

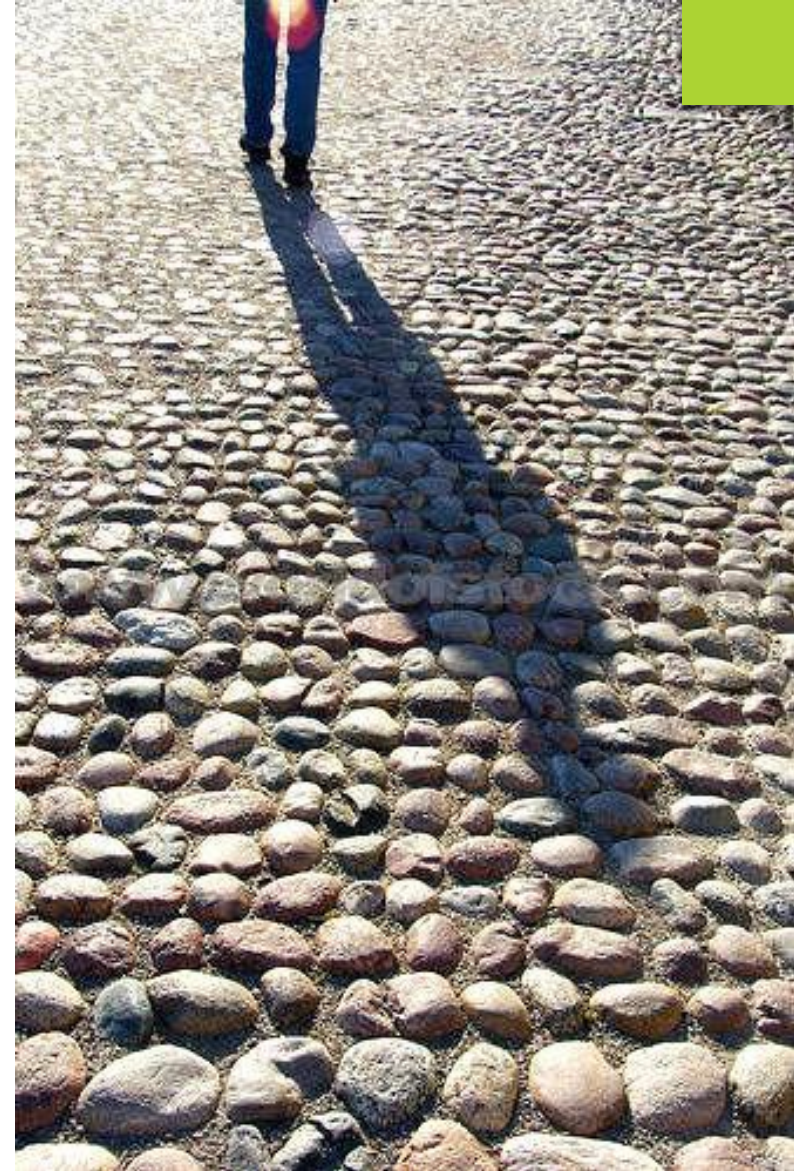
# Neurodiversity and Returning to Work After Traumatic Brain Injury

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- ▶ “No matter how much detail a person’s medical records indicate about their injury, the record is only a shadow, a small hint, at the human behind the injury.”



# What is Neurodiversity

- Neurodivergent people may have received a medical diagnosis of
  - autism,
  - ADHD,
  - Dyspraxia - causes difficulties with motor (movement) skills and coordination,
  - Dyslexia - a learning disability that affects reading,
  - Dyscalculia - difficulty learning or comprehending arithmetic,
  - Tourette Syndrome - characterized by multiple movement tics and at least one vocal tic,
  - Acquired Brain Injury - brain damage caused by events after birth

# What is Acquired Brain Injury

- Acquired Brain Injury - brain damage caused by events after birth, rather than as part of a genetic or congenital disorder, including strokes, brain illness, traumatic brain injury and other brain injuries. ABI can result in cognitive, physical, emotional, or behavioral impairments that lead to permanent or temporary changes in functioning.

# What does it mean when a RTW is **successful**?

- ▶ Return to work is often one of the main objectives in multi-disciplinary teams
- ▶ Employment is often used as an “end point” when measuring recovery and reintegration, and the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions
- ▶ Return to work = greatest measure of success of rehabilitation programs (Journal of Head Trauma and Rehabilitation)
- ▶ Decreased health related absences

# Common Barriers

- ▶ Balance
- ▶ Hemiparesis, especially of the dominant side
- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Fine motor function
- ▶ Memory impairments
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Lack of compensatory strategies
- ▶ Mood dysregulation
- ▶ Attentional deficits
- ▶ Attitude/pessimism
- ▶ Personality/trait based concerns

# Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- ▶ Assessment- testing, evaluation, referral, recommendations, job sampling
- ▶ Job Development
  - ▶ Client works with a community provider to assist with resume, interviews, job search, applications, advocacy, and maintenance
  - ▶ Job coaching provides on-the-job support for a limited period of time

# Case Studies

- ▶ Gloria - 26 yo female engineer at Finland MB factory – sustained BI from toxic diesel fumes
- ▶ Medication was changed causing severe behavioral problems – over time medication stabilized
- ▶ Outcome: individual hired part time at Safeway
- ▶ Tim – 34 yo male, veteran, TBI/PTSD, suicidal
- ▶ Utilized existing employment, assisted with vehicle modification, introduced him to the VFW and they took him under their wings and have his back
- ▶ Outcome: employment maintained, hours increased, transportation accessed, managing train congestion - no longer suicidal



# Case Studies cont...

- ▶ Laura – 19 yo female, brain injury from MVA, memory and confusion, fatigue – living at the coast
- ▶ Utilized previous employment, accessed additional training
- ▶ Outcome: Hired by McMenamins transitioned from part-time to full-time employment, needed to be closer to medical specials so Mike and Brian McMenamini help her move to the Portland area and gave her a job there
- ▶ Dave – 35 yo male, brain injury from exposure to chemicals, veteran, memory impairment, aphasia, anxiety, hearing impairment
- ▶ Utilized previous education, provided job coaching, hearing devices
- ▶ Outcome: successful full-time employment, no longer utilizing SSDI, increased income

# Case Studies cont...

- ▶ Chris - 17 yo male, severe brain injury from being attacked and beaten into a 5 month coma by baseball bats, memory and confusion, fatigue
- ▶ Worked with VR and job coach – slowly over three years was able to return to work at Target
- ▶ Outcome: transitioned from part-time to full-time employment, started working for 15 minutes with 45 minute rest to working full time-accepted to college in Wisconsin and Target gave him a job there
- ▶ Carl – 46 yo male – software designer at Intel- brain injury from falling over 70 feet at Multnomah Falls, blind, memory impairment, anxiety
- ▶ Utilized previous education, provided job coaching, hearing devices, worked with the Commission for the Blind and VR
- ▶ Outcome: successful return to full-time employment at Intel, using computer and assistive technology for the blind

# Case Studies cont...

- ▶ Thano - 19 yo male, brain injury from being in a motorcycle accident, in a 6 month coma, left side paralysis, memory and confusion, fatigue
- ▶ Working with VR and job coach – slowly was able to return to work at Safeway
- ▶ Outcome: transitioned from part-time to full-time employment, working as a bagger. Most baggers stock shelves but with his left side paralysis he could not do that – was awarded most valuable employee numerous times
- ▶ Dean – 37 yo male – salesman, sustained severe TBI from MVA, sensory issues from too much noise and movement, memory impairment, anxiety
- ▶ Utilized previous education, provided job coaching, worked with VR
- ▶ Outcome: successful return to full-time employment at Fred Meyer, with the issues caused by noise overstimulation – his boss gave him his office – for 7 years he was their #1 sales person – then a new boss came in wanting the office and Dean had to quit