The Lights are on but Nobody’s at Home

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ABSTRACT

In this narrative, the author shares his perspective from both sides of the spectrum. First, the author begins as a patient with traumatic brain injury (TBI) secondary to an accident, as he deals with post-traumatic amnesia. His view as a trained osteopath, who draws on these experiences to heal others afflicted with TBI and its sequelae, is then presented.1

Keywords: Memory, NeuroLinguistic Programming, Osteopathy, Post Traumatic Amnesia (PTA), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

PATIENT NARRATIVE

The first thing that I don’t remember:

“Hey Smithy how you feeling today?” said Charlie with intent. I immediately recognised Charlie, he is a close friend and a wicked lead guitarist in our garage rock band.

“Charlie!” I answered like he was coming round to jam.

“Smithy, yeah, how you going” Charlie responded.

I looked around and said “Where am I?”

“You’re in Hospital mate”

I looked around, or so I am told, to see the settings of hospital, well this is interesting.

“How did I get here?”

“You had a paragliding accident” said Charlie.

“Oh?” I replied. That seemed to me to be highly unlikely but I went with it.

Then I said: “Charlie, hey mate how you?”

Charlie “Smithy, how you feeling?”

“Charlie, where am I?”

“You are in hospital, mate” With that I would look around the hospital to confirm this.

“How did I get here?”

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“You had a paragliding accident.” He reaffirmed which was greeted with the same look of disbelief.

This loop would go on for ages and was only changed by Charlie’s change of subject. I had a memory of about 90 seconds.

Welcome to the land of PTA (Post Traumatic Amnesia). PTA is the condition following a traumatic blow to the head (Tittle & Burgess, 2011). After my ten days of induced coma my brain was a little shaken, I had trouble comprehending where I was. Yes, apparently I had crashed my paraglider while taking somebody for a joy flight of which I have still no memory. It is a very confused state in which your “self” and then your consciousness reforms. I will come back to the details of the accident later but first I want to describe my very first memories and possibly how this relates to brain function and consciousness. This is what I have studies since my accident .The first thing that I recall was I didn’t know who I was, where I was, or what I was, I just felt an all encompassing loneliness, a loneliness and emptiness so profound that it surpasses any sort of descriptive words. Then a period of time later, I still didn’t know who or what or where I was but I felt beauty, warmth, love and I knew everything was going to be alright.

From my memory, my first window into consciousness was purely emotive so the pencil light of consciousness shone on my basic core reptilian brain into my limbic system (Figure 1).

Life in PTA land was about to begin. I could recognise people by the emotion that they provoked in me. At this stage I could not understand words. All I wanted to do was to get up and go to the toilet, I was however, catheterised but the fact that my urine was being evacuated from my body did not change how I wanted to pee standing up.

Unfortunately, I did not know I had fractured my spine and was restrained with Velcro straps to my bed. The restraints were there for my own good. I couldn’t understand why I couldn’t get up, take the tube out of my nose and piss standing up. I apparently would use any ploy to get this gastric nasal feeding tube out of my nose. My friends would come in and hug me and I would try to hug them back whimpering at my restraint. They would then undo the Velcro strap so I could hug them back and I would then pull that bloody tube out of my nose. One thing I distinctly remember is that I could see a sign saying toilet in bright red and all I wanted to do was go and piss at that toilet standing up like a real bloke, like I thought I was supposed to. I was at a very amnesic state driven by a primal emotion to pee standing up and to release myself from restraint.

Figure 1. Layers of the brain
HealthGrids in Health Informatics: A Taxonomy
www.igi-global.com/chapter/healthgrids-health-informatics/36378?camid=4v1a

Modes of Delivering Psychotherapy: Investigating Technology
www.igi-global.com/article/modes-of-delivering-psychotherapy/181627?camid=4v1a