

My Story:

I hesitate to share my story because it brings back **awful** memories, but at the same time, I wouldn't trade what I have been through for even the world's most delicious jar of nut butter. My past has created the very person I am today and let's be honest— this wonderful YouMakeYou® community would be nonexistent without it, as well. So here we go:

At post prom my junior year of HS, I was chosen to be hypnotized for '**entertainment**'. It worked. At some point during the hypnosis, I collapsed and fell off of my chair, directly onto the ceramic tile floor beneath me, landing head first. I woke up, told the hypnotist 'my head hurt' and he put me right back out, hitting the floor again. I was later diagnosed with a concussion, which months later healed but left me with extremely severe **post concussion syndrome**. Post Concussion Syndrome, PCS, is just a general name for symptoms that occur as a result of a concussion, after the concussion itself has healed, there is no pattern to who gets it, what each person gets, when it will heal, or how to 'heal' it.

From the end of junior year on to senior year I felt generally **off**. I had frequent headaches, noise bothered me, I could barely focus, I constantly just wanted to sleep, my neck hurt to the point where I would barely move my head. But it was 'OK, it was just post concussion syndrome and would go away with time' according to many professionals. Despite my symptoms, I was cleared in the middle of the year to play my final season of Ice Hockey. In the very last game of my career, I was hit. **Hard**. I didn't know at the time, but I was concussed again. I will never forget looking up into the bleachers and seeing the fear on my parent's faces as they slowly receded from standing to sitting, a blank stare taking over their expressions. They knew immediately.

I was back at square one. Fast forward, I let the concussion heal, but then the post concussion syndrome (PCS) took over again, this time more powerful than ever.

I finished my senior year from home. I spent the days pulling all the courage in me to push through the pain, finish my high school career, get into college, and attempt to hold onto some true part of myself. It was **hard** to say the least. I woke up **every day** with a piercing headache, went to sleep with a piercing headache, I lived in a fog, I didn't even know who I was anymore, the pain was just shy of unbearable. There were times I would try to drive to a friend's house and have to pull over to call my mom to pick me up in utter pain, crying. I lost many friends, my boyfriend, heck— **I lost myself, my personality, everything**. My back, my head, my neck... it all just **hurt**. I was no longer Colby. I couldn't handle anything more than the basics of life. I don't even know how to explain in a clear way how I felt, but I can say that I don't **ever** want anyone to experience it.

I wasn't me anymore, I was taken by seemingly unstoppable pain.

It's really *scary* to feel like someone else has taken over your body and you have no control over how it treats you.

Once senior year was over, *three days before I was supposed to move into my dorm at Cornell* I made the incredibly hard decision to take a year off. I couldn't leave the house without a massive headache, I couldn't handle social interaction for more than a few hours at a time, I was still living life in a fog just able to do the bare minimum to get by. College was unthinkable.

I remember the day I told my parents I couldn't go away. They looked at me with *sad, knowing eyes*, and said "We know, but we wouldn't decide that for you". I was distraught, Think about it-- you dream all your life of going to college, and then you just can't. I never, even my worst nightmares, thought I wouldn't go. It took me days to admit that I wasn't.

I walked into my bedroom a few nights later to see a new bracelet and a note on my bed from my mom. The end of the note read: "Here's to a year of healing, Colb"! And from that day forward, that is what we **tried** to make it. When I say try, I mean we put *everything* into trying to get me better. I saw tens, twenties, of doctors, had countless procedures done, we tried just about everything (yes- including getting re-hypnotized).

I was a ragdoll.

I will never forget one procedure '**promised to get me better ASAP**' that involved me getting 80+ injections of my own spun down blood into my head and neck. It was the worst thing I have ever felt in my entire life. My mom had to leave the room. It never helped, actually, it made things worse. I couldn't sit for weeks after it without my entire face and legs tingling. I physically stood up for days on end until the fire in my body subsided.

I was let down, over and over again. But, things had gotten so bad, I was willing to **try anything**. I had this hope that the next thing was it. **It never was**. The will in my and my parents' heart and soul to find an answer was **simply astounding**. I bless my family every day for what they did for me over those two years; for the days on end sitting in a doctors having to take off of work, for the countless times they just sat and held me, for the pain I put them through for over two years. I will never forget what they did for me.

By February of my 'healing year' I was at the same place I was months earlier pain wise, and utterly defeated. I had put my body through so much with no sign of an end, or even an answer. **One doctor even walked into my room and within 2 minutes laughed and said 'You're ridiculous, I can't help you' and left**. That hurt just as much as any procedure I went through. If even a doctor, a medical professional, had no hope, how could I? I was terrified I was going to live my life like this forever. The idea that I was going to be in unbearable pain for the rest of my life was becoming more and more real. **The days went on**, I developed severe anxiety and couldn't be left alone— **I was terrified for my life**, there was no other way to put it. Each day I was torn down more and more...

I remember the exact turning point. I was in my room with one of the worst headaches I had ever experienced. I felt like my brain was on fire and I could barely remember who I was. My puppy jumped onto my bed, as she often did when things got bad, and rested her head on my leg. All of a sudden, I had an idea that I had never had before. **I was simply done with letting pain control my life. If nobody else could help me, why couldn't I help myself? From that point forward I committed myself to being my own hero. Pain could have no control over me if I didn't let it. Right?**

The sheer will to live life took over me and I suddenly found power deep in me. I aligned *all* of my thoughts and actions to healing myself. Even in the worst moments of pain, I refused to admit that anything hurt. I kept all of my thoughts positive and healing. I started ignoring every **rule** anyone set for me in terms of what was going to help me heal. I started to run whenever I wanted to despite being told it was 'making things worse'. I started slouching when I sat, despite 'how bad it was for my neck and head'. I started going to the grocery store— a place I grew to **absolutely** hate because of the noise and everything moving quickly by me. I threw away my neck brace, started looking at computer screens again, one by one, I started living aspects of my life like a **normal person** and denying any pain that came with it.

I started **thinking A LOT** about what I had been through and how it affected me. I went back through what had happened and was **real** with myself. I acknowledged everything that had happened but told myself over and over that it was the past, it was over. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and I was approaching it.

I threw positive vibes EVERYWHERE inside and outside my head. I aligned my life to the way I wanted it to be, and yes it was fake at first, but eventually it became real.

March 30, 2015 was my first headache & pain free day in over 2 years.

And, from that day forward things starting falling more and more into place. I was gaining my life back and I had myself to thank, that's it.

It is **crazy** looking back now because I remember countless breakdowns asking *why this had to happen to me, what I had done so wrong to have my life shattered for so long*. I didn't think there was a reason, there simply *couldn't have been* in the moment. But, BOY there was-- that *2 years of hell* was the soul reason I am where I am today. Pain free, happy, **loving every single second of life, and** most importantly helping YOU do the same.

YOU MAKE YOU and it's time to do so.