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Overcoming life with a traumatic brain injury

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Brain Injury is an invisible and silent epidemic with 2.8 M Americans affected annually. It is the leading cause of death and disability in the World. Yet, it is far too often misunderstood and undiagnosed by doctors, leaving survivors and their family members to tread through murky waters while trying to understand why their life has been turned upside down. I believe that better education and awareness through advocacy is the front line of defense in this battle that so many of us struggle through daily. After a slip on the ice in February of 2014 my life has never been the same. I live with constant dizzy and balance problems, cognitive deficits, and short-term memory issues. I easily fatigued after doing simple tasks that I used to take for granted such as washing the dishes or carrying in the groceries. I was easily confused by anything with touch buttons and some days still don't understand how to use the microwave or pay-at-the-pump gas stations. While friends and family drifted away, doctors kept telling me that I would be fine in a few more

weeks (even after months of no improvement), and some even accused me of not trying hard enough to get better. It took me two and a half years to finally find a doctor who had a better understanding of how my eyes and brain weren't communicating with each other properly and was able to help me with simple eye exercises. I'm a strong, independent woman now and it took me this long advocating for my health, imagine what it takes for those who are less able to voice their mounting concerns. Through my presentation, I hope to help the healthcare professionals understand what it's really liked to live with a brain injury, and help the scientific community understand why more research is needed in hopes of finding better ways of prevention and treatment. I will take attendees through my journey showing them the struggles and triumphs in hopes that hearing from a survivor may help them in their practice and/or research.

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