

# HELPING PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY BRAIN INJURY

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## BIASD Upcoming Events

BIASD Board Meeting -  
September 17, 2022 - 9:00 CST.

## Support Groups

**Aberdeen** - 3rd Tuesday of every month. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at Avera St. Lukes. Contact Ron Hoops 605-380-6655

**Brookings** - 1st Thursday of every month. 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Children's Museum of SD. Contact Doris Schumacher 605-697-6678

**Rapid City** - 2nd Tuesday of every month. 6:00 p.m. at the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Center. Contact Dr. Justine Ashokar 605-343-7297

**Sioux Falls** - 2nd Saturday of every month. 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at Active Generations. Contact Karen Brokenleg 605-940-1815; Kathleen Steen, April Camariegg 605-322-5066; Mary Tommeraasen 605-367-5260

**All meetings have been temporarily suspended due to Covid-19, except for Sioux Falls & Brookings who are meeting in person.**

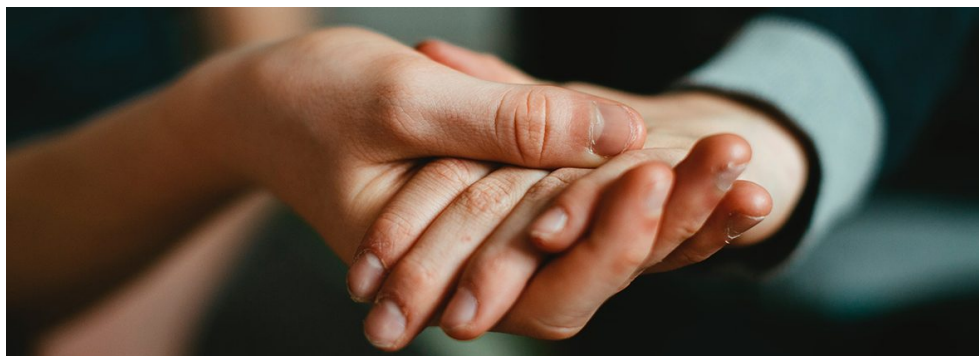
## BIASD Board Members

Contact your BIASD Board Member by emailing us at [braininjurysd@gmail.com](mailto:braininjurysd@gmail.com)

Karen Brokenleg  
Doris Schumacher  
Dr. Justine Ashokar  
Glenn Schumacher  
Mary Tommeraasen  
Jenny Hallan  
Brian Poelstra  
Jennifer Williams  
Brenna Christiansen



# Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota



*Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota* introduced a new look, including new logo, to their website recently. Check us out at <https://braininjurysd.org>. You can find tabs for Support Groups, Services, Resources, About Brain Injury, Donate, Board Members, Newsletters, By-Laws and Minutes.

## Comedian from Brookings Area Brain Injury Support Group

Travis acquired a brain injury when he was a freshman in college. Life suddenly changed. Years later one talent in particular has blossomed in his role as a comedian. First Travis emceed comedy night at the former Pavilion/Ground Round for 20 plus years. Then he began performing himself. I first saw Travis using his gift of humor last Spring at our local Wooden Legs Brewing Co. (WLBC) open mic comedy night. Monthly comedy shows began in February 2021.

Occasionally WLBC feature outstanding professional comedians while at other times it is open mic night. When I witnessed Travis behind the microphone, four other individuals had their own featured time too. Professional comedy performances are Friday and Saturday at 7pm once a month. Several shows have been sold-out with about 50 people in attendance, the capacity for the Comedy Room. As a result, comedy came to Pioneer Park this July 14 with a cover cost of \$20 per person. Mic comedy night is free of charge.



**BIASD NEEDS YOUR HELP**

We are a statewide organization of individuals, families, and organizations who educate the public, advocate to improve the quality of life for brain injury survivors and their families, and support programs to help prevent brain injury. It only takes an e-mail message to become a member of the Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota and to help make a difference for people in South Dakota who have been affected by brain injury. Joining does not require additional work from you, but it makes us a stronger and larger organization with a louder voice in South Dakota. Please e-mail your name and mailing address to us, and we will include you in our future mailings. **We are a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.** If you choose to donate, donations are tax deductible and will help us carry out our mission. **Donations can be made at <https://braininjurysd.org>** or mailed to: Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota, 4304 S. Glenview Road, Sioux Falls, SD 57103

**Book Review Corner . . .**

**Book:** *Understanding Mild Traumatic Brain Injuries*  
**Author:** Mary Ann Keatley and Laura L Whittmore  
**Reviewer:** Randy from Sioux Falls Brain Injury Support Group

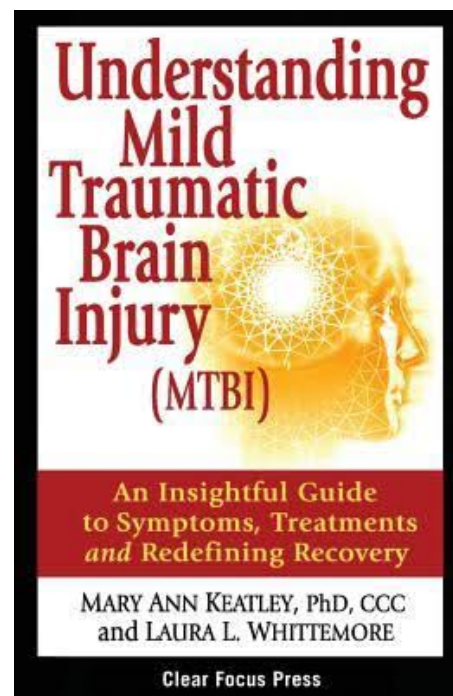
Traumatic brain injury is defined as: Traumatic brain injury (TBI), a form of acquired brain injury, occurs when a sudden trauma causes damage to the brain. TBI can result when the head suddenly and violently hits an object, or when an object pierces the skull and enters brain tissue. Symptoms of a TBI can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the extent of the damage to the brain. Progress in classifying traumatic brain injury (TBI) for targeted treatment has lagged behind other diseases such as cancer, and has contributed to the lack of progress in the field. Today, TBI is most often classified as mild, moderate or severe on the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). However, GCS is symptom-based and does not allow to target a specific pathology.

So, that said, all brain injuries are serious! Don't let the word "MILD" fool You!

It is only a classification!

This book identifies these classification differences and offers much information on those differences and how to address them. The classification is determined by the primary care physician which is established by the severity of the injury.

I am quite sure that anyone with a TBI, including family and friends, will find this information helpful, especially for those who do not fully understand what is going on. Many Survivors may appear normal on the outside, but the damage



that occurred has taken place on the inside and is not visible to most, which makes the survivor appear to be undamaged.

There are most definitely some topics that will resonate with readers who can relate their experience to specific topics that are unique to them.

There is also a functional symptom questionnaire included at the end of the book that the authors recommend a person fill out every 3 to 6 months to assess their progress in recovery. Also, to enhance the rehabilitation process it is recommended to learn new skills in order to rewire and rehabilitate the brain. Learning new things helps to re-establish neural pathways.



## Mark your calendars . . .

### United States Brain Injury Alliance.

Free webinars - 2 pm EST

08/10/22 - Return to School

Following Brain Injury,  
Promising Practices  
& Current Research.

11/09/22 - The use of Apps  
within the TBI Community

### North Dakota Brain Injury Network (NDBIN.ORG)

Free Webinar Wednesdays.

1:30 to 3:30 pm CST

08/10/22 - Lift up my Mind

08/24/22 - ND Programs

09/21/22 - Saving Shannon,  
A family's story of strength  
& devotion

10/05/22 - Autoimmune  
Encephalitis

11/02/22 - Brain Injury &  
Audiology

03/23/2023 - 2023 Mind

Matters Conference  
Baymont by Wyndham  
2611 Old Red Trail  
Mandan, ND

Virtual and in person

### Brain Injury Advocates of Wyoming

09/09/22 - BIAW Golf Tourney

1601 King Blvd., Casper, WY

10/07/22 - KCBS BBQ

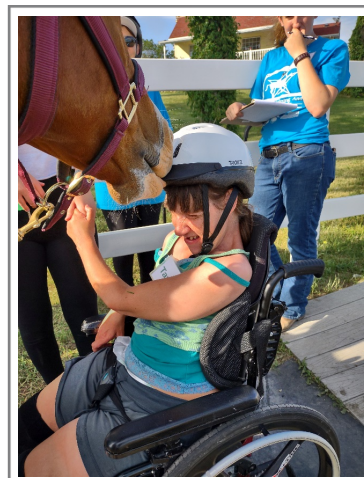
Competition, Central  
Wyoming Fairground,  
Casper WY

10/08/22 - Sinclair Casper

Refinery Kids Q



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S.T.A.R.S. is a non-profit organization that offers a unique form of physical, mental, and emotional therapy for those with unique abilities. It is a recreational, therapeutic horsemanship program for persons with challenges in Brookings and the surrounding communities. The program is designed to teach basic horsemanship skills but also to benefit the riders physically as well as mentally and emotionally. We partner with trained horses to facilitate balance training, core building, emotional connections, self-esteem, and confidence building among the participants. With a combination of staff that are experienced riders and compassionate volunteers, S.T.A.R.S. offers a safe environment for riders of various ability levels.

A horse's movements mimic the motions of the human body. This improves the rider's range of motion, flexibility, posture, balance, coordination, muscle strength, and social interaction with other participants as well as staff,

volunteers, and the horses. For some riders, riding horses is as close as they can get to the feeling of walking. The riders gain confidence and increased self-esteem from forming unconditional bonds with the horses and learning to “control” an animal up to twenty times their size.

Potential participants may call or email the Program Director with any questions. There is a registration form. An exam may be needed and upon approval, a physician’s release form would then need to be filled out and signed. At this time, insurances, Medicare, and Medicaid do not cover the fees for the services provided by the S.T.A.R.S. Program. There are different Family Services type programs that do help with the registration fees.

We have three sessions this summer. Each session includes 8 nights of riding with an added week at the end in case of cancellation due to weather. Each session has a limit of eighteen participants. Currently, we have forty-four participants registered.

We rely heavily on volunteers and employ a Director, a Wrangler/Riding Coach, and three interns.

- Bobbie Chambers Wilson is our Wrangler/Riding Coach. She started riding at the age of six and fell totally in love with horses. She started her first horse job at the age of seven working at her riding stable cleaning stalls and grooming in exchange for riding lessons. She volunteered for twenty-five years, and then began teaching (P.A.T.H. Standards) at Pegasus Therapeutic Riding. She has taken many workshops and instructor trainings at High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center. Bobbie also has been teaching recreational hunt seat riding at Whispering Willows Equestrian.

Bobbie trained for five years with two-time Olympic dressage competitor and trainer, Lendon Gray. Ms. Gray assisted Bobbie in retraining her first off-the-track Thoroughbred in dressage. Bobbie currently has three beloved adopted horses: two off-the-track Thoroughbred horses, Quick and Sweet, that she adores, and the most adorable chocolate palomino Shetland pony, Cinnamon, that God ever made!



- Kristine Skorseth serves as the Program Director. Kristine, AKA Kris, grew up on a farm by Redwood Fall, MN. She had a love of horses from a young age and was gifted her first horse on her 13th birthday. From there, the passion continued to grow. Upon graduation from high school, she attended South Dakota State University, studying Dairy Production, and graduated with a BS in Agriculture.

Growing up, Kris attended Girl Scout Camp and then went on to be a Wrangler Assistant. During college, she was the Wrangler; caring for the horses, scheduling riding sessions and trail rides, and teaching young ladies about horses and how to ride Western style.

Kris has been a massage therapist for 26 years in the Brookings community. Her passion is providing service to others and assisting in their healing journey.

For many years, Kris traveled to the Black Hills in the fall to ride through the Hills. She currently has three special needs horses.

Costs are \$40 for single participant, \$60 for two family members. Other similar programs are Spurs in Aberdeen, Joy Ranch in Watertown, HorsePower in Sioux Falls, and SunCatcher in Rapid City. Each program has different registration requirements so if anyone is considering them, check to see what their requirements are.





# A Letter From Your Brain - By Stephanie St. Claire ©1996

Hello,

I'm glad to see that you are awake! This is your brain talking. I had to find some way to communicate with you. I feel like I barely survived WWII and am still not quite all in one piece. That's why I need you. I need you to take care of me.



As time passes and you and I feel better and better, people, even doctors, will tell you that we are fine, "it's time to get on with life." That sounds good to me and probably even better to you. But before you go rushing back out into that big wide world, I need you to listen to me, really listen. Don't shut me out. Don't tune me out. When I'm getting into trouble I'll need your help more than I ever have before.

I know that you want to believe that we are going to be the same. I'll do my best to make that happen. The problem is that too many people in our situation get impatient and try to rush the healing process; or when their brains can't fully recover they deny it and, instead of adapting, they force their brains to function in ways they are no longer able to. Some people even push their brains until they seize, and worse... I'm scared. I'm afraid that you will do that to me. If you don't accept me I am lost. We both will be lost. How can I tell you how much I need you now? I need you to accept me as I am today... not for what I used to be, or what I might be in the future. So many people are so busy looking at what their brains used to do, as if past accomplishments were a magical yardstick to measure present success or failures, that they fail to see how far their brains have come. It's as if here is shame, or guilt, in being injured. Silly, huh?

Please don't be embarrassed or feel guilt, or shame, because of me. We are okay. We have made it this far. If you work with me we can make it even further. I can't say how far. I won't make any false promises. I can only promise you this, that I will do my best.

What I need you to do is this: because neither of us knows how badly I've been hurt (things are still a little foggy for me), or how much I will recover, or how quickly, please go s-l-o-w-l-y when you start back trying to resume your life. If I give you a headache, or make you sick to your stomach, or make you unusually irritable, or confused, or disoriented, or afraid, or make you feel that you are overdoing it, I'm trying to get your attention in the only way I can. Stop and listen to me.

I get exhausted easily since being hurt, and cannot succeed when overworked. I want to succeed as much as you do. I want to be as well as I can be, but I need to do it at a different pace than I could before I got hurt. Help me to help us by paying attention and heeding the messages I send to you.

I will do my part to do my very best to get us back on our feet. I am a little worried though that if I am not exactly the same... you will reject me and may even want to kill us. Other people have wanted to kill their brains, and some people have succeeded.

I don't want to die, and I don't want you to die.

I want us to live, and breath and be, even if being is not the same as it was. Different may be better. It may be harder too, but I don't want you to give up. Don't give up on me. Don't give up on yourself. Our time here isn't through yet. There are things that I want to do and I want to try, even if trying has to be done in a different way. It isn't easy. I have to work very hard, much harder, and I know that you do too. I see people scoff, and misunderstand. I don't care. What I do care about is that you understand how hard I am working and how much I want to be as good as I can be, but I need you to take good care of us, as well as you can do that.

Don't be ashamed of me. We are alive. We are still here. I want the chance to try to show you what we are made of. I want to show you the things that are really important in life. We have been given another chance to be better, to learn what is really important. When it is finally time for our final exit I would like to look back and feel good about what we made of us and out of everything that made up our life, including this injury. I cannot do it without you. I cannot do it if you hate me for the way being injured has affected me and our life together. Please try not to be bitter in grief. That would crush me.

Please don't reject me. There is little I can do without you, without your determination to not give up.

Take good care of us and of yourself.

I need you very much, especially now.

Love,

your wounded brain

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# What to Do If You Hit Your Head

Knowing in advance what actions to take can help keep you safe

By Ashley Abramson, Consumer Reports. Ashley Abramson is a freelance writer focused on health and psychology. June 13, 2022

Falling and hitting your head can be scary. In the moment, it can be difficult to figure out how serious your injury is, what you should do next, and what symptoms might signal a possible emergency.

A blow to the head can cause a traumatic brain injury (TBI), bleeding in the brain, a concussion, or a contusion (a bruise on the brain). But quick action can help mitigate some of the most serious potential outcomes. Here, how to assess your personal risk level after a severe head injury, and when you need to call for immediate help.

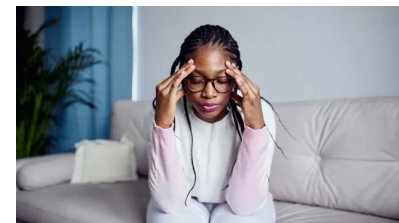


Photo: Ekaterina Goncharova/Getty Images

## What's Your Risk?

As people age, they may be more likely to fall and hit their head, says Matthew E. Peters, MD, an associate professor in the division of geriatric psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Medicine. That's in part because your strength, balance, and reflexes may decline with age as well as with conditions such as osteoporosis and arthritis.

The risk of a serious head injury is also higher for older adults. One large Israeli study, published in the journal *Brain Injury* in 2016, found that among all age groups, they were the most likely to be hospitalized with a traumatic brain injury.

"As you age, the brain tends to stiffen and shrink, which means there's more room inside the skull for it to move around," Peters says. "That moving can tear blood vessels, which [with age] are more rigid and likely to tear."

Some medications can also increase the likelihood that a head injury will cause bleeding in the brain. These include blood thinners—commonly prescribed to reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke—as well as the regular use of aspirin and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen, according to Matthew Robbins, MD, a neurologist at Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian. Frequent or excessive alcohol consumption can raise the risk of bleeding as well, Robbins says, along with the risk of falling in the first place.

## Is It an Emergency?

The first rule of thumb with a possible head injury: When in doubt, don't hesitate to seek help.

If you've hit your head and are experiencing weakness, numbness, a decrease in coordination, slurred speech, or increased agitation or confusion, call 911 immediately or get someone to call for you. Do the same, Peters advises, if you develop a headache that's either the worst you've ever had or that's not relieved by acetaminophen. (Consult your doctor before taking an NSAID like ibuprofen after a head injury.) Other red flags include a change in pupil size (the black of your eyes), changes in vision (such as blurriness or double vision), seizures, or a loss of consciousness. People who sustain a skull fracture could experience delayed bleeding, which can "progress in very unpredictable ways minutes, hours, or days after a head injury," Robbins says.

If you're at a particularly high risk of a serious head injury—for one of the reasons detailed above, for example—you should seek emergency care after hitting your head even if your symptoms seem mild, says Ula Hwang, MD, MPH, an emergency medicine doctor at Yale Medicine and professor at Yale's School of Medicine.

In a nonemergency situation—you hit your head on a cabinet but otherwise feel normal and aren't on blood thinners, for example—it's still wise to check in with your doctor. It's also a good practice to tell a loved one if you've hit your head, even if it seems minor, because the effects of some head injuries can escalate in severity over time.

## How to Prevent Falls

Simple adjustments to your home can help prevent injuries, according to experts. Here are four tips for a safer space.

- Remove hazards. Keep clutter off the floor and secure any rugs.
- Dress for balance. Wear stable, well-fitting shoes, and use your cane or walker if you need one, Hwang recommends.
- Customize your space. Add railings to your bathtub, shower, and toilet areas, and any stairways in your home.
- If you need more help, Peters suggests checking to see whether your insurance policy covers fall risk assessments, which are completed at home by an occupational or physical therapist.

## Introducing BIASD Board Member Jennifer Williams. . .

**HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE OF SD (BIASD)?** I became involved with The Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota via the advocacy of Dr. Justine Ashokar. She has been my direct supervisor for the past 6.5 years, providing me with exceptional mentorship and the opportunity to navigate professionally in all ways I find meaningful. Dr. Ashokar encouraged me to interview with the board if an opportunity came open, as we share a mutual passion to provide quality services and resources to those in need. Becoming a board member would increase my ability to do just that. An open spot on the board became available, I interviewed with the board members, and the rest is history. =)



**TELL ABOUT AN ACTIVITY BIASD HAS DONE DURING YOUR TERM OF SERVICE.** I joined BIASD during COVID! As you can imagine, this put a hold on many in-person activities. I did have the privilege to attend the South Dakota Special Education annual conference this year, where I was able to watch Dr. Ashokar and Mary Tommeraasen present on the Teenage Brain and Concussions. Their presentation evoked conversation amongst many and it was an awesome experience to actively watch resources reach people.

BIASD has also been updating information and systems (website, logo, resources, operations, future opportunities, etc.) in order to best serve people impacted by brain injury. Each member of the board advocates and takes opportunities whenever possible to increase awareness about various means of support.

**WHAT SERVICES DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE FUTURE OF BIASD?** Personally, the ultimate goal is that resources are plentiful and easier to access for those impacted by brain injury in South Dakota (and everywhere, of course!). To name a few services I'd like to see in the future of BIASD: picking back up with booths at conferences to promote service awareness; having the resources for ongoing scholarships and other learning opportunities; fundraising and holding other events; and ongoing advocacy to increase access to resources.

**WHAT DO YOU WANT READERS TO KNOW ABOUT BRAIN INJURIES?** Self-care is key! An active lifestyle, getting enough sleep, proper nutrition, positive mindset, going new places, taking medications as prescribed, good personal hygiene, engaging in hobbies, spending time with family and friends, playing brain games, maintaining routines, and challenging oneself regularly are all examples of what we can do to heal, improve cognition, and increase overall wellness.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE BEYOND BEING A BOARD MEMBER FOR BIASD.** I'm originally from Wyoming and lived there until moving to South Dakota to attend college. I attained my bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Black Hills State University, and my master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from South Dakota State University (Rapid City campus). I am a licensed counselor and my next professional goals are to attain my LPC-MH and CBIS. I have worked for Black Hills Works for 9.5 years and am beyond fortunate to have a career that I love!

Who I am in a nutshell: My soul is nourished when I get to spend time in the Black Hills. I love backpacking, snowboarding, hiking, camping, going to the lake... basically most things outdoors. I have two lab-something pups, Belle and Human (I always forget how goofy his name is until I have to tell someone new), who absolutely light up my life. Anytime I get to spend time with family and friends is time well spent. I have an infinity for music and get involved with it however I can – attending live shows, casual listening on the day-to-day, playing instruments, etc.