

FIVE CRAZY GUYS, PART 6

Source: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio One, Outfront Radio Series.

Female Speaker 1: I have a story to tell.

Group speaking: Outfront.

Male Speaker 1: People can't take an interest if they don't have an idea of what it's actually like to live that way.

Female Speaker 2: Silence in a funny thing. That empty space of what everyone's thinking.

Female Speaker 3: It felt like I was wearing an itchy wool sweater, and I was itchy all the time.

Female Speaker 4: This is Outfront.

[Music]

[Assumed spellings]

Gary Hayes: I am Gary Hayes.

Hamid Nouri: I am Hamid Nauri.

Tom Taney: I'm Tom Taney.

David McAdam: I'm David McAdam.

Mike Vetter: I'm Mike Vetter.

Hamid Nouri: We are five crazy guys.

Carolyn Lemsky: And one leader.

Mike Vetter: Welcome to Out Front.

Gary Hayes: Welcome to Hell.

[laughter]

[background music]

Tom Taney: I mean if we can't laugh at something or ourselves then we're in trouble.

Carolyn Lemsky: I'm Doctor Carolyn Lemsky, and this is my group.

Hamid Nouri: Call it five brain damaged group, or five crazy brain damaged group. We meet every Thursday afternoon at CHIRS.

Men all together: That's Community - Head Injury - Resource Services - Of Toronto.

Hamid Nouri: You recording?

Carolyn Lemsky: Today, you're going to hear Mike's story.

Mike Vetter: Well, we're a room full individuals. There's no blueprint for the head injury.

Hamid Nouri: What does that mean, blueprint for the head injury?

Mike Vetter: When we say there's no blueprint, that means there's no two head injuries that are the same. So --

Gary Hayes: The only similarities between our head injuries is there's a tree involved in both situations. But we have different results.

Mike Vetter: It wasn't the same tree.

Men all together: No.

Mike Vetter: Well my accident happened after I completed my first year of university at University of Waterloo. Went out west to visit my friend who went out to school there. On the way home, I drove all night, the sun was just coming up, I am told, and I nodded off to sleep and went along into the left shoulder for about 100 meters before going down -- veered down into the ditch. And I ended up hitting a tree. I'm still recovering. Going to be recovering for the rest of my life. Here's five, five of us here. And that's our board to show who's in and who's out. This is the kitchen.

Female Voice: Hello.

Mike Vetter: [Inaudible] in the office? Is the [Inaudible] in the office here? They are. Next week I'll be making maple tenderloin. [Inaudible] maple tenderloin. After you've had a head injury, it's like growing up all over again. You have to almost relearn a lot of

things. It's there, but it's not. This is my room. And well there's my daughter on the fridge. She phoned and left me a message the other day.

Answering Machine: You have one old message.

Mike Vetter's Daughter: Hey Dad, I know you called yesterday. I've just been super-business with Simon and my last assignment is due Wednesday. So maybe I'll give you a call Wednesday night to catch up. Anyway, I'll talk to you later. Bye.

Mike Vetter: So that's my daughter. It's always nice to hear her voice. It gives you some -- something to focus on outside of what goes on at CHIRS. It's refreshing.

[Laughter]

Mike Vetter: Everyone likes to joke around. [Inaudible] eases the pain.

Group speaking: Yeah. It is.

Mike Vetter: You can't really make light of having a head injury. But it's something that we all have in common. Kind of the tie that binds. I find that CHIRS is a very comfortable place to be.

Hamid Nouri: What?

Carolyn Lemsky: Michael was saying -- we were talking about work. And some of the barriers to working. And I asked Michael, I said what's the biggest barrier, and you said -

-

Mike Vetter: Punctuality.

Carolyn Lemsky: Punctuality. And Mike said my biggest problem is getting to bed on time, right?

Mike Vetter: I'm up until like, 2, 2:30.

Carolyn Lemsky: What keeps you up?

Mike Vetter: Nothing.

Carolyn Lemsky: Well, can you describe what happens?

Mike Vetter: I don't go to bed.

Carolyn Lemsky: Meaning? That you just --

Mike Vetter: Think about going to bed early. I think about going to bed very early. But then I don't.

Carolyn Lemsky: You just don't.

Mike Vetter: Yeah. I watch -- see what's on TV.

Carolyn Lemsky: So you're watching TV until late at night?

Mike Vetter: Notice, yeah.

[Inaudible comment]

Carolyn Lemsky: What keeps you awake at night, mostly the TV?

Hamid Nouri: Sometimes listen to music.

Carolyn Lemsky: Okay. So -- what -- can, I mean, because we were talking about it in the group, and the update would be about how you're sleeping.

[Inaudible comment]

Mike Vetter: It's been on my mind.

Carolyn Lemsky: Yeah?

Mike Vetter: I've been struggling with it.

Carolyn Lemsky: Yeah?

Mike Vetter: Uh huh.

Carolyn Lemsky: How much sleep are you getting?

Mike Vetter: Last night let me see, five hours and 15 minutes.

Carolyn Lemsky: And how much do you need?

Mike Vetter: More than that.

Carolyn Lemsky: It would help to have somebody who can force you into a good routine, and they be maybe the routine would be maintained, or --

Tom Taney: That's what happened to me. They come in and told me bed time.

Mike Vetter: Because a head injury -- you don't process things as quickly as you did before. You have no idea what you want to do, and sometimes because of the head injury, you're doing something, something else catches your attention, and you start working on that. And you forget what you were working on in the first place. Things take a lot longer than they should. Early on in my -- my rehabilitation I -- I [Inaudible] some computer courses. And for a while I was at CIBC. I also was with Timex. For quite a while I was working at Ikea. But I had a problem getting there on time. Like, I was late all the time. Time management is a problem. I know -- I knew when I was supposed it be there. But I still wouldn't get down there early enough. Getting things going, initiating the beginning of the day is my Achilles tenon.

Carolyn Lemsky: And you get stuck?

Mike Vetter: Yes.

Carolyn Lemsky: Can you describe getting stuck?

Mike Vetter: Getting stuck, meaning --

[Multiple voices speaking]

Carolyn Lemsky: Sometimes the best way to avoid getting stuck is to set up your environment so you're less likely to become stuck. So you may have to do things you don't really want to do like --

Hamid Nouri: Move your TV out there, don't have a TV in the room.

Carolyn Lemsky: Say that again, say that again!

Hamid Nouri: [Inaudible] talked about that don't have a TV in the room, you know?

Carolyn Lemsky: It's stimulus control, right? The scheduler in your brain doesn't say whoa, too much of that. We have to pay attention to our goal now. You lose track of the goal or you don't initiate.

David McAdam: Initiate -- initiation, that's a good --

Mike Vetter: You know what happens to me, I initiate late.

Carolyn Lemsky: Or initiate late.

Mike Vetter: Personal, I've been dealing with a head injury for more than half my life now. Which is inspiration and depressing. Inspirational; dealing with what has happened to me and how it effected my life and not giving up. Depressing; Things aren't going well. They all -- if I didn't have a brain injury, this wouldn't be happening to me.

Carolyn Lemsky: You guys correct me if I'm wrong, but on the one hand --

David McAdam: It so rarely happens.

Carolyn Lemsky: I know. On the off chance that I could be wrong, the -- it often happens where on the one hand you kind of say yes, I need somebody to provide the structure and help me do it. And then on the other hand, it's not much fun to have somebody telling you what to do. You guys know you need the help, but you don't always want it. Is that accurate, is it fair.

Mike Vetter: No, we know we need help, we don't know how to [Inaudible] the help.

Carolyn Lemsky: Oh, okay.

Mike Vetter: That's the big step. It all [Inaudible] before all always, and not getting up with the morning.

Carolyn Lemsky: That is -- that's the hard thing about -- about getting back into the community. Because you've got people telling you Mike, get up, get up. And you're going I'm a grown man, [Inaudible] tell me to get up.

Mike Vetter: You need a pretty thick skin. Although the person getting you up [Inaudible] --

Carolyn Lemsky: What happens in your case, Mike, you start to realize, oh, it takes Mike an hour-and-a-half to get out in the morning. So what does the staff do then?

Mike Vetter: Exactly.

Carolyn Lemsky: Eventually, a staff member will say -- they provide the cue, provide the cue, and then you made the comment that you scare them off.

Mike Vetter: Probably.

Carolyn Lemsky: Yeah, how do you do that, what do you do to scare them off.

Mike Vetter: I give them the look.

Carolyn Lemsky: You start to look aggressive? Maybe mean? And you're a big guy, right? And then what happens?

Mike Vetter: Then they stop putting themselves in potential danger.

Carolyn Lemsky: There we are. And I don't know how to get around that, because I can't ask somebody to do something that they feel is dangerous. Right?

[Singing]

Mike Vetter: I'm busy every night of the week, except Friday night. Friday, Saturday, and Sundays. Thursday is a busy day. There's the men's group, head injury group. And then from 4 to 5:30 a program called Voices and Vibes. That's informative and enjoyable.

[Singing]

Mike Vetter: We wrote a song about brain injury itself. But -- excuse me -- David, [Inaudible] help to put together the words for this song. Do you remember which part I --

David McAdam: Yes, you did the first four lines.

[Multiple voices speaking]

[Singing]

Carolyn Lemsky: So what's to be done, what do you need?

Mike Vetter: Some incentive.

Hamid Nouri: What does that mean, incentive?

Mike Vetter: A reason to get up.

Hamid Nouri: Huh?

Mike Vetter: A reason to get up.

Carolyn Lemsky: A motivation, a reason that has to be work that in and of itself that you like. Because --

Mike Vetter: I think that's my stumbling block right there.

Carolyn Lemsky: Yeah. Like what kinds of positions you think you want to try.

Mike Vetter: You know, [Inaudible] gas jockey.

Carolyn Lemsky: Okay. I think you'd last 15, 20 minutes. After the second car you'd be like, my hands smell, I'm leaving. But that's up to you, if you want to try that. All right, see you later. See ya.

[Music and singing]

Mike Vetter: That's that.

[Music]

Carolyn Lemsky: I'm Carolyn Lemsky at the Community Head Injury Resource Services of Toronto. You've just heard the last of our six-part series. If you missed the others or want to hear them again, go to the Outfront web site. Cbc.ca/outfront and click on Past Shows. So that's it from us.

Gary Hayes: Gary Hayes.

Hamid Nouri: Hamid Nouri.

Tom Taney: Tom Taney.

David McAdam: David McAdam.

Mike Vetter: Mike Vetter.

Hamid Nouri: We are five crazy guys.

Carolyn Lemsky: Thanks for listening.

[Music]