

BrainLine Talks With Michael Paul Mason

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Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=810>

Partial Death Syndrome and the Spiritual Nature of TBI

Michael Paul Mason: There's a strange name for an affect that the person feels after traumatic brain injury. It's called partial death syndrome. And it happens in some cases where people feel as though the old person or the person they were prior to their injury has died and the new person has sort of resumed their identity. To feel that much change in who they are. And so this feeling I think occurs on a spectrum. Some people may feel just a little bit different. Some people actually feel as though they're better people following the injury. And some people feel just so, you know, bereaved by what they've lost, that they have a tremendous difficulty accepting life with a brain injury.

Michael Paul Mason: I call brain injury the most spiritual injury. Because it's the one kind of injury that forces a person to ask who they really are. And that question of who am I is so central to so many different spiritual traditions that it really opens up the door for transformation in many cases. I wrote about a woman in my book named Melissa Felta who was a very Type A corporate executive. And following her injury, she had this sort of radical transformation where she, after a very long struggle, was able to deal with herself in a way that embraced who she was after the injury. And she did this with the help of meditation and spiritual practice of some kind. But it was that element of questioning who she was and embracing that, that really led her to a type of recovery that I think is very special. And I've heard a lot of other survivors echo a similar thing.