

## Chef Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injury

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Anthony suffered a traumatic brain injury in a motorcycle accident when he was 22 years old. Three years later, he is living with his parents, who are desperate to find support for him. Anthony has been through many rounds of therapy over the past three years, including physical, occupational, and speech therapy. While his physical abilities have returned to normal, he continues to experience chronic problems with his cognitive skills. He finds it difficult to concentrate for complex tasks and is forgetful. His ability to organize, plan, and problem solve have been impacted. He struggles to initiate tasks, particularly those that require multiple steps to complete. Anthony has also suffered from personality changes. His parents have noticed that he is frequently irritable and has trouble controlling his impulses during daily activities.

Prior to his accident, Anthony was a talented chef at an upscale restaurant and was preparing to launch his own business. He was living with his girlfriend in a city apartment and enjoyed an active social life. Anthony tried to live independently for several months last year, after returning to work at his former restaurant; however, he was unable to manage his work responsibilities and had to move back in with his parents. He spends hours watching TV and playing video games each day, and his parents are at a loss of how to help him.

Anthony's social worker recommended Cognitive Concierge. Anthony declined to participate in the first several meetings, but his parents were able to describe the situation to his Ambassador, who laid out a roadmap for helping Anthony to receive ongoing support for his cognitive deficits, with a focus upon occupational skills training.

Anthony eventually agreed to meet with his Ambassador, who engaged him in a discussion about his favorite recipes and his personal goals for returning to work. His Ambassador helped to research and build a team of professionals, including psychologist, occupational therapist, and speech-language pathologist (SLP). Because Anthony's parents live in a rural area, they have poor access to professionals who specialize in brain injury. His Ambassador completed several training sessions with his rehab team, to formulate a comprehensive plan of care to meet his needs. While initially reluctant to participate in therapy sessions, Anthony is motivated to continue treatment since the goals are focused upon his vocation and life role: culinary skills.

Over the next 2 to 3 months, Anthony works intensively with his rehab team. He completes cognitive behavioral therapy sessions with his psychologist, to increase insight into his cognitive deficits while completing cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) tasks to increase self-awareness of his irritability and impulsivity. He learns to self-monitor and better regulate his emotions in different situations. His occupational therapist completes cooking tasks with Anthony, teaching him strategies to help multi-task and sustain attention for more complicated recipes. His SLP trains Anthony to utilize technology to help him compensate for his forgetfulness and attentional difficulties. They identify apps on his smart phone to help him plan and organize weekly tasks, while setting reminders and alarms to help with initiation and task completion. His SLP also helps to create visual sequencing aids for his favorite recipes, helping him to complete cooking tasks more easily. She also identifies cognitive retraining programs that Anthony can complete daily to target his cognitive skills.

Anthony's Ambassador organizes all recommended strategies and

cognitive exercise program links in his Personal Resource Page, which he is trained to refer to multiple times a day for generalization of strategies. His parents are also able to access the Resource Page, so they are aware of the many strategies that are being targeted in his therapy program.

While Anthony is completing his rehab program, his Ambassador researches Brain Injury Clubhouses, where people living with TBI are treated as members, not as patients, and help to operate the program responsibilities. Although there weren't any local Clubhouse programs, his Ambassador identifies a Clubhouse that offers virtual participation opportunities; Anthony joins the culinary team and helps them with meal planning tasks and gives online guidance as they prepare meals. He also participates in Cognitive Concierge's virtual retreats, where he is engaged in daily cognitive activities and meets others living with brain injuries.

After Anthony has demonstrated marked improvement over 3 to 4 months, he works with his Ambassador to identify several restaurants in town where he could apply for work. They prepare a script he can use to tell his story, to educate his potential employers about his brain injury and his motivation to return to work. After interviewing at 4 restaurants, Anthony is offered a position as a dishwasher at a local café. The restaurant manager indicates that he may be promoted to work as a junior chef if he demonstrates the ability to successfully complete tasks for the dishwasher position. After several months, Anthony is promoted to assist in food preparation. He works with his Ambassador, along with his occupational and speech therapist, to apply the strategies he learned during treatment to his new job.

Over time, Anthony is able to successfully complete his work tasks, to

the point where he begins to offer suggestions for new dishes to the head chef. Anthony develops relationships with his restaurant team and begins to hang out socially outside of work.

Over the next several years, Anthony and his parents continue to meet with his Ambassador, who provides ongoing support and resources for him to more successfully complete work and home responsibilities. They collaborate with his social worker to develop a plan for Anthony to live in a small apartment near his parents, who are thrilled that he has steadily developed the skills needed to once again participate in meaningful work activities and to live independently. They are comforted to know that their Ambassador will continue to journey with them, providing the necessary guidance through the rough times.