

by James McCormick

In our practice, we deal with clients who have been horribly injured all the time. No matter how long you do this work, you never get used to the loss some of these injuries cause the victims and families of those we represent. One of the worst injuries we often face is one you can't see, touch, or feel. It's a brain injury.



Brain injuries are terrible. Even a “minor” brain injury can leave a person with deficits in balance, word finding, memory, recall, or speech. More severe brain injuries can be completely disabling and leave someone only a shadow of the person they once were. Even worse are those in which the brain has been injured to such a degree that the body lives on in a persistent vegetative state or a coma. Working with a family who has experienced a loved one suffer this extent of injury is a wrenching experience.

Brain injuries can be difficult, if not impossible to treat. There are no magic surgeries or medications to heal the brain. Unfortunately, nerve cells do not divide like other cells in our bodies and when a nerve or brain matter is damaged, it is often permanent and irreversible. For less severe injuries, treatment usually focuses on “therapy.” The brain is trained to essentially work around the injury. People are taught to talk again, to remember, or to process complex tasks again by using other parts of their brain or even by using external cues such as note cards and other reminders. This process is slow, tedious, and never guaranteed to return the person to where they were before the injury.



At MBC we've helped a lot of families put their lives back together after a loved one has suffered a brain injury. However, our advocacy isn't limited to what we do for our clients. Each year MBC supports and contributes to the Brain Injury Association of Washington. We also support safety efforts to prevent others from suffering brain injuries.

The brain is a very fragile part of the body which must be protected. I frequently see kids in skate parks without helmets. Sometimes I even see people on motorcycles or ATV's helmetless. Brain injuries can happen in a split second and causing one takes a lot less force than you might think.

Things you can do to protect yourself, your children, and others from brain injury is to wear a helmet when engaged in activities such as biking, climbing, motorcycling, skating, or skiing. Helmets are no guarantee against injury, but can drastically improve your chances. When motorcycling or skiing, I always wear a helmet, as do my family members. We make sure our daughter wears her helmet when riding her bike or skiing. If you make it fun for kids, helmet use will become a routine habit. Additionally, I would recommend buying the best quality helmet you can reasonably afford. Make sure it's certified for safety. A helmet needs to fit snugly and always have the chin strap connected. On motorcycles, ATV's, or BMX bikes, there is no substitute for a full face helmet which protects the jaw and face as well as the head.



Remember to protect your brain. It's the only one you have.