

Speaking from Experience Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Transcript for chapter 6 of 10: Relationships

Peter and Carol: We were married for probably 7 or 8 years before the assault happened. So we were sort of still very much in the honeymoon period. But, I tell you what, after the assault happened it was like, oh my god. It was a big change. Sometimes I wonder myself how I actually hang in there.

Kerrie: It's quite dramatically affected my relationship with my husband. We've gone from two high-achieving people, with quite common goals and aspirations, to just one high-achieving person, being my husband. We've actually shifted into a carer and caree relationship, rather than a husband and wife, which has been quite difficult to accept as well.

Paul: Initially, she got angry and she couldn't cope. When it registered, by doctors saying to her, she was able to relax. I found it very interesting. Everything that has happened to me... people find it very hard to cope with sickness. Eventually they understand and think it's something real.

Anita: I find that family doesn't fully understand me. I don't know whether they cannot accept my changes or whether my performance is disappointing them.

Paul: For me, I've created a whole new world of friends. I've lost a lot of friends, because of my behaviour.

Kerrie: I'd please like to discuss with you my relationship with my mum. Prior to the accident, we had an incredibly close relationship. However, that aspect of our relationship has changed. My mum finds it very hard to accept all the changes, and all the negative changes within me, after the accident.

Anita: I find that especially my son does not have the patience to speak to me. Often, he has to stop me from talking, saying that I have talked too long or I have repeatedly asked him the same questions. So, I feel as if I am too stupid.

Igal, Anat, Illana: I supposed I should add that, like any ABI I suppose, the friends are coming less and less. Everybody has their own issues; friends are getting married, having families and careers. At the time, everybody was a student. Things are different now; everyone is more occupied with their lives, with their jobs and families and so on. Less time to visit Anat.

Igal, Anat, Illana: Fair enough.

Igal, Anat, Illana: I'm not complaining, I'm just explaining the reality. So, friends don't play a big support at the moment, as it used to in the past. Now it's more family than friends. There are some friends, but not as many and not as much as it used to be.

Igal, Anat, Illana: But this has also created an opportunity, because instead of being reactive, Anat is learning to be a little bit proactive. So, instead of waiting for a telephone call from a friend, she is encouraged to call a friend.



Delia and Cassandra: I remember there were a lot of people that came to visit my mum. My dad tried to keep a log book or visitor's book. So people could sign in and say when they were there, when they visited mum. I just remember drawing pictures and one cassette tape that my dad made, for mum to listen to while she was unconscious, and me being four at the time, I just sang a song.

Delia and Cassandra: I've still got that tape.

Delia and Cassandra: I know. It's embarrassing. Apart from that, I just remember there being a lot of people, especially my nanna – my mum's mum – and her younger sister, my aunt.

Delia and Cassandra: Who was living with you at the time.

Delia and Cassandra: They were taking it in turns to look after us. Trying to keep the day to day life going for us at home, while dad and everyone else were struggling to keep...

Delia and Cassandra: I've been told that Jason, the oldest, refused to, while I was unconscious, he refused to visit. Then, as soon as I regained consciousness, he came and visited.

Igal, Anat, Illana: It's very important to have an extended family. We didn't have that, at that time. Instead, all the burden fell on Illana, because our son was not here. It was just obvious that I should come here. Now, what we are doing is we together are looking after Anat, together with other carers. But without being a team of two in the early stages, would have been mission impossible.

Delia and Cassandra: I think, because of the age that he was at the time, being ten. He was old enough to know what was going on, but without the full understanding of what was happening. I know my brother had said to me before that mum being attached to all the different machines was quite confronting for him. Whereas, me being four, I just saw mum in a bed.

Peter and Carol: In the past, I've always felt that there wasn't the acceptance there of me. Pete's family is very religious, very churchy. At my special birthday, Pete's older sister said to me, she goes, "You know, it just would've been easier for you to just walk away. And when I thought about it that would've been the easier option out. Instead, you stuck by Pete and he's the person he is today, because of you." That alone said a lot.

Igal, Anat, Illana: I think I've been pretty accepting from moment one, because I've felt that I can relax; only because people around me, i.e. my parents are relaxed. And I always feel like I have the power to achieve, but only because they are doing something.

Peter and Carol: I miscarried before the assault actually happened, I didn't have time for myself to grieve properly for that. There wasn't the time. Everything had to be focussed on Pete and seeing that he was right, and to be there for him and the girls. All that sort of stuff went on the back-burner.