

POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

BY

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DISCLAIMER



I dictated this book by using voice to text while I was still paralyzed. There may be few run on sentences, the formatting may not be perfect, and there may be some topic repetition. With that said, this is the first book I wrote since my injury and I appreciate you for taking interest in my journey.



DEDICATION



The writing of this book has been a wonderful transformative experience, and I dedicate this book to all of my therapists, friends, social media followers and all of the wonderful people I had the opportunity to meet along my journey.



I was shot in the head. On April 23, 2017 my car was surrounded by five people when a gunman shot at me through my driver's side window. When the shooter saw that I was still alive he put the gun against my head and pulled the trigger causing the bullet to enter one side of my brain and exit out the other. After my near death experience, and six months in the hospital, I developed a new attitude, values, and philosophy to lead a positive and impactful life that I wish to share with the world.



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“Opportunities to find deeper powers within ourselves come when life seems most challenging.”

-Joseph Campbell



Power of Belief



My limitations lie in only what I choose to believe. If I choose to omit the possibility of walking, I would not have the mental capacity to do so. If I believe I can do something, I will set out on an adventure and people, technology, or things that I learn will help me through the challenges along the way. Choosing to believe that I will without a doubt walk will start the transformation of acquiring my new skill. Leah LaBelle said, “Work hard for what you want because it won't come to you without a fight. You can do anything you put your mind to.” I was paralyzed for a few months, I could not move my legs for eight months, yet, I was not limited because I chose to believe I will walk. One year ago docs said I will be in wheelchair for life, in three months I will practice walking. The world is yours if you believe it is according to Steve Jobs, Tupac Shakur, and Sun Tzu.

Steve Jobs said, “Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love.” Jobs was fired from the company that he created, started a new business, and rescued Apple with the technology he developed elsewhere. If Jobs never got fired then he never would have developed the tools to create the technology revolution we are going through today. More importantly, if Jobs did not believe in his abilities to be successful, again, then jobs would have missed his opportunity to change the tech world as we know it today. Jobs believed that he could change the world and he would have ran through a brick wall to do so. Jobs said, “(being fired) freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life; I'm pretty

sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple," Jobs went on to say, "It was awful-tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it." When Jobs returned to Apple he, and his team of engineers changed the course of humanity with his intuitive, elegant, leapfrog product, the iPhone. I am almost certain Jobs was depressed and let down after losing his multi-billion dollar company however, he did not lose belief that he could accomplish this feat again. In fact, prior to returning to Apple Jobs had his hand in formulating two other juggernauts including next and Pixar. The thought of self-doubt never crossed Jobs mind as he continued to put one foot in front of the other toward what he believed. Jobs went on to say, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something - your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

Sun Tzu said, "Put your men in the face of death, there is nothing they can't overcome." We have in us everything we need to accomplish great feats. In the face of death, we do not have another choice but to tap into this internal power that has been inside us all along. Maggie Summers, a survivor of the Oklahoma City Bombing, said, "I made a deal with God that if he let me survive I would lose weight, finish college, and fix relationships with my loved ones. I survived and began to live a purposeful life". Summers went on to explain that since her awakening she graduated college, started a charity to assist victims of violent crimes, and realized what she values the most, spending time with people she loves. Generally, an abyss will cause a revelation which transforms individuals. When I came out of the coma, after a slug went through my head, if I wanted to survive then I had to envision myself fully recovered, follow my envisioned steps to a full recovery, and choose to believe my life has zero limitations. Sun Tzu said, "On desperate ground, fight with all you might, there is a chance of life; whereas death is certain if you cling to your corner." If a doctor told me that I would never walk again, what is the harm in trying to do so? There is nothing wrong with believing past the limitations set by others opinions. My life would be very limited if I choose to live within a box that doctors, or people for that matter, said I could not escape. Like a prisoner, I slowly scratch at the walls of what I am "limited" of today, tomorrow may be the day I break free. Maybe something supernatural will help me, maybe I will develop the strength all on my own. No matter what, the source of all my thoughts comes from me being fully recovered.

Tupac Shakur said, “You have to believe in something. Believe in god, believe in faith, you have to believe in something.” When I came out of the coma I believed in my sister and I believed in myself. The doctors and physical therapist did not know my mental, spiritual, emotional, or physical strength, my sister and I did. To this day I have no hard feelings, everything is good. I work hard in my recovery, stay positive, and have faith everything will settle accordingly. My sister, Laura, told me a quote by Rhonda Byrne that said, “There is no such thing as a hopeless situation. Every single circumstances of your life can change!” I had just come off of my death bed and I asked my sister, “can I die?” Laura replied, “No, you are out of the woods.” There were two problems, however. I had a two breathing tubes up my nose that I could not stop fishing with my tongue and chewing through. Additionally, I could not get myself to eat so the the doctors were going to put in a trach tube in my stomach and a breathing tube in my throat. I had tests wrongly performed consequently delaying my operation date. This may sound silly, however, I believed that I would recover properly to avoid those medical procedures. I took a nap and woke up hungry, ate everything I could and began breathing properly as well. This is the moment that I learned that if want things to happen differently, I have to think differently. Prior to the operation I began to dream and think about myself eating and breathing on my own and thought I already was. I called the nurse in, I remember I was starving, and was upset that nobody was feeding me as I demanded French toast. I believed in my strength that I would overcome this obstacle, and I did. It is like what Buddha said, “We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.”

It is impossible to have positive results with negative beliefs. Limitations are seeded in our beliefs. What I have learned during my process of recovery is to picture myself at the end of the goal I am accomplishing and walk myself through the steps I took to get there. I took I inventory of everything that could go wrong. With the sequence of steps to accomplish my goal, picturing myself completing my goal from beginning to end I believe with full intentions, and no reservations, that I will complete any task at hand. My belief in who I am and my capabilities will determine my actions which directly impacts the recovery I will get. If you see yourself as limited, that you are mostly helpless, you will keep your recovery expectations, efforts, and drive to recover low. You should believe the opposite. You should believe with certainty that you are destined for greatness. With that being said, power of belief empowered Steve Jobs to transform the world as we know it today. The power of belief

aided Sun Tzu shape modern China, 3,000 years ago. Belief got Tupac Shakur through his tribulations and the power of belief will get me walking again.

Yesterday my karate instructor, Bear, told me, “You know the question, ‘Is the glass half empty, or is the glass half full?’ Most people want the glass full, however, this is the wrong way of thinking.” When I first came out of the coma, my mind was open, virgin to calamity and chaos, and with my second chance of living, I found opportunity in everything I once knew. In essence, my internal glass, which was once half full, was now shattered with missing contents. From then on, I thought recovering my life meant filling my new glass of life until Bear told me, “You want to keep your glass of knowledge almost empty. When you fill your mind to maximum capacity, you think you know everything and you eventually become resistant to change.” For the past eight months my day-to-day recovery has become mundane routine to the point where my progress, toward my goal of walking, has become a static feeling. Today I believe that I need to keep my glass empty and remain thirsty for knowledge, fresh ideas, and wisdom.

According to Lester Hernandez historian, “When Socrates was told that the Oracle of Delphi had revealed he was the wisest man in Athens, he responded by trying to prove the Oracle wrong.” Socrates sent himself on a mission to find the true wisest man of the land when all he could find was men boasting about how much they knew. He engaged in many discussions with poets, politicians, and philosophers, and Socrates found nothing but ignorance among his townspeople. All the people of his society had spoken adamantly about matters of which they were closed minded to and had zero experience of. By remaining hungry for knowledge I learned I can overcome ignorance and fallacious mental barriers. Additionally, by opening my mind to curiosity and what could be possible, I inevitably become less isolated from reality. Robert Greene said, “With time, our minds tend to close off. At some point, we feel like we know what we need to know; our opinions are certain and firm. We don’t want our assumptions about life changed.” When I came out of the coma, with a traumatic brain injury, I had to relearn everything. Being curious as to what my new life entailed, I saw everything as a source of education. The world is full of mystery and operating with an open mind will open new and fresh ideas.

Ryuhō Okawa said, “If we do not challenge ourselves again and again, we will never be able to accomplish anything.” New challenges give me fresh

ideas. Bending my mind around problems expands my thinking and enriches my mind. For example, when I was in the hospital, I wanted to start my blog. However, I could not write and I could not use a computer. To solve this problem I would ask my mom, my nurses, or family members to take notes of my blog ideas. My blog challenged me again and again to the point where I could publish my blog independently on the computer. Additionally, I get fresh ideas when I put in the effort to improve by overcoming challenges. With that being said, Okawa goes on to say, “Always try to see things in a constructive light. Look for a way to solve the problem, a way to break through it.” In my recovery at the moment, I can extend my legs. However, I cannot pull my legs back in. My positive thought is I can move my legs and I am excited knowing that I have room for improvement. Furthermore, after my legs improve I will work on advancing toward my goal of walking. With that being said, Okawa continues to elaborate by saying, “To overcome adversity and create a new path, a solution that we have not thought of yet, a new idea. You should be thinking about how to make things happen.” Overcoming challenges keeps my mind fresh with new ideas. Obstacles give me an opportunity to reassess my abilities and grow beyond current limitations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” I try to open my mind, continually expanding outward, so I have the capability to make better choices that otherwise would not be found within a narrow scope of thinking. If I have a limited outlook and unwilling to consider alternative ideas, I would have no other choice but to remain on a single path in life and see where it leads. For example, I have a therapist and we completely bump heads. She does not like me exercising outside of therapy, or for that matter doing therapy outside of therapy, resulting us both becoming narrow minded within our limited ideals. I have found that keeping an open mind towards others views provides me with a clear perception of the bigger picture. Furthermore, expanding my mind outwards and learning from others expands my reality and prevents mental isolation. The 14th Dalai Lama said, “Too much self-centered attitude, you see, brings isolation. Result: loneliness, fear, anger. The extreme self-centered attitude is the source of suffering.” I make a conscious effort to explore various aspects of thought, whether they are my own or others. I am currently on a path that I want to get off of. If I do everything according to my limited knowledge, I will not get very far. Additionally, if I do only what other people tell me to do, without any collaborative effort, I will become a mindless robot on a path going on a path wherever it leads. With that being said, I try to

broaden my horizons and mental limitations by both creating new thoughts for myself without influence and considering other individuals thoughts without prejudice.

My karate instructor told me, “You know the question, ‘Is the glass half empty, or is the glass half full?’ Most people want the glass full, however, this is the wrong way of thinking.” I kept my mental glass half full until it shattered. Coming out of the coma and relearning everything I once knew forced me remain thirsty for knowledge, fresh ideas, and wisdom. By remaining hungry for knowledge we can overcome ignorance and fallacious barriers. I found by opening my mind to curiosity, and what could be possible, I inevitably become less isolated from reality. Keeping positive thoughts in negative circumstances keeps my mental glass refreshed. As I overcome adversity my limitations dissolve. With persistence and determination these temporary circumstances will be dissolved. I have limited knowledge and expertise however, I do have creative input to collaborate with others who are kind enough to contribute to my glass of knowledge.

My karate instructor told me, “You know the question, ‘Is the glass half empty, or is the glass half full?’ Most people want the glass full, however, this is the wrong way of thinking.” One thing I learned from losing everything was perspective. When everything is gone a vacuum for exponential growth is created. In the moments of having a broken glass it does not matter if the glass is half empty or half full, what matters is identifying opportunities for improvement and mustering energy, belief, and focus to fill that void. Relearning everything I once knew gave me an opportunity to refresh my knowledge, thoughts on life, and wisdom.



Super Hero



Batman, Superman, and Spider-Man are all superheroes that every day civilians look up to. These fictional characters inspire us to work harder, have courage, and they provide a sense of wonder and hope. One would think with the power to save the world from harm, and protect humankind from unnecessary evil, superheroes would not be insecure within their own skin. While lying in my dark hospital room alone, on Sunday, I began to feel very insecure about the unknown. Will I ever walk again? Will I ever have a sex life as a paraplegic? Will I date again? At this moment I had a cognition. There is a superhero in all of us, however, sometimes some of us put on a front, or put on a mask. As I realized this I began to talk myself through this moment of crisis. I said, "Do not be afraid to be your authentic self. Be honest with yourself, be open to possibilities, take your mask off, keep your cape on, and don't be afraid to be something great."

Epictetus said, "It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." After being robbed randomly at gunpoint, brains blown out of my skull, and waking up paralyzed, I tuned in with the little of the one thing I had left, my thoughts. I came to peace that I had little control over this violent individual intersecting my life and that I was the one in control my attitude in which I responded to my unfortunate circumstance. My acceptance allowed me to shift my focus from working against a negative force to creating a positive and beneficial mind frame for myself. For example, coming out of the coma I was pressed with two thought options, which would dictate the trajectory of my recovery. The options were I could prepare to suffer, or prepare to heal. In choosing to heal I disconnected from my sources of anxiety and forged forward with a fearless approach in life. Robert Greene said, "A bold act can put people on their heels and eliminate obstacles." In society we are socialized to conform to a status quo and appeal to authority. However,

what happens if one travels beyond the walls of social norms and advocate for themselves? My unconventional approach to my recovery taught me to trust myself, embrace fearlessness, and be my own superhero.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Imitation is suicide.” By imitating other people, instead of being yourself, you become a disservice to yourself and others. No individual should seek praise, approval, or validation. Furthermore, one should act upon their own concerns and never on the opinions of others. For example, I had a physical therapist, an authoritative figure, tell me that she does not want me to workout in my free time. Additionally, my therapist schedules my therapy once a month. If I chose to limit my recovery to once a month, by appealing to authority, I would be, as Emerson said, committing “suicide.” Additionally, nobody knows my relationship with me, my determination, and vision for a full recovery. Better than myself. Emmerson mentions, “Trust thyself... Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind... In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts... None but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.”

Curtis Jackson said, “The greatest fear people have is that of being themselves... You’re running away from the one thing that you own, what sets you different.” Everybody has unique gifts, life experiences, and creativity which shapes our perspective of the reality we live in. For example, for myself, growing up as an athlete I always spent every summer recovering from some sort of sports injury. In my healing process I became well connected with my physical and mental abilities as well as my spiritual strength. With that said, in the spring I was shot, so I looked forward to my same old routine of recovering from another injury and getting to know myself in the process. Jackson also states, “I was born alone and I will die alone. I’ve got to do what’s right for me and not live my life how anybody else wants it.” When the doctors said I would never walk again, and told my family to order me a high-powered wheelchair, I had to do what was best for me and learn how to walk again. Growing up and constantly recovering from some sort of injury taught me that your attitude has the ability to shape reality in two opposite directions. One direction constricts you and corners you with fear while the other direction opens up possibilities and freedom of action. I can only act upon and discover possibilities if I disconnect from fear and opinions of others.

Ernest Hemingway said, “The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.” In my recovery I could have the best surgeons and doctors, however at the end of the day, the only person with my inner voice, drive, and vision to a full recovery is myself. Learning how to get up and moving again was not on the therapists agenda. In addition to that, I had demonstrated my enthusiasm for independence in the past only to be lectured, in a tone of negative discouragement. In addition to the lack of patient/therapist compatibility, my therapist was moving at a snail’s pace and scheduled me for therapy appointments once a week and in one instance, once month. I told myself, “If I wanted professional help achieving my goals then I would have to forge my path through my actions.” I had to in secret make my own physical gains, make my own plan of action, and surpass the entire plan of therapy by my next physical therapy session. I tuned out external noise and listened to my inner voice. I began making strides in my plan of action and was referred to a more intense program where i all I do is practice walking all day every day. I learned that I cannot appeal to authority figures or expect somebody else to be great for me. With that being said, I learned that everybody has a superhero inside them which can only be discovered by listening to and understanding themselves.

My unconventional approach to my recovery taught me to trust myself, embrace fearlessness, and be my own superhero. I rejected the fallacious thought of appealing to authority and continued to think for myself throughout my recovery. By listening to my inner voice and constantly resetting my goal, I was constantly surpassing goals set for me by others. My self-evaluations proved to me what Emerson said was true, imitation is suicide and always think for yourself. Being yourself is one thing that cannot be replicated. Everybody has a superhero inside them and nobody should ever be insecure or fear to be something great.



Remember Where You Came From



The other day I paid a visit to the second hospital I was in. Being caught up in my day to day recovery, and looking forward, I became disconnected from where I came from. Being paralyzed became an exaggeration, the inability to eat became more of a “choice”, and the thought of moving my legs again was dismissed after receiving surgery. Basically, I had become lost and caught up in the moment, so much so, that I forgot where I came from and lost sight of where I was going. Anthony Burgess said, “It’s always good to remember where you come from and celebrate it. To remember where you come from is part of where you’re going.” Revisiting where I came from grounded me as I was reminded of the progress I achieved, the challenges I faced then no longer applied, and the vision I had back then manifested itself. I see a long road ahead of me however, at least now the vision is clear. Now, my vision moving forward is clear and where I left is still in the rear view. Taking a step back to where I came from put my eyes back in the direction in which I am headed.

In today’s world where we are consumed in social media, bombarded with negative global events, and pressure to sway from our attitudes, values, and beliefs, it is easy to lose touch with our mindfulness. Do you, or have you had, a simple goal that seemingly got hijacked? For example, have you gone on Facebook to create a positive post only to find your values and beliefs challenged on your news feed? Even worse, have you read the comment section on YouTube? With chaos intersecting our lives in our fast paced world it is easy to get distracted from the envisioned trajectory of which we take our

lives. Additionally, with the presence of mass media and communications it is fairly simple to compare where we are in our journey to bliss compared to others. With that said, we must take advantage of the opportunity for growth in the moment, think for ourselves in the process, and then remember where we came from.

Socrates said, “To find yourself, think for yourself.” After I awoke on my deathbed, with a five percent chance of surviving, my family was told to order me a high powered wheelchair because if I could get my wrist to move then I would reach my full potential. I had things to do and plans for myself. My limitations live within my imagination and we become what we think about most. With that said, I was not going to listen to a prognosis; instead, I was going to think for myself. Ryuho Okawa said, “you have to reflect on the outside what you are thinking about on the inside.” All I thought about was the next small improvement I had to make to make a full recovery. This thought became deeply rooted and began to flourish in front of everybody. Shortly after I began getting scholarships for intensive physical therapy, told by the doctors that I need to get up and start walking, and found opportunities to reach out and help other TBI survivors. Where a problem exists there is an opportunity for growth. As I began working myself out of paralysis I saw the positive in everything. What I learned was, take advantage of what you have right now because, it can get worse. Or, if you work hard, you can make it better. My brain injury became an opportunity to explore, examine, and help others through a life I never knew about.

When I was paralyzed, I could not move any part of any limb, I did not think about my mobility in the future, I focused on taking advantage for the opportunity of growth in the moment. After the doctors said I would never move, feed myself, or walk again, the opportunity for growth was limitless. Instead of focusing on my limitations, I focused on my capabilities. At one point my abilities were restricted to one thing, having positive thoughts in a negative situation. Maintaining my positive thoughts kept my mind open to enthusiastically trying new things. With that said, Dr. Wayne Dyer said, “you can prepare to suffer or, prepare to heal.” Preparing to heal musters up all of your positive energy and narrows the focus to one thing, the small baby steps to improvement. All of the baby steps collectively add up. For example, a piece of the puzzle is not much, however, collectively all the pieces create the big picture. I had envisioned my journey to recovery and how I was going to make

an astonishing recovery. When the odds were stacked against me it was essential that I listened to myself.

Robert Greene said, “Win through your actions, never through argument.” I kept my intentions to walk again a closely guarded secret. Learning how to get up and move again was not on the therapists agenda. In addition to that, I had demonstrated my enthusiasm for independence in the past only to be lectured to, my family and I both, in a tone of negative discouragement. In addition to the lack of patient/therapist compatibility, my therapist was moving at a snail’s pace and scheduled me for therapy appointments once a month. I told myself, “If I wanted professional help achieving my goals then I would have to forge my path through my actions.” I had to in secret make my own physical gains, make my own plan of action, and surpass the entire plan of therapy by my next physical therapy session. I tuned out external noise and listened to my inner voice. One day I went in for a checkup with my doctor and he told me, “wow, your legs are ready for walking and you need a much more intensive therapy program than what you are currently receiving.” I left that doctor appointment with a referral to get in patient physical therapy where all I do is practice walking all day every day for six weeks. Professional therapists are great, however, I would never win a verbal argument against them, I won through my actions.

Socrates said, “To find yourself, think for yourself.” My limitations lie in only what I choose to believe. If I choose to omit the possibility of walking, like my prognosis said, I would not have the mental capacity to fight for what was ultimately possible. The bottom line is, opinions are strictly strictly opinions. These thoughts hold no merit to bog me down, discourage me, or make me doubt what I am capable of. If I believe I can do something, I will set out on an adventure and people, technology, or things that I learn will help me through the challenges along the way. Leah LaBelle said, “Work hard for what you want because it won’t come to you without a fight. You can do anything you put your mind to.” The first step to accomplishing and overcoming the odds is to mute out external noise and listen to your inner voice. The second step is to listen for a call to adventure. The third step is to take the call into the abyss, go through a transformation, and return in an altered state of being.

Chris Denise said, “In “Success Rule 17, Know Thyself”, “There is a list of techniques to get to know yourself a little better. One of the techniques is

to “look back” at your life. Looking back at your life can be both pleasurable and painful.” The past contributes to who you are today. You may wonder how that can advance your success right now. The key is to remember where you came from. Remembering where you came from, what you’ve been through, and what you have felt leads to a better understanding of both your capabilities and where you are going. When you find your success, whatever that may be, remembering where you came from allows you to see the progress made over a course of your journey. Shelby Jones said, “While entering a new chapter in life, it’s important to remember where you came from, what keeps you grounded. Your roots in life can be an experience you learned from... They can be the impact, the people in your life.” When we venture off in search of fulfillment, it is inevitable that we return to our roots. Even if we do not go back where we came from physically, we do while reminiscing. And this time it is important to be mindful about where we came from and our character transformation.

In today’s world where we are consumed in social media, bombarded with negative global events, and pressured to sway from our attitudes, values, and beliefs, it is easy to lose touch with ourselves and where we are going. Remembering where we came from combats discouragement. In today’s fast paced world it may feel like we are making baby steps at a snail’s pace. Our journey, whatever it may be, is like a puzzle. Every puzzle piece itself is small however, collectively they create the big picture. When all of the work is done you can look at the empty puzzle box and remember where you came from.

I made a post, the other day, which read, “Instead of getting mad at the world for the way it is, let’s accept it and do what we can to improve it.” Today was my would be killer’s court date and my feelings were all love. A perpetrators conviction does not give me healing, however, sharing my story of recovery carries strength to touch lives beyond my own. For example, sharing my journey as I publicly rebuild my life might inspire another individual fighting for their recovery, or, if I am lucky, inspire a perfectly healthy individual of the general population. Additionally, if I burdened my heart with hate, towards an individual who attempted to murder me, I would hold myself as a prisoner in my past instead of becoming an architect of my future. With that being said, nobody is immune from the ups and downs in life and I have learned that instead of getting mad at the way things are, find solutions to prevent tragic osmosis. Eldridge Cleaver said, “You’re either part of the solution or you’re part of the problem.” If I do not spread a positive

message in what could be a negative situation then I am a passive participant in the prevalence of misfortune. Being a victim of a strong armed robbery and having my brains blown out was tragic however, that does define my life as a tragedy. With that said, instead of getting upset about the way things are I will lead my life with the change I want to see in the world.



Grow From Your Problems



Colin Powell said, “There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” Everybody has unfortunate circumstances, problems, and have made mistakes. With that being said, it is not your problems that matter, it is how your problems positively impact your life that counts. At the end of the day, our present circumstances are only temporary and will become empty and meaningless as we evolve. Ryuho Ho said, “No matter how tough our lives become, in the final analysis, we all pass on from this world and all our problems die with us. We are here to spend the time we have in accepting the problems this life gives us and using them to cultivate growth in our souls.” In every problem there are opportunities and solutions. Nobody should succumb to negative self-talk, discouragement, or fear that will only stunt your growth. With that said, from my experience of being shot I learned the importance of forgiveness, I learned to be grateful, and to help myself.

Lewis B. Smedes said, “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.” I had learned a lot about forgiving over the past few weeks. The seventeen year old who shot me in the head is going to be prosecuted as a child. I had held myself prisoner over this injustice and this case, my rehabilitation, and recovery has become the new lifestyle for both my caregivers and me. For example, I have eight hours of numerous therapies per day, court dates every six weeks, hours away every three weeks, and I still have procedures done. It is impossible to be at peace with myself with an internal war waging within. Forgiving is not about turning a blind eye and ignoring that we were trespassed against. Furthermore, forgiveness is not letting a perpetrator free knowing, wishing, or praying that they get what they deserve

down the road. The art of forgiveness sets yourself free from the the things that you cannot change. One will take that thought, breathe in peace, and then let that thought go. With that being said, it does not matter how much jail time the assailant gets, what matters is that I let go, set myself free allowing myself to move forward.

Rhonda Byrne said, “Be grateful for what you have now. As you begin to think about all the things in your life you are grateful for, you will be amazed at the never ending thoughts that come back to you of more things to be grateful for.” Both time spent with people you love and relationships are irreplaceable. Items such as iPads, cars, and money can be replaced, however, time in life is not a commodity that is exchangeable in the marketplace. Yesterday, I went on Facebook to see how a friend was doing, to which I learned she passed. I began to dig up a slew of never ending thoughts that I am grateful for meeting this individual. An interesting observation that I had through this experience is, two days ago my iPad broke. I had extra iPads laying around the house and, I was still frustrated because I needed to get a new case that fit. Those things are replaceable, life and time with people you love is not. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “You cannot do a kindness too soon because you never know how soon it will be too late.” If you are envious, learn to appreciate. Set aside differences and find common ground. And lastly, I learn to be grateful for both the present and past.

Being in complete forgiveness is essential not only towards others but internally as well. It is necessary to both be kind and forgive myself otherwise internal peace will be impossible to find. To move forward I learned that must let go of the past. Letting go of the past is much easier when I learned to be grateful for what I have in the moment. Material items can be replaced however life and people in our lives are irreplaceable. Life is full of ups and downs which translates to opportunity to strengthen ourselves and time to reflect with gratitude for the lessons learned through the challenges. The important lesson I learned was challenges and problems, should be embraced as they provide opportunity to be better than we were the day before.

