coping Strategies of Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors and Primary Caregivers

Deana Adams, Ph.D., LPC-S
Patti Foster, B.MeD.

Workshop Number: MS 75

Disclosures

Financial Disclosures:
Deana Adams has no relevant financial disclosures.

Patti Foster has authored “Coping with Traumatic Brain Injury: One Woman’s Journey from Death to Life.” She benefits financially from royalty payments from this product.

Non-Financial Disclosures:
Deana Adams has no relevant non-financial disclosures.

Patti Foster has no relevant non-financial disclosures.
Coping Strategies of Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors and Primary Caregivers

Deana Adams, Ph.D., LPC-S
Patti Foster, B.MeD.

Objective: Explore the coping and adaptive strategies of traumatic brain injury survivors and primary caregivers

- Qualitative Research – Series of Semi-Structured Interviews
- 11 TBI Survivors (4+ years post-injury)
  - Ages ranged from 28 – 83
  - Brain Injury: assault, military blast, mva, falls
- 6 Primary Caregivers
  - Ages ranged from 34 – 75
  - Parent, spouse, child
- 4 Themes:
  - Deficits
  - Needs
  - Coping Strategies
  - Recommendations for Mental Health Professionals
- Research Question: What coping strategies most helped you manage the effects of brain injury?
- Subquestions:
  - What were the coping strategies utilized by the survivor and the primary caregiver to manage the effects of TBI?
  - How were these coping strategies developed?
  - What were the greatest needs for TBI survivors and primary caregivers?
  - What were the biggest obstacles that TBI survivors and primary caregivers have had to overcome?
  - How could mental health professionals utilize the knowledge of these coping strategies in developing a theory of counseling for helping the TBI survivor and primary caregiver?

Results: Results of the research uncovered specific needs such as understanding, patience, and support associated with various deficits incurred by the brain injury. The deficits identified include short-term memory loss, anger, and personality changes. The findings indicated that problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping were utilized to some degree throughout the rehabilitation process. Problem-focused coping were behaviors and helps that addressed a specific need associated with a deficit. For
example, to accommodate short-term memory loss, the survivor would employ organizational resources such as planners, calendars, and post-it notes. Emotion-focused coping addressed the emotional disturbances that are common to brain injury. For example, anger and mood swings (depression to elation) were addressed through optimism, behavioral adaptations, and counseling. In addition, primary caregivers identified specific coping strategies to address their needs as they live with their loved one affected by brain injury.

**“Coping Strategies of Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors and Primary Caregivers” accepted for publication in NeuroRehabilitation (Summer 2016).**

Patti Foster, TBI Survivor, Author, Inspirational Communicator, Voice-Over Talent

As a traumatic brain injury survivor, Patti shares her compelling story internationally with the hope it will inspire others along their journey. In 2013, Patti’s gripping book, COPING with TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY: One Woman’s Journey from Death to Life was released. In 2015, she voiced her raw story and released it as an audiobook through Oasis CD and Redemption Press. She is a contributing author to 4 other books: Amazing Faith as well as Getting Things Done: Successful Women Speak both published by Insight Publishers; Modern-Day Miracles published by Destiny Image; and in June of 2014, her head-trauma story was featured in CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL: Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries: 101 Inspirational Stories of Hope, Healing, and Hard Work published by Simon & Schuster. Her voice-acting skills were utilized by an author in Canada when she was invited to voice the audiobook of Modern-Day Miracles which was released in 2013.

Visit her web site at: www.pattifoster.com

Hope After Brain Injury is a non-profit organization devoted to sharing hope with those affected by brain injury by offering counseling, education, and connection to community resources. We are involved with brain injury survivors and their caregivers, along with healthcare professionals, committed to the advancement of brain injury recovery.

Visit us at www.hopeafterbraininjury.org