



The Monthly Motivator

December 2011 Newsletter + *Life After Brain Injury*

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ZuZu's Petals, and other Holiday Traditions

Ahhh, the holidays! Full of traditions with personal and special meanings for each of us.

For some, it's a time for festive parties, plenty of food and drink (but no drinking and driving), mistletoe and ho ho ho.

For more settled-down folks, the holidays mean togetherness, when family members both near and far gather to celebrate the joy and meaning of Christmas or Channukah.

For children, it's a time of wonder, "when dreams really do come true" (even if Santa's workshop is on a budget in today's economy).

True confession: I am a cinephile (a lover of movies). So come each December, my family watches our favorite holiday movies (for the 30th time), from the black-and-whites — *The Bishop's Wife* (with Cary Grant, at right - hubba hubba!), *It's a Wonderful Life*, *White Christmas* — to the newer ones — *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Love Actually*, *Elf*. Movies are a big part of our holiday traditions.



But we also enjoy expanding our awareness by sampling other religions and cultures.

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Employing the highly scientific theory that "if one holiday party is good, two is better," we introduce the first annual ...

Life After Brain Injury's **(Almost) New Year's Eve** **Open House** for Survivors and Families

NOT a Potluck!

(I sense you raising your eyebrows, but it's true!)

Friday, December 30th
5 to 8 p.m.

Cherie's House in Thousand Oaks
(call for address and directions)

Hosted by Cherie Phoenix and
sponsored by the Survivor Advisory Council

RSVP by Tuesday, Dec. 27

This is an evening soiree, so
dress to impress!





Meetings & Activities

Holiday Party

Potluck & Gift Exchange

December 10

11:00 — 2:00

at the Kilpatricks' home

(call Cherie for address and directions)



If your last name begins with **A through L**, bring an appetizer.

If your last name begins with **M through Z**, bring a dessert.

We'll play the "Greedy Gift Grabber" game we played last year, which involves, ahem, "stealing" gifts from each other.

So bring a wrapped gift, worth between \$5 and \$15, that either a man or a woman will like. Ho ho ho!



LABI Lunch

December 5 and 19

12 noon to 1:30



Our lunches are a great opportunity to...

- ◆ Meet people who understand your life and "get you";
- ◆ expand your circle of friends;
- ◆ enhance your social life; and
- ◆ get out into the community!

On a budget? We understand, and we don't judge. You don't have to order anything. Some people just show up for a glass of water and enjoy our most excellent company (if we do say so ourselves! ☺).

Game Day

(includes lunch)

Monday, December 12

10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



*RSVP to Cherie at 805-493-5555
(so she has enough food!).*

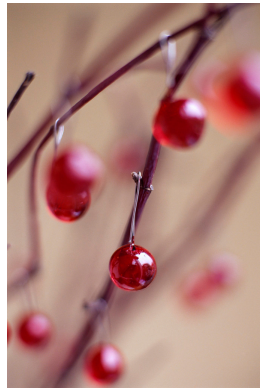
Call it brain exercises, call it cognitive rehab, call it a time to practice your social skills – it doesn't feel like work, it's just good old-fashioned fun!

Join us for good times and skill-building games like Scrabble, Sequences and Scruples, as we work the ol' neurons and hang with our posse. (And YES – there is such a thing as a free lunch!)

Holidays

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For example, when my kids were in elementary school, I taught them about Chanukah and the meaning behind the menorah and the foods that are eaten at this time of year. (And though we're not Jewish, it has become a family tradition to have brisket and latkes [potato pancakes] each year.)



Following is a definition of each Kwanzaa principle (source: Wikipedia). I encourage you to have a conversation with others in the coming weeks about these principles and how they might apply to your life as a survivor or family caregiver. Can you think of ways these principles can enhance your life, or how we can further integrate them into our programs at *Life After Brain Injury*?

Unity: To strive for and maintain unity in the family and community.



Self-Determination: To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and stand up for ourselves.



Collective work and responsibility: To build and maintain our community and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and solve them together.

Family: The belief in family and in communal understanding.



Purpose: To make our collective vocation the building and development of our community, in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.



Creativity: To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Faith: To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Next I introduced them to the African-American celebration called Kwanzaa. I liked its beliefs and felt they were a nice complement to our Christian values.



The seven principles of Kwanzaa are:

**Unity • Self-Determination
Collective Work and Responsibility
Family • Purpose • Creativity • Faith**

Tonight, as I began to write this newsletter, I reflected on these concepts anew. And I realized that every one of them is interwoven throughout *Life After Brain Injury's* philosophy of consumer choice, with family support; full inclusion in the community; and the value of creating and leading a productive and meaningful life.

Find us on the web at
www.LifeAfterBrainInjury.org

Or contact us at

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A Guide to Making your Holidays Happy

by Ryan Needham

Ryan says, "My deep thanks to Juan Villicana for his tireless effort in helping to make this and all my articles the best they can be."

The holiday times are often difficult for many people because they stir up unsettled feelings of regret; as a brain injury survivor, perhaps you have noticed that this time of year is even more difficult than it was prior to your injury.



To help share joy in the Holiday season you can help out your loved ones by remembering this simple exercise.

One way I have found to deal with unresolved feelings regarding my injury is to think of all the feelings I have surrounding my injury, good and bad, and take them and visualize them as being stored within a box in my mind.



If I simply tell myself that this box is off limits during the next month or two, I may fully participate in the festivities that are being enjoyed by my friends and family.

I know there is a common misconception that brain injury survivors cannot or do not form new memories of post injury events, I am here to tell you that this is simply untrue.

Your "thinker" is damaged, that's true. but its important to realize that the undamaged areas of your brain (which there are many of), still work well.

The Holidays will come and go every year, its something we can't control. For those of you who don't really enjoy them, like the majority of people its important to remember that like with most things, a good attitude is essential.

It is the only time of the year when millions of people actually make an effort to spread kindness and love, and its up to us as individuals to make the memories good ones to look back on.



Bright Idea!

Don't miss hanging out with LABI because of a poor memory. Post the calendar on your fridge or bulletin board right now!

Warning: Calendar changes ahead!

Please check your calendar carefully this month. Some December meetings and activities have been canceled due to the holidays.

In particular, we are working a light schedule the week immediately before and after Christmas.

Thanks for understanding, and we wish you a very happy holiday season!

