

## Dr. Jeff Kreutzer and Dr. Taryn Stejskal Talk About The Challenges of Maintaining Hope and Remaining Positive

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Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1603>

**Dr. Jeff Kreutzer:** Helping people be hopeful is often a great challenge early on after injury and sometimes I think it's the most important thing that we do and I would say that we, I've been working in the field for really long time and I find, I still look forward to go into work everyday and I just find it really rewarding because I've been so impressed by people who've been in a lot of pain, but who've worked really, really hard to turn things around and found many people to be very courageous and very creative and very caring and I've just been so impressed by how much people have recovered after their injuries that I would say that working with those kinds of folks has inspired me to continue to work in the field and to dedicate my life toward helping and helping people achieve better outcomes.

**Dr. Taryn Stejskal:** And I think one question that people often ask me is I've received some information or some feedback about what I'm going to be able to do now after my injury and I'll tell you that after a brain injury family members, couples, individuals, they see a lot of doctors and the ones that they remember are the doctors that told them what they couldn't do and talk a lot about how not only were they able to get out of the wheelchair, they don't use a walker anymore and, and they walk when they were told that they wouldn't be able to do that or they were told that they wouldn't live and if they did, they'd be vegetable and they, you know productive member of society. So I would say that if someone has put limitations on your life and said that you can't do something that may be true and it may not be true, but don't let those limitations stop you from your recovery and achieving what it is you think you can achieve.

**Dr. Taryn Stejskal:** You know learning how to be positive is not an easy thing to do, but like patients or stress management, it's a skill. It requires me and you and everybody else when you begin to say something negative to yourself and your mind to stop yourself from saying that negative thing and to say something different. People that tend to be pessimistic, tend to say negative things to themselves in their minds about what's achievable, what will happen or what will never happen and so first I start with some self-examination about what you're saying to yourself on a daily basis. As professionals we're really bad at moving pretty quickly to acceptance and making big changes and that is not something that happens overnight. Learning to be more positive, learning to accept what has happened and what changes have occurred, that's probably a life long process. Does that mean that you won't move toward acceptance over time and it won't get better, absolutely not, that will be a process. But it's, it's something that is hard won. People have to fight for and I think that's where the patient and persistence comes in because learning these new skills is not an easy thing, but definitely a possible thing.

**Dr. Jeff Kreutzer:** We envision off in the first few meetings with the person who's been injured saying how can I live like this and I have actually used this as a question for group discussion as well as discussions with students. Imagine that a person walks, a person with a brain injury have a terrible injury walks in your office and says how can I live like this and it's a really hard question to answer, it's a hard question to hear and it's been an issue, because I've talked with groups of people who've had brain injuries and said what if somebody came into our room, this room today and said that to you and there is a series answers that will partly work for that question.

One is that to acknowledge that having a brain injury is very, very difficult, it's very important to acknowledge that person's feelings of being overwhelmed. People say they feel frustrated those are all normal feelings that people have when they have a catastrophic injury. So acknowledge person's feeling. The second is and Taryn talked a bit about stories and or about examples of people that she's worked with and examples of people that I've worked with who've been, who've had a very, very difficult

time early on. People who were told they never walk, they never work, they never have the family, they never get married, we've seen those people ten years later and sharing the stories of people who've been successful can help people see hope and what it may really come down to in answering that question in a positive way is to ask the person to try to get beyond their feelings of frustration, their feelings of hopelessness, and just trust me as their therapist. I'm going, I have worked with other people who've been in similar situations and I'm going to work very hard with them over the next year, two years, or three years however long it's going to take, I'm going to help them make their life better and please trust me for now, we're going to find a way out of this and trying is way better than not trying.