



Douglas Walker

A Survivor's Story

[Click the link to read all of the stories.](#)

Did you know that June is #BrainInjuryAwarenessMonth in Canada? This month, we're shining a #SpotlightOnBrainInjury.

Help us raise awareness about #BrainInjury in Canada by following along with our posts & sharing to your stories!

#SPOTLIGHTONBRAININJURY

Scattered Memory

To start this off, I will introduce myself as Doug and let you know that I am a brain injury survivor. My injury happened in December of 2008 just after Christmas. It took the next four or five years to realize that there is a new me.. Doug 201 as the old Doug was no longer there. The new me had to relearn how to deal with interrupted cognitive abilities such as speech, word and sentence interpretations, learning methods of remembering things as I suffer from short-term and long-term memory loss. I also had to find ways to settle down and relax my brain as it mostly feels clouded and busy with confusing thoughts. I like to walk a lot so I continue to do as many as 5 to 8 kilometers most days as it seems to relax my busy brain. I also enjoy acrylic painting. The old Doug always had a rusty artistic ability as he spent 20 years as a sign writer. I also enjoy taking photos and deciding which ones to paint on canvas. Occasionally I also like to paint something that is in my memory or in my head. I find it very difficult to keep a picture memory within my brain long enough to complete the painting. The original idea that I started with seems to disappear a few hours into a painting and I have to start all over or rearrange the painting that I started. This can happen numerous times and can get somewhat frustrating over time. These paintings end up becoming a true abstract piece of artwork with some good and others totally redone.

I would like to refer to a recent painting that I finished, and I call it "Scattered Memory" for several reasons. When I first started out, I wanted to work with a black background as it shows the colors that I so dearly wanted to bring out at their best. My initial intention was to paint a colorful moonlit evening over a calm body of water. I started with bright yellow and orange. Before I could continue, I had to answer a phone call which took about 15-20 minutes of my time. When I started to continue with my painting, I suddenly lost interest in the two colors that I had applied and proceeded to reapply the black. At this time, I completely lost the original idea of what I was attempting to paint. This is when I realized that my brain was so busy processing everything that I lost the ability to find the original idea. It was at this time I decided to just paint whatever came to me at the moment. I continued with various bright colors using different style brushes and mediums. I decided to stop the painting and take a break as it was getting late and I was tired. The next day I looked hard at the work that I had done and found myself even more confused about what this painting was supposed to be all about. The idea that the confusion came from the fact that my brain kept losing my ideas and replacing them with other ideas, made me think that it might be a good thing to just go along with the confusion and paint whatever comes to mind. I had the notion that if I go along with the many projections that my brain was putting out, I might get a sense of relaxation and calmness in my work. Many colors, styles and shapes developed over time and when I found the painting was completed and I was satisfied with it, I signed it and varnished it the next day.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that it really wasn't me that did this painting.. it was my brain in its own way that was telling me what it's like to have confusion and total disruption when dealing with an injury to the brain. Fortunately, my brain has the same name as myself so I didn't have to change that. My brain and I are still fighting small battles within, but I have learned so much and will continue to learn each and every day. Memory loss, confusion, distraction, attention deficit and frustration all play an important role in everyday life when dealing with a brain injury. Every painting I do has a special meaning within themselves, but those "special meanings" and any brain injury have one thing in common.. you can't see it! The painting (18" X 24") represents a portion of the brain that explodes after an injury and scatters all its available memory and makes it very hard to recover those memories.