

My Story

Tamara Williamson

It's a strange thing to have absolutely no memory of the most seminal event of your life. But that's how it is with me. Although I mercifully escaped my head injury with no lasting effects, it has absolutely been the defining moment of my life so far.

Like I said, I have no memories of actually being hit by the car or going to the hospital. I remember leaving the hospital clutching a coloring book given to me by the nurses. My main memory of that day, though, is that I was given a peanut butter and strawberry jam sandwich when I got home. The jam contained little berries, and the sandwich made a crunching sound when I chewed. The crunching sound repeatedly cracked through my still-on-the-mend head (sort of, I think, how people feel who experience ringing in their ears), and the sensation was so disturbing that I didn't finish the sandwich, and to this day haven't eaten peanut butter and jelly.

I'm not really traumatized by the car accident, because I don't remember it. But I feel for the people in my life at the time. My brother, who, at the age of six, witnessed his sister get struck down by a vehicle. My mother, who was out of town and had to find a way back to Memphis, not knowing if her youngest survived or would have lasting brain damage. I think this proves that the head injury doesn't only affect the victim. It affects that person's loved ones as well.

The head injury affected me in little ways, though. I startle very easily. The sound of metal scraping against metal (like a metal fork scraping a metal pan) bothers me to no end—I quickly learned to use wooden spoons when cooking. Sometimes, when I am stressed, I get a weird tension feeling behind my ears. And I am extra careful about crossing streets (I joke that I am the safest person with whom to cross a street, because I will make absolute sure that we don't get hit). But that, thank God, is all. The most important thing that I think about is the fact that I was given a second chance at life. For that, I am grateful. And I remind myself constantly that I cannot waste it.