

Brainbridge

The Newsletter



Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth in BC

April 2019



Spring is nature's reminder of how beautiful change can be!



Announcement: We Have Two  Coordinators!



Whitney MacRae

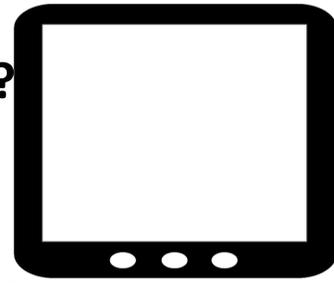
Whitney joined the CBIPCY in mid-September, 2018 as a Coordinator for the program. Whitney recently graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Masters of Social Work in the Fall of 2018. Whitney also has a Bachelor of Neuroscience and a post-graduate diploma in Behavioural Therapy. Prior to her graduate studies, Whitney worked in the field of brain injury rehabilitation for five years in Ottawa, Ontario. She provided in-home service as a behavioural therapist and rehabilitation assistant, worked in the Acquired Brain Injury program - Behavioural Rehabilitative Services at the Ottawa Hospital, and was a case manager at The Robin Easey Centre, a residential community brain injury program through the Ottawa Hospital.



Dana Seidel

Dana Seidel joined the CBIPCY in August, 2018 as a Coordinator for the program. Dana recently graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Masters of Social Work in Fall, 2018. Dana also has a Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Arts majoring in conflict resolution studies and psychology. Prior to her graduate studies, Dana has work experience with children and family services and child protection in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has also worked as a school support counsellor with children in a specialized elementary school setting as well as an addiction support worker in Calgary, Alberta.

What's good to know about screen time and how it affects you and your family?



How much screen time is too much?

Studies have shown that by limiting the amount of time spent in front of a TV, computer, or smartphone, people recovering from brain injuries do so more quickly.

Many experts have recommended no more than 1-2 hours per day of screen time.

Moreover, excessive screen time can exacerbate symptoms of brain injury and lengthen recovery time.

Some General Screen Time Minimizing Tips for you and Your Family:

- Screen time for children younger than 2 years is not recommended.
- For children 2 to 5 years, limit routine or regular screen time to less than 1 hour per day.
- Ensure that sedentary screen time is not a routine part of child care for children younger than 5 years.
- Maintain daily 'screen-free' times, especially for family meals and book-sharing.
- Avoid screens for at least 1 hour before bedtime, given the potential for melatonin-suppressing effects.

Why are we recommended to limit our screen time? Because short-wavelength, high energy blue light scatters more easily than other visible light, it is not as easily focused. When you're looking at computer screens and other digital devices that emit significant amounts of blue light, this unfocused visual "noise" reduces contrast and can contribute to digital eye strain.

Questions to Consider Asking About Your Family's Screen Time:

1. What kind of screens are in your home (e.g., TV, tablet, computer, smartphone)? Which does your child use?
2. Is watching TV or programs/movies on other devices a shared family activity and a common way to relax?
3. How often is a screen on in the background although no one is really watching?
4. Does anyone in the family use screens during mealtimes?
5. What do you watch with your child? What does your child watch alone?
6. Does your child use screens while you do chores around the home? Often? Sometimes?
7. Are there any screen-based activities in your child's day care program? Do you know how much these are used?
8. Does your child use any kind of screen before bedtime? How long before bedtime? Is there a TV or computer in your child's bedroom? Does your child take mobile devices into the bedroom?
9. Does your family have rules or guidelines for screen use that everyone understands and shares?

Let's Talk Alternatives To Screen Time

Puzzles

- ⇒ Benefit memory
- ⇒ Enhances problem solving skills
- ⇒ Promote relaxation



Crafting



- ⇒ encourages creativity
- ⇒ good for fine motor development
- ⇒ gives sense of pride and achievement
- ⇒ enhances mindfulness

Moving Your Body

Exercise is a very positive strategy to promote health. There are many cognitive, physical, mental, and emotional benefits



Listening to Music

- ⇒ Relaxing
- ⇒ Benefits memory
- ⇒ Can improve mood



Colouring

- ⇒ Utilizes areas in the brain involved with focus and concentration,
- ⇒ Overall relaxing activity
- ⇒ Meditative
- ⇒ Stress reduction
- ⇒ Beneficial for adults too!



Reading

- ⇒ Provides cognitive stimulation
- ⇒ Benefits memory
- ⇒ Reading before bed can enhance sleep



Getting outside

- ⇒ A chance to get some sunshine (Vitamin D) and fresh air
- ⇒ Opportunity for exercise (walking) and activities
- ⇒ Being outside can decrease stress and improve mood

Listening to Audiobooks or Podcasts

- ⇒ Promotes learning
- ⇒ Contributes to active listening skills
- ⇒ Provides entertainment without a screen



Cooking and Baking

Involves many cognitive processes:

- ⇒ planning
- ⇒ organizing
- ⇒ preparation
- ⇒ problem solving
- ⇒ multi-tasking
- ⇒ time management



...and you get a healthy meal or treat when finished!

BCCFA Accreditation

The BC Centre for Ability (BCCFA) is surveyed by an accreditation body, CARF International, every three years. We recently went through a survey at the end of November 2018. BCCFA had three surveyors on site at our offices speaking with staff, families and community members. The accreditors are individuals that come with years of experience working with agencies and programs all over North America. Accreditation is a collaborative process, and a good opportunity to ensure that we are delivering services in accordance with internationally-recognized standards.



This accreditation year was a great success for us and the surveyors gave us feedback about what we are doing well as an agency and how we might improve in the ways that we deliver services. We are always interested in our families thoughts on this area and this is one of the reasons why we always ask for evaluations after groups, workshops and events. If you ever want to share feedback with our Program staff, we would love to hear it! Thank-you to those who have filled out evaluations and provided feedback over the past three years, it all went to good use with CARF!



We would like to say a big 'thank-you' to all of the families of the CBIPCY for their feedback. The evaluations you have filled out, questions you have answered and feedback that you provided help us a great deal during the accreditation process.

With Tax Season approaching, what's important to know about the Disability Tax Credit?

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) is a non-refundable, Federal Government tax credit that helps a parent/caregiver of a person with disabilities reduce the amount of income tax they may have to pay. An individual may claim the disability amount once they have applied for and been accepted for the DTC. This amount includes a supplement for persons less than 18 years of age at the end of the year.

The purpose of the DTC is to provide for greater tax equity by allowing some relief for disability costs, since these are unavoidable additional expenses that other taxpayers don't have to face.

Being eligible for the DTC can open the door to other federal, provincial, or territorial programs such as the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) and the Child Disability Benefit (CDB). For more information please visit: www.cic.gc.ca/revenue-agency or call one of our coordinators.





What to Watch

The Crash Reel (2013)

The Crash Reel (2013) is a documentary that follows a Snowboarder, Kevin Pearce, after he suffers a traumatic brain injury while training for the 2010 Winter Olympics. The film shows Kevin as he works through rehabilitation and begins his journey of recovery. A unique and important aspect of the story is the involvement of Kevin's family and friends and shows their experience as well as his own.



What to Read

<http://www.loveyourbrain.com/>

From the creators of the The Crash Reel, the LoveYourBrain website aims to have positive approach to brain injury prevention and healing. The programs and features of the site have been created to build community, foster resilience, and help people understand the importance of caring for their brains. The website offers videos, educational resources, strategies for meditations and yoga aimed for brain health, among other programs and helpful information.



What to Access

Disability Tax Credit Resources and Supports

For information on The Disability Tax Credit (DTC), please see the previous page. There are numerous online resources that can be helpful in determining your eligibility for DTC and how to apply. Several are listed below:

Plan Institute: <http://planinstitute.ca/resources/access-rdsp/>

The Disability Alliance: <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/help-with-the-rdsp-and-dtc/>

Brainstreams: <http://www.brainstreams.ca/resources/national-resources/disability-tax-credit-canada-revenue-agency/>

Inspire Me - The following inspirational story about Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth service recipient, Tyler, was graciously submitted by his mother, Pamela.

Our story has a happy outcome, and we are so blessed. My son, Tyler, was on the receiving end of a terrible tackle that resulted in, among a myriad of other things, a TBI and 2 ensuing craniotomies. He would be writing this himself (he is sooooo grateful for all the care and support he received) except that he is ridiculously over scheduled, maintaining top grades in his second year at Queens, volunteering with several groups, working part time and squeezing in time with his girlfriend and buddies as well. Blessed indeed.

It might be tempting to try to forget the traumatic 1.5 years we spent not that long ago yet another lifetime ago, except that I don't want to forget it. We all (mom, dad, injured son and younger brother) learned so much about life, each other, our selves. I am so incredibly proud of us, how we each found strength, courage, determination, selflessness, patience that we never realized we had. Of course it goes without saying that we couldn't have done it without the support of countless friends, family and incredible health care providers along the way, particularly the Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth who gave us the road map to recovery and did all the organizing and arranging of specialists and appointments. But I digress ...

Two craniotomies (118 stitches and a whopper scar that Tyler is very proud of), seizures, severe visual disturbances, crippling headaches, speech problems, light and sound sensitivities, balance problems, prescription drug withdrawals and accompanying anxiety, a blisteringly bad case of OCD, sleep issues ... our new normal for a year and a half. I think that we had over 10 specialists (and accompanying appointments) to keep track of at one point (thank GOODNESS for the Community Brain Injury Program!). I was very fortunate to be granted a one year leave from work so we could focus completely on what Tyler needed for his recovery. Back to school - not as fabulous as we hoped it would be because Tyler had to come to terms with redefining himself (no longer the athlete at the top of his game), and face the possibility that his cognitive abilities/intellect may have been compromised. He felt adrift socially, no sense of belonging any more. Friends had formed groups he was no longer a part of as they had been sharing experiences for the year he was 'out'. He couldn't really safely participate in many of the things his peers were doing. No late nights out. No loud parties. No alcohol. No impact sports. Constant fear of seizure. What worried him most though, was the possibility that his intellect may have been permanently affected. He determined to prove to himself that he was as able and capable as before. He worked sooooo hard to catch up and be able to graduate with his peers. He hasn't stopped being being overly demanding of himself. I have to constantly remind him to slow down and be good to himself. The most recent round of neuropsychological testing declared him completely recovered. The vestiges of his injury are mild anxiety, fueled by a fear of failure, and a bit of OCD. I am so pleased to report that almost 4 years post injury, there are still incremental improvements in both areas. I'm not sure if that is because his brain/body continues to heal, or if its because he is learning and using more of the coping tools he has been given along the way (hooray for belly breathing, meditating, essential oils, cognitive behavioural therapy ...), but whatever the reason, Yay! I will never stop worrying that he might hit his head - on an open cabinet, getting out of a car (he is 6'2"), walking past a sporting field and an errant ball thwacks him ... you get the picture. But, for the most part I keep these thoughts to myself.

My amazing husband visits the floor where Tyler was at Children's hospital with chocolates for the staff once a year in hopes that one day he will be able to actually speak (he gets too choked up) and tell them thank you. Thank you for choosing to help families through what is undoubtedly the worst times of their lives. Angels all.

Terrible things happen to people. I believe we are defined by what WE DO when those things happen, not by the things themselves. Some may think that it's easy for me to say that as my son has made a complete recovery, but I can tell you that at one point it did not look like that was the case. At one point, before surgery, he couldn't even speak because he was in so much agony. His left eye was pointing side ways. At one point he had a gran mal seizure that turned him blue. At one point we were given a referral to a psychiatrist by our neurologist and told that Tyler would likely have to be medicated for life because of his extreme levels of anxiety and OCD. We chose not to accept that diagnosis. We did our homework. We questioned. We persevered. Tyler's outcome may well have been different, but I know that as a family we are courageous, strong, determined and selfless, because that is how we were in the thick of it, before we knew he would be OK. And that is very empowering.

My deepest and most heart-felt thanks to everyone who helped us through.

Save the Date

- ◆ **BC Centre for Ability – Dining For Dreams Gala** - the BC Centre for Ability is *Celebrating 50 years* on April 25, 2019 at 7:00pm at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. For more information please see our website: <http://bc-cfa.org/news-events/events/>



- ◆ **Vancouver Based Support Groups:** Monthly Brain Injury Support Groups for survivors of brain injuries and caregivers of brain injury survivors are held in various areas around the Vancouver area. For more information visit: <https://vancouverbia.org/services/support-groups/>
- ◆ **Northern BC Based Support Groups:** The Northern Brain Injury Association offers several monthly brain injury support groups throughout northern BC in locations such as Terrace, Kitimat, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek and Quesnel. Prince George also has events and support groups through the Prince George Brain Injury Association.



For more information visit:

The Northern BC Brain Injury Association website : <http://nbia.ca/brain-injury-support-groups/>

The Prince George Brain Injury Association website: <http://pgbig.ca/calendar/>

Recommended Resources

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/blue-light-has-a-dark-side>

<https://opto.ca/health-library/blue-light-is-there-risk-of-harm>

www.cic.gc.ca/revenue-agency

<http://planinstitute.ca/resources/access-rdsp/>

<http://disabilityalliancebc.org/>

<http://www.brainstreams.ca/resources/national-resources/disability-tax-credit-canada-revenue-agency/>

<https://www.screenfreeparenting.com/kids-screens-9-reasonable-screen-rule-alternatives-totally-screen-free/>

We want to hear from you! Your Opinion Matters and Counts. Please participate in our parent survey.

We would like to encourage you to write to us with your inspiring stories and lived experiences. Your story can *INSPIRE* someone like You! And don't forget to share pictures of Beautiful You!!

Contact Us:

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