

Thomas Byrnes - A Balanced Life

I am a spiritually based man, consistently balancing a positive life to accommodate the changes that occurred over nineteen years ago since a severe, closed brain injury.

My recovery is progressing and my position and intentions in life have grown in accordance, based on my personality and disposition before my injury. My transition to a more grounded and reflective self provides me with a compass for my voyage through life, which must embrace vocation and accept change.

Following my injury, I received 12 months of intensive rehabilitation, then returned to college. I completed my BA and returned to Penn State University for graduate work, while being employed part time. At this time I developed strategies to assist me in balancing my life as a student and employee, using progressive muscle relaxation.

I became involved with the Keystone State Head Injury Foundation, serving on their board of directors and speaking at high schools, colleges, hospitals, support groups and other venues in PA and New York. I was the Keystone State Head Injury Foundation "Celebration of The Stars" Honoree in 1992 and received the "Federation Outstanding Achievement Award" from Harmarville Rehabilitation Center (now Harmarville/HealthSouth) in 1994.

I returned to Pittsburgh to attend the police academy in 1996 and in August 1997 I became a Commissioned Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer, for the PA Fish and Boat Commission. Then in January 2002 I traveled to New York, to serve on National Assignment for the American Red Cross during September 11, 2001, relief and recovery.

My passion for the mental health field led me to Duquesne University where I received my M.S. Ed. in Community Counseling in August 2005.

Currently I am employed as a professional therapist and advocate in the mental health field and as a Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer for the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

My leisure activities include church, family, friends, fishing, hunting and exercising. Even with advance scheduling, some days and weeks go by without leisure activities due to the nature of the vocations I have chosen; however, I have decided to keep Sunday as a day of rest for God and family, to the best of my ability.

What means the most to me is providing service to someone who follows through with diligence and reaches their goal. That is a brief but positive feeling.

The main ingredient of keeping a positive outlook is the ability to realize that I have God, faith, family and that not everyone has the same outcome as I did.
