



KEEP GROWING

Jim Knight

WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM A TRAUMATIC ACCIDENT

From the moment that I was lifted into the ambulance, I recognized that I was about to learn a lot. When everything about your life gets disrupted, you can always expect to start learning.

The morning of July 4, I went for an early morning bike ride on my usual loop around my hometown. Just after starting, I hit a slippery patch on the trail, causing my wheels to go out from under me, and I crashed, shattering several bones in my hip and pelvis. I had to have extensive surgery, and I spent three weeks in two different hospitals recovering. In a flash, on that bicycle path, my life was turned upside down.

From the moment that I was lifted into the ambulance, I recognized that I was about to learn a lot. When everything about your life gets disrupted, you can always expect to start learning.

The change I experienced tangibly and quickly taught me the obvious lesson that each day, each experience, each person is precious, and we need to value all of it because everything can change in a moment. But there are a few other lessons I have been taught as I've recovered.

Be patient — progress takes time. For the first eight weeks of my recovery, I saw very little progress. I was discouraged, and I worried that I might never get better. However, as I write this, I am getting ready to walk without crutches, and each day, I am taking tiny steps forward.

Progress, I've learned, especially at the start, can be hard to see. Wise people stop doing things that aren't working, but they also need to guard against recklessly giving up before seeing results. Our obsession with quick fixes can keep us from seeing real fixes.

Disrupt your routines to find new inspiration. Like most people, I have a long list of tasks I need to complete, and each day I put my head down and try to do them all. After my crash, I couldn't do any of my scheduled tasks. Suddenly I had time to think, and that led to an explosion of ideas like I've never experienced before. Sometimes doing nothing might be the best work we can do.

Plan to be inclusive. My injury helped me see how easy it is to unintentionally exclude people we want to include. I often had experiences that were designed for everyone, but which I couldn't enjoy. For example, I read a short column on self-care, and every suggestion involved walking, something that was impossible for me.

As I move forward, I hope that I will think more carefully about how to include everyone. A simple act, such as using a microphone to ensure that everyone hears, can make a huge difference.

Look for beauty. When I got home from the hospital, I decided to fill my days with the music of J.S. Bach, listening to different compositions each day as I went about the dull, slow work of healing. My daily music ritual has done more than distract me — it has fed my soul.

Whether we experience beauty in the still, quiet of the morning, or in Captain America comics, or in the laughter of a 2-year old, beauty breathes life into us. Especially when times are tough, we need to make time for beauty because beauty will get us through.

Remember that people are good. One of the hardest parts of my injury was that I couldn't

Continued on p. 18



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do the tasks I had planned to do. It's hard to give a Zoom workshop when you're in a hospital bed taking painkillers. Within hours, my colleagues selflessly volunteered to do my work, adding more to their plates to take everything off my plate. They told me, "Don't worry, we've got this. Just get better."

Recognizing the fundamental goodness of other people might be my most important lesson. Throughout my injury, family, friends, coworkers, and complete strangers have put down what they are doing to help me do what I need to do. This was important for me to see.

I've seen so much hatred, division,

and fear in our world that I had begun to wonder whether human compassion no longer existed. But since my crash, I have no doubt that people care deeply for each other. Caring is our default mode. That's a lesson I hope I never forget. ■

COACHES CORNER / Sharron Helmke

Continued from p. 15

- my students?
- What aspects of this change, even small ones, are already emergent in my current teaching? What would the next step into this aspect of the work look like?
 - What upcoming learning objectives or standards offer a chance to practice or lean into this work in a way that would benefit learners? Is the coach available to assist in planning this upcoming work, offer classroom support during these early efforts, or reflect on the impact of these changes?
 - What are the early indicators

of success for both change in teaching practice and in student outcomes? The more immediate and accessible these indicators are, the more quickly we can either see progress or adjust our approach.

Additionally, coaches can help build teachers' resilience for change by occasionally helping them look backward to reflect on the changes that have already been mastered and become seamlessly incorporated into current practice. In doing so, we remind them that these changes, now part of current practice, were once also new, unfamiliar, and perhaps even felt a bit out of reach. Each time we step toward change, we build resilience and

confidence to tackle the next change, and the next — because we know they will keep coming. It's the nature of the work.

A coach's task is to facilitate growth, not to eliminate the need for it. Those are two very different tasks, and mistaking the nature of the work will undoubtedly lead to coaches experiencing burnout and teachers missing opportunities for improvement.

REFERENCE

Killion, J. & Harrison, C. (2017). *Taking the lead: New roles for teacher and school-based coaches* (2nd ed.). Learning Forward. ■

EQUITY IN FOCUS / Angela M. Ward

Continued from p. 16

the racial incident to think their actions were harmless.

As we reflected and planned to support all students and shift the culture moving forward, black staff members wondered aloud why I was the only person to show up to support them, noting that a contingency from central administration shows up to their campus when a staff member or student dies or commits suicide.

An additional focus of my work districtwide was to implement antiracist professional learning to all staff. I designed professional learning as an entry point to help staff build capacity to address racist issues and issues involving other social identities using actual scenarios that we were dealing with in our schools.

This process eventually led to a shift. The district has revised its crisis response plan to implement a strategic

response to issues arising from race that includes antiracist professional learning as a proactive strategy. Supporting this process was intense and highly stressful.

As an antiracist leader, I knew that self-care is critical to my ability to find meaningful connection and provide supports to my colleagues. I continue to prioritize self-care and encourage other educators to do the same as we lead in stressful times. ■