

Jan Brown Talks About TBI and Stigma

Credit: Produced by Victoria Youcha and Brian King

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1936>

Jan Brown: I think the biggest thing, and it's a huge, this idea of stigma, and to really help people celebrate the fact that recovery really does happen. And so we used to look at this idea of really, you know, we're going to combat stigma, we're going to do this and somewhere through the years I learned that we needed a positive message and if we put all of our energy into breaking something or removing something then we were going to come up empty. And so what one of our messages is is really about that, we do recover. And I know for myself, personally, once I really got a hold of this idea that I was never going to be who I was, and that's okay. You know, I was able to watch other people age. And it's a very similar cycle that we all go through. And so we're really not special or unique and that truly something horrible happened to us. Whether it was alcohol, or we got hit or we fell down or we were in a car crash, something happened, and make no mistake about that, you know. Um, the opportunity to acknowledge that and treat it and get what it is that we need in terms of help and then be able to move from this identity of kind of I'm an addict or I'm sober or I'm a survivor of an injury to be able to say I live with, I'm in recovery for my brain injury. Today, these days, I introduce myself as a person in long-term recovery, which means that I haven't used drugs or alcohol for 20 years, and people clap. Years ago, I would say my name is Jan and I'm an addict. And they'd kind of put their heads down. And so, just that shift is so amazingly different. And even when, you know, I live with the results of a brain injury versus I'm a survivor of brain injury, it feels very different just in communicating that message. So a lot of it, I believe, starts with us, because that's one of the other pieces, I want the system to change and I want, it still keeps me in this role of being a victim or being less than and so I needed to begin to look at myself very different in the fact that I'm empowered and I'm thriving and those kinds of things, because that's where the recovery happens.