

## Dr. Kelli Gary Talks about her Relationships After Traumatic Brain Injury

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Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=2901>

**Kelli Gary:** Actually, this is my second marriage. I actually had what was called sexual dysfunction after my brain injury. Part of my brain that was injured was partly the reason for that. I actually led a pretty promiscuous lifestyle and because I looked okay to a lot of people and I had enough sense to be able to hide, you know, or compensate for things, and people may not have seen what was wrong with me particularly, you know, guys that maybe I had never met in the past or didn't know me from the past. I was able to get away with --a lot. I had a healthy dating life in the past, and so that was a problem for me. That was a problem. It interfered with my studies, because a guy made me feel wanted. It made me feel normal. Being with a guy made me feel like I was just the way I was before my injury. You know, I didn't have any problems and so that was a problem for me.

Part of the way I resolved that is through my faith, actually. Just focusing more on, you know, my spiritualness and knowing that part of the things that I was doing wasn't necessarily what was in God's plan for me. And starting to realize that, you know, everybody's not going to have your best interest at heart and seeing that from even a painful perspective because I have had some very, very painful relationships afterward, you know, afterward. And there's things I might not have picked up on but because of lack of awareness or lack of problem solving or just wanting to be needed and loved, you know, because of my insecurities now that was a problem.

But as time went on, more through even through my experience and being able to have my mother as some support even though she didn't like some of the things that I was doing or the men that I were dating who I was going out with. You know, she was supportive. She allowed me to go out with some of these guys and see for myself, you know, how they were. And that helped.

My first marriage actually occurred after graduate school, and it ended rather abruptly and actually rather nicely. My ex--husband and I are still good friends. We just decided that we dated too quickly, and it's not what we really wanted. And part of the problems was because of my brain injury as well. He complained about me being too tired and sleeping too much and doing this and doing that being too slow in certain things. And I, you know, was attracted to him because he was a man of the faith, and, you know, I thought that's what I needed was to be with a man of the faith. And so that ended.

My relationships, like the type of people that I went out with and the frequency of my dating pattern started to decrease. I started to look inward focus more on me. I started to learn how to go to the movies on my own and enjoy being by myself. And the more and more I started to focus on me and doing stuff for others instead of taking my focus off of

being with another person to validate me that's when I started to get better. And actually that prepared for my next marriage.