

## Why me?

This is an almost inevitable question to ask when something as significant as a brain injury happens to us. Why did this happen to me? Why do I have to cope with all this? I've done nothing to deserve this, why am I being punished? Why me, why not someone else?

We have a natural tendency to want to blame someone or at least something. It is part of our desire to be able to explain the world, to make things out there predictable and understandable. Human beings do not like being in the dark about things, unable to explain what is going on. It makes us feel insecure. However, the simple fact is that all brain injuries occur through accidents and illnesses. It's often just a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Even when there is someone else who is clearly to blame, they may not have acted deliberately. Brain injury can happen to anyone, from any section of the community at any time.

We base our lives on the assumption that life is ordered and predictable. We develop little routines and we dislike change. Our routines and all the arrangements we make, rely on the world carrying on pretty much as it always has. We have expectations for the future. We may be planning to go to college, progress in our careers, to marry and have a family, or to travel the world. We all have ambitions that depend on everything going the way we expect it to. And our expectations of others are the same. Our children will grow up, be healthy and happy, get jobs, get married and so on. But sometimes something happens that turns all these assumptions on their head. Something that means your life will never be the same again. This understandably makes us feel uncertain, insecure, and just plain frightened.

With a brain injury this is doubly disturbing as the head injury itself takes away our confidence and makes us confused. The why me question becomes even harder to answer.

After all, what could be the answer? Fate? Bad luck? Chance? God's will? Does it help if there is someone specific you can blame - for their stupidity, lack of thought or vindictiveness? And what is the consequence of being able to pin the responsibility for our misfortune on someone else?

Perhaps it helps make the world slightly less uncertain if we can understand why something has happened to us, but does it help in the long run? The answer is probably not. Rather than dwell on what has happened, the important thing to do is to rebuild our lives and look for the positives. Pondering the negatives is itself a negative pastime and will lead us nowhere. Spending time trying to apportion blame and looking for someone or something to be made responsible takes us away from thinking about those we care about and those who care about us. We may become bitter and twisted. This is self-destructive, and does nothing to improve our situation or help us deal with it

If we can acknowledge there *is* no answer to 'why me?' then we can leave it behind and move on. If we are in a great deal of debt, or made redundant, or our relationships end, or we lose someone close to us, it may not help to ask why such things have happened. We may have to accept them and decide how best we can cope.

So the magic word is 'acceptance' or at least 'resignation'. We may need to resign ourselves to what has happened and move on. It sounds simple, but it is by no means easy. We may have to spend some time getting our heads around what has happened. This can take months even years. If we don't do this we are in danger of becoming grumpy and irritable, people whom nobody wants to know.

With support, most people come to realize this and eventually manage to find their way through, often to a remarkable degree. Their life will almost certainly be different from the way it was and the way they planned, but it can still be a good life. They find purpose, meaning and enjoyment in this new life and often develop a new philosophy and outlook along with it. Perhaps this is why many people with brain injuries appear cheerful and content. Their experience has taught them a lesson that the rest of us would do well to learn. To disregard the unimportant and focus on those things which are of most value – independence and a good quality of life.

A personal view by:  
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