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Author Information



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On May 10, 1993 my life was changed forever because someone ran a red light. After a life-threatening car accident, I suffered a severe brain stem injury and medically died, rating a "3", the lowest number possible on the Glasgow Coma Scale. According to medical experts, 96% of the people with such a severe injury either die or remain permanently comatose. The few who survive typically face a non-functional life.

Paralyzed and unconscious, I was transferred to the locked brain injury wing of a rehabilitation facility, where I awakened with vivid memories of my near death experience. During "death" I saw my grandmothers in heaven. They instructed me to "Go back and be happy" and assured me that my body would heal. Although medical experts said I would never walk again, or be able to take care of myself, I didn't listen. I believed the words of my grandmothers.

Through extensive therapy, I relearned how to stand, walk, and swallow. However, I faced the daunting challenge of facing the able-bodied world as a disabled person. After overcoming paralysis and battling severe depression, I embraced my gift of recovery as a true miracle.

In 1999, I ran in a 5K race near Chicago on Mother's Day! In February 2007, I completed my first triathlon. I have become an advocate for other survivors looking for hope and guidance. I work with the Brain Injury Association, the Spinal Cord Injury Association, and am a peer advisor to the Midwest Brain Injury Clubhouse. As a VIP member (voice for injury prevention) for the international program of ThinkFirst, I speak to students about injury prevention and safe driving. I volunteer at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in their Peer Support Program. I currently work part time as a community relations advisor for a top Chicago law firm.

Featured on Lifetime's "Beyond Chance", CNN, *Woman's Day Magazine*, *The 700 Club*, and top ranked WB's WGN News, my story is gaining national media attention. I continuously seek to share this story with others, to share faith, determination, and inspiration to those dealing with sudden changes in life.

Go Back and Be Happy (978-0-8254-6276-4, \$12.99 paper) by Julie Papievis released January 2009 from Monarch Books and is distributed in North American by Kregel Publications.



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