



TBI

Model System Updates

Winter 2021
Volume 18
Issue 3



Happy New Year!

Happy 2021 from the [University of Washington Traumatic Brain Injury Model System](#)!

While we recognize the struggles of 2020, we look forward to what we hope will be a brighter year ahead. In that spirit, for our first article, Silas James spoke with some people about how they not only coped, but have thrived during the time of COVID-19. We highlight many resources that individuals have used to get them through the pandemic. In the next article, Erica Wasmund shares some of what brings her comfort and joy. Also in this issue, we give a sneak-peak of the latest TBI InfoComic: *Pain after TBI*; we spotlight our new TBI Fellow at the University of Washington and Harborview Medical Centers, and provide updates on the 2021 Health and Wellness classes from the BIAWA. Finally, we recognize Dr. Jeanne Hoffman, Project Director of the UW TBI Model System, who began as Head of the Division of Rehabilitation Psychology and Neuropsychology in the Dept. of Rehabilitation Medicine.

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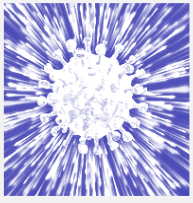
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Stories of Coping and Thriving During COVID-19



By Silas James

People who have experienced a TBI discuss feeling both the positive and negative effects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 made 2020 an unusual year for all of us. Social distancing and masking are our new way of living and restaurants, movie theatres and other businesses have temporarily closed. Everyone in the world has had some changes in their social life and these changes can understandably have effects on a person's health. Many people have had also changes to their access to physical or mental health resources. With the impact of the pandemic, there have been significant changes in how services are delivered and the availability of some public benefits.

I wanted to find out how these society wide changes have impacted the TBI community; many people who have experience TBI receive public benefits, have regular medical appointments, and experience temporary or long term isolation. I reached out to a TBI community leader for help connecting with people to learn about how they have experienced the pandemic. I hosted a focus group and conducted several one on one interviews which focused on two themes: *Managing Social Changes* and *Staying Healthy*. I've included links to resources where appropriate.

Managing Social Changes

People who have experienced a TBI often experience feelings of isolation, and this was a common thread in many of the interviews I conducted. People especially miss the loved ones they saw regularly prior to COVID.

The biggest challenge has been being away from my two adult sons, and not seeing my friends. I really miss seeing my kids. – Michele

I'm tired of being cooped up in the house. I'm ready to go out and have a cup of coffee with a friend. – Julie

People in my apartment building get in small disagreements more often, I think because we're all more on edge since COVID. – TBI Community Member

This past year would've been nuts even without COVID. My wife and I just moved to the area and there have been other things that have been overwhelming. COVID has really added to that... it's been very hard to meet new people, so we've just kind of had to put a hold on that. Thankfully we have each other. – David

Some people also found the changes that individuals without TBI were experiencing matched their own: *For the past three years, since my TBI, my world has slowed down a lot. It's strange because now it feels like the rest of the world has also slowed down because of COVID. – Rob*

What I didn't expect was all of the solutions that people told me they had come-up with to help each other and stay connected to the world. From shopping to taking classes online, people in the TBI community have changed their routines. People also talked about changing the way they socialize and spend their free time, from playing cards online and chatting with friends over Zoom, to learning to play a new musical instrument from videos on YouTube, the people I spoke with told me about creative ways to adjust to this changed world.

Coping and Thriving During COVID-19, cont.

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In the beginning of COVID there was no understanding of...anything—that's scary. Now there's a timeline, I can imagine an end to this. Day-to-day, I focus on the short term.... My goal is to go for a walk every day, I can do that. It helps me feel like I'm running my life. I was taking a socially distanced art class at the senior center but that was canceled, so now I'm volunteering there. I still get out; I have activities and I see my friends at a safe distance. Once I had brunch with a friend at a restaurant with outdoor seating and heaters. – Kathy

Since COVID, I've stopped caregiving and that's given me more time; it's been an opportunity to learn about myself. I've also built my intentional community making deeper and more meaningful friendships. At the start of this I realized that I would need to see my people more often, so I set up different ways for us to meet online every day. My community has grown stronger now we meet virtually every day, that's brought us closer. The more people you have holding the sides of your safety net the better we are. Being accountable to all my friends, I don't have the time to slip into depression. – Michele

Ways to connect online:

Free DRIVE-IN WIFI if you don't have reliable internet where you live, there are several *hotspots* where you can access free WIFI in our state:

<http://www.driveinwifi.wa.gov/>

Zoom offers a Basic Plan for free with unlimited meetings as long as they are kept under 40 minutes. Once signing up you can watch video tutorials or register for a live training class:

<https://zoom.us/signup/>

Seattle Public Library has so many great resources from free streaming video and audio books to language classes, skill building workshops, and employment counseling, get access here: <https://www.spl.org/books-and-media/digital-resources/>



Things to do for free online:

Eventbrite is a listing of thousands of events, literally all over the world, most of which, are virtual. This site helps you to easily find free events by typing “free” into the search bar, adjust the filters to help find what you are interested in: <https://www.eventbrite.com/>

Graduate School Lecture Series, sign up for future lectures and stream past presentations for FREE: <https://grad.uw.edu/public-lecture-series/>

Khan Academy offers grade-school through college level classes online for free: <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Coursera offers many free classes online, many more are free to audit and only require payment to receive the certificate of completion: <https://www.coursera.org/courses?query=free>

Staying Healthy

Many people I spoke with shared ways they have been adjusting their routines to stay healthy. They talked about a whole range of activities and changes they've made to support their health. This included things like developing a regular yoga practice using online classes, and switching to a vegetarian diet. Good health is certainly on everyone's mind.

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Comfort and Joy

By Erica Wasmund



embrace the darkness by using this time to enjoy the calm and quiet as a time to reflect.

The Danish have a word that fits my mood this time of year: *hygge* (pronounced hue-guh). Some key concepts of *hygge* are togetherness, relaxation, indulgence, presence and comfort. The true essence of *hygge* is the pursuit of everyday happiness; it's basically like a hug, but without physical touch.

From the moment summer ends, I rejoice! After the long, hot days of summer, fall always feels like a gift. The vibrant colors of the leaves changing, the crisp nights, and all the wonderful smells that are sure to follow. The smell of pumpkin bread, apple crisp and peppermint hot chocolate are some of my favorite things.

Winter brings me many comforts as well. I love curling up with a blanket, cooking soups, baking bread, and of course all the holidays that fall into these months. The traditions and rituals seem to slow time down, and pull us into the present. Looking back, I remember my mom pulling out all the decorations to fill each room with a little bit of cheer. My favorite decoration was a tiny antique sled and reindeer that was from her grandparents. We always listened to Christmas music as they prepared Swedish meatballs and Polish potato soup on Christmas Eve. Although these things have still brought me joy, I find that I've had to dig deeper to feel comforted.

Many of us have already grown weary of the shorter days and colder weather, but I love the traditional Nordic Festival of Lights- bringing light into the darkness and sharing time with family and friends. The Nordic countries endure long, cold winters, so this time of year is when they go inside, both literally and figuratively. They

I have begun looking for words to lift me up from others who have been through challenging times. I find inspiration from Maya Angelou who wrote, *"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style"* and from Martin Luther King Jr., who when addressing a class of students said, *"Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are."*

As we begin a new year, many of us make resolutions for what we want to focus on or improve upon. For me, I'm focusing on words and activities that fuel my mind, body and spirit. These things get me through the day and give me the courage to continue to strive to find comfort and joy in the small things.

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Coping and Thriving During COVID-19, cont.

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Staying Healthy continued...

I didn't cook for about 10 years, but Washington has increased SNAP food assistance, and now I can afford more fresh food and spices. I also signed up for Fresh Bucks, and Good Food Bag from [Tilth Alliance](#), both of those make my food assistance go even further! It's been amazing to get the fresh produce. In my free time I've been cooking a lot more and eating so much better. – Kathy

Assistance to access healthy food:

Washington State maintains a resource page with links to resources for food and rent assistance during this time: <https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/resource-topics/food-and-housing>

Food Lifeline seeks to solve the issue of hunger; they distribute food to thousands of Washingtonians through a network of food banks, shelters, and meal programs: <https://foodlifeline.org/need-food/>

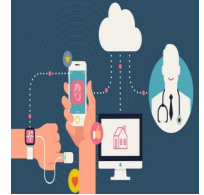
Fresh Bucks is a food assistance program that provides recipients with access to healthy food at farmers markets and local grocery stores: <https://www.freshbuckseattle.org/>

Good Food Bags is a weekly (or bi-weekly) produce subscription program that provides recipients with nutrient dense locally grown organic produce. Each bag costs \$5 and contains \$10 worth of fresh produce. The bags can be paid for with cash, debit, or EBT cards: <http://www.tilthalliance.org/about/good-food-bags>



Telemedicine

People also discussed telemedicine or other online resources that they were using to maintain their physical and mental health.



It's easier because I can do my appointments online, so that's better for my body. I'm not rushing around as much. – Julie

Having doctor appointments on the computer is a lot easier. I can plan better and get organized for what to talk about and since I don't drive, getting there is easier, too! - David

Attending medical appointments virtually isn't the only thing you can do online to maintain your health. The [Brain Injury Alliance of Washington](#) (BIAWA) offers online classes and can connect you to support groups to help you grow and maintain a supportive community

Health and Wellness Classes, the BIAWA sponsors these health and wellness online classes geared toward those who have experienced brain injury. Find the current schedule here: <https://www.biawa.org/support/brain-health-wellness-classes>

Support Groups: Many support groups have gone online. Find more info here: <https://www.biawa.org/support/support-groups>

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Coping and Thriving During COVID-19, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

Talking with people who have found new and creative solutions to the problems that so many of us are experiencing has given me an unexpectedly hopeful feeling about 2021. As a global community, we still face incredible challenges, and no meaningful solutions are ever easy, but after listening to so many people who found creative solutions, and learning about a whole host of new resources, I have confidence that 2021 can be a better year than the one we just had.



We are grateful to Michele, Joel and all of the wonderful people for taking the time to talk and to share their experiences and resources for this article.

Below are some of the resources we have found helpful to keep us informed about COVID.

COVID Resources:

Washington State has information for everyone on facts about COVID-19 and how to connect to resources:

<https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/stay-home-stay-healthy>

Seattle Public Library Resource Hub is a collection of resources and is categorized by different groups who may need specific resources:

<https://www.spl.org/programs-and-services/civics-and-social-services/covid-resources-hub>

Solid Ground maintains an extensive list of resources for food and health as well as housing and jobs to support people during COVID-19 for those in the Seattle/King Country area:

<https://www.solid-ground.org/get-help/coronavirus-resources/>

World Health Organization website offers up-to-date information about COVID-19 to insure we have the facts as we learn them:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>



The Latest *TBI InfoComic*:

Traumatic Brain Injury and Chronic Pain

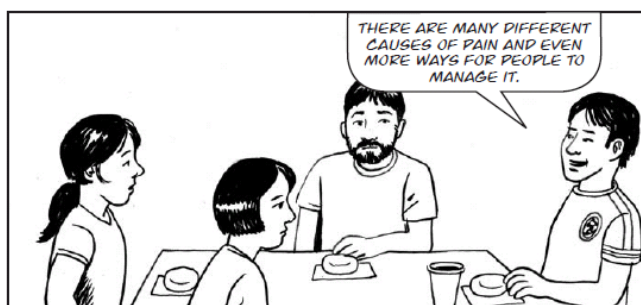
The TBI InfoComics were created by Silas James and Ayla Jacob to educate people who have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury, their families/caregivers, and healthcare providers about common symptoms of TBI and how to manage them. The InfoComics are written to be accessible to people who may have memory issues or trouble reading large blocks of text. They present the most vital and up-to-date information about physical, cognitive and emotional issues people with TBI may be dealing with. The content presented represents the most recent findings of the largest and longest running study about TBI: the Traumatic Brain Injury Model System Study.

Shown here is the second page of the latest TBI InfoComic: *Traumatic Brain Injury and Chronic Pain*. To view the full comic as well as all of the TBI InfoComics created to date, please navigate to our website [here](#).

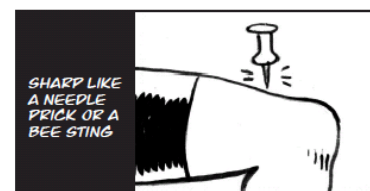


Finding What Works
There are many different strategies that people use to manage their pain. Some of them are:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| -Exercise | -Hypnosis |
| -Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) | -Art therapy |
| -Scheduled rests or Pacing | -Acupuncture |
| -Meditation | -Massage |
| -Biofeedback | -Heat or ice |
| -Breathing exercises | -Social activity |
| -Visualization | |



PAIN CAN TAKE MANY FORMS





Announcements



UW TBIMS PROJECT DIRECTOR, DR. JEANNE HOFFMAN, NAMED REHABILITATION PSYCHOLOGY and NEUROPSYCHOLOGY DIVISION HEAD

We are pleased to announce that Jeanne Hoffman, PhD, has accepted the role of Head, Division of Rehabilitation Psychology and Neuropsychology for the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, effective January 1, 2021.

Dr. Hoffman has been with the University of Washington's Department of Rehabilitation Medicine since 1999 as a trainee, and began as faculty in 2001 as an Attending Rehabilitation Psychologist and researcher. She has an extensive history of successful research in the field of trauma with focus on both people who have had Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), bringing awareness to the health care and service inequities for individuals with disabilities. She demonstrates leadership as a champion of diversity and equity for accessibility to health care resources, researching and promoting outreach to communities with disabilities and for people of color. We congratulate Dr. Hoffman and are proud to have her as our TBI Model System Project Director!

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Comfort and Joy, cont.

I've begun baking my own bread, and recently I bought my first bird feeder to feed all the birds that have found my yard as an oasis. The cat and I enjoy watching them fly around, and I love that I am helping them get the nutrients they need for the long winter. Doing these things may not save the world, but by taking time to care for ourselves, we can recharge, live life and contribute in a way that is meaningful to us.

May we all find our own comfort and joy in the New Year!



Erica's homemade bread



The TBI Care Study

Interested in participating in research?



We are in our last three months of recruiting volunteers to participate in a study called [TBI Care](#). This study compares a treatment for pain using an approach called collaborative care with the usual care approach. Collaborative care includes a care manager who works directly with a patient as well as their physician and an expert team of providers to coordinate medical care and deliver behavioral interventions that are personalized for each patient. This approach not only focuses on treatment of pain, but also addresses some of the common co-occurring problems that often happen when people have pain including difficulties with mood, anxiety and sleep.

Study participation lasts for six months and can take place by phone, video calls, or in person.

You may be eligible to participate if you:

- ♦ Have had a mild-to-severe TBI more than 6 months ago
- ♦ Experience pain (including headache and/or other kinds of pain) in the past 6 months
- ♦ Receive your care from a TBI physician at either Harborview or the UW Medical Center Rehabilitation clinics

Participants are randomly assigned (like a coin toss) to either the treatment group or the group receiving usual care. There is a compensation of \$50.

For more information please contact
Laurie Peabody by phone at 206-744-3607 or
lpeabody@uw.edu

ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT03523923



**All studies are voluntary and will not impact the care you receive
at the University of Washington.**

In the Community



Inspiring • Learning • Growing

Brain Injury Today

PODCAST

♦ [LISTEN HERE](#)

Latest Episode—Reflecting On 2020: You Are Not Alone. We Are Here.

In the latest episode of the BIAWA podcast *Brain Injury Today*, host Deborah Crawley, BIAWA Executive Director, focuses on the challenges that 2020 brought, and how the brain injury community has grown even stronger.

The BIAWA offers helpful information and resources, including information about how to attend an online support group, as well as comfort and strategies to get through this time of isolation and uncertainty. The BIAWA also has a **Resource Center** Monday thru Friday where you can connect with staff.

BIAWA Resource Center 1-877-982-4292



We will get through this together!

Upcoming Brain Health & Wellness Classes!



The UW TBI Model System and BIAWA continue to collaborate to offer incredible and free classes with in 2021. All classes are held virtually, using Zoom. Please click [here](#) to register through BIAWA.

January: *Physical Therapy's Role in Management after Concussion*

Facilitated by Becky Hansen, physical therapist at Harborview Medical Center.

February: *Relaxation and Mindfulness Practices after Brain Injury*

Facilitated by Mary Curran, MSW, LICSW

March: *Advocacy*

Facilitated by Silas James, MPA

April: *Acupuncture and TBI*

Facilitated by Mark Sodder, Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (DAOM)





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UWTBIMS



TBI Fellow Spotlight: *Dr. Natasha Mehta*



Natasha Mehta, MD has joined us at the University of Washington as our new Brain Injury Medicine Rehabilitation Fellow. For the next year, she will be rotating between Harborview and UW Medical Centers, and Seattle Children's Hospital. In addition to seeing brain injuries of all different severities and types, she is also assisting with teaching and managing the resident physicians on the rehabilitation medicine inpatient units.

A true Midwesterner, Dr. Mehta was born in Chicago and raised in Ohio where she completed her undergraduate and medical degrees before diving into the culture of the East coast. There, she completed her residency in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) at the esteemed Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation (Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School) before moving upstate to Rochester, New York. It was in Rochester that she treated patients rehabilitating from stroke, brain and spinal cord injuries, neuromuscular disorders, and those dealing with chronic pain.

Dr. Mehta's passion for people experiencing cognitive impairment led her to return to training for a fellowship that will allow her to hone in on rehabilitative approaches to a healing brain. She has used her continuing medical education time to improve her procedural ultrasound skills, better understand movement biomechanics, and to become certified in Lifestyle Medicine. (Lifestyle Medicine is an emerging field looking to integrate recommendations in the areas of physical activity, diet, stress, and sleep into the comprehensive model of care we already provide to our patients.) She will begin to look at the impact diet may have on a healing brain after mild traumatic brain injury, starting with a pilot study in 2021.

In her spare time, you may find Dr. Mehta experimenting with flavors in the kitchen, exercising, or spending time with her husband. They have especially enjoyed the hiking scene and paddle boarding on Lake Union.

The Washington Traumatic Brain Injury Resource Center

BIAWA is first and foremost a source of support for those affected by Brain Injury, of which the Resource Center is a critical part.

[Brain Injury Alliance of Washington](http://www.biawa.org/): www.biawa.org/

[BIAWA Support Center](http://www.biawa.org/getsupport.php): www.biawa.org/getsupport.php



TBIMS Updates

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The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR grant number 90DPTB0008). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).



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