



Brainworks®

Teaching Life-Changing Behaviors Since 1981

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We find your pathway to success.

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Lessons Learned in High Stress and Chaos

by **Carla Crutsinger**

The morning of Saturday, December 15, 2007, started out like any average conference day at Brainworks. We were all thinking about the next two weeks being a holiday. I was looking forward to the staff Christmas party at my house the next night. While I was in the middle of the last conference, I got a call from my husband, Gerald, telling me that I should cancel the staff party because he was sick. He described that he was so dizzy that he had to hold the walls to walk, and he couldn't stop vomiting. I also noticed that his speech was slurred as he described his situation.

To make a long story short, what we thought was a sinus or middle ear infection turned out to be stage 4 lung cancer and a malignant brain tumor! My husband of 46 years had never been sick, and now we were having life and death discussions. As I have often shared with my clients and their parents, your brain shuts down when it is overwhelmed. Time stands still. You can't think. You can't process information. Your memory goes blank. You hear pieces of information, not necessarily the whole story. Frankly, I was experiencing the same dilemma. I didn't know if I could stay focused and make decisions.

Ask For Help

I needed to ask for help, a skill most of my clients don't like. I called my three sons and told them the situation, and we made plans for everyone to come home. Gerald needed emergency brain surgery to remove a golf ball size tumor from

the cerebellum, the motor part of the brain controlling movements such as in the legs, fingers, and speech. If he did not survive the brain surgery, we did not need to worry about the cancer in the lung that had gone to the brain.

Untimely Illness

There is an unwritten rule. Do not have an emergency on the weekend, and emergency brain surgery during the Christmas holidays is out of the question. Doctors want time with their families, so they are not available for unscheduled surgeries. Another problem is that hospitals are full at the end of the insurance year. Although the steroids were controlling Gerald's symptoms, that would reverse in 10 days. We were on a count down clock; we needed a room in a hospital that could do brain surgery, and we needed a doctor to do it.

A Vision Unfolds

My mind started thinking of the Christmas story and Mary and Joseph having trouble finding a room at an inn. I visualized Mary in labor and poor Joseph persevering by knocking on doors trying to find a bed for Mary. They were in a crisis too. I wanted a miracle just like they wanted one.

During this frustrating time, I left the hospital about 9 p.m. and crawled into bed about thirty minutes later after being on my knees praying for patience, inner peace, and a miracle. Suddenly about one o'clock, I woke up from a dream or a vision. I had heard a voice telling me. "Wake up and write this down." I actually had a pen and a pad of paper by my bed. The following was what I wrote:



Carla Crutsinger
Founder of Brainworks

1. Gerald will survive the brain surgery with only slight side effects.
2. This crisis will cause Brainworks to expand to new horizons.
3. You will have some rocky times ahead, but I have a master plan for your life. You will not be alone during this period of adversity.
4. Remember that God is in charge of the timetable for when someone dies, not a probability chart.
5. I will send people to help you during this transition time in your life.
6. Train Becky French to direct Brainworks in your absence.
7. "Turn off the light and go to sleep."



Surviving in Spite of the Odds

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I turned off my light and went to sleep. The immediate miracle was that I had the most restful sleep I had had in 30 years! I was not worried that Gerald would survive the surgery.

After seven days of waiting, we got into Medical City Hospital. We had three days before the symptoms would return. Now we were told there were only four doctors that might do brain surgery during the next few days. Would the dots connect in time?

A few hours later we are told there was a doctor that might take the case who was doing surgery at 8 p.m. that night. He would drop by before his surgery. By this time, it was December 21. Soon a doctor in scrubs walked in and said, "Show me his pictures." (We had no pictures; we only had the CD's of the brain MRI and the PET scan of the upper body.) He said, "Forget it. I can't determine if I can do the surgery tonight without pictures. I don't have time to download the information onto a computer."

Technology Miracle

Another miracle unfolds. Sam, my ADHD computer geek son, had just figured out how to download the pictures on his computer five minutes before the doctor arrived. He tells the doctor to look at his computer to see if this is what he needs to see. The doctor says, "Yep. This is it." He clicked through the brain MRI, and said he could do the surgery based on four factors within the next two days.

1. His heart beat had to become regular within the next two days. (Gerald had had an irregular heart beat for several years.)
2. He had to go off blood thinner medication he was taking for a blood clot in the foot five years earlier. (It usually takes longer than two days to get a 1.0 number.)
3. He had to have a special computer guidance system. (Don't expect that to happen since most people are closed for the holidays.)

4. He had to have the first surgery of the day. (Who knows the odds of this one?)

His parting words were, "If all these things happen, I'll see you at 7:00 a.m. on December 24, Christmas Eve."

I asked, "By the way, what is your name?"

He told us and off he went. As far as we knew he could have been an actor in a lab coat! But this man was going to do the surgery. At this point, I remembered my vision. "Gerald will survive the surgery." No one knew about the vision but me. Mentally I said, "Let's assume everything will work out as predicted."

Keep in mind, we had not been told that he was actually going to have the surgery because of all the factors involved, but shortly after his evening meal on the second day, the nurse came in to announce he was not to eat anything after 12 midnight because all his numbers were perfect! He was scheduled for 7 a.m. surgery.

My thoughts went back to Mary and Joseph and the Christmas story. I thought how nice it was that Mary and Joseph had a star to announce Jesus' birth. I prayed for a sign that Gerald would be at peace that night, and we would both get a good night's sleep. Suddenly, a full moon started coming up in the sky. I didn't get a star as a sign, but I got the brightest moon you can imagine all night long. Once again I slept like a baby. I was at peace because I knew there was a higher power present.

Successful surgery

When the doctor came out following the surgery, he said that he did fine in the surgery, but he was concerned about the fact that a 50 year smoker usually had a smoker's cough. If he coughed in the



Sam Crutsinger, Carla's ADHD computer geek son, is videotaping Shelly Varghese teaching a sample lesson.

next 48 hours, he would destroy the internal stitches and bleed out in the brain. He didn't cough, and furthermore, he suddenly did not crave cigarettes!

Now that the emergency brain surgery was out of the way, we could address the cancer. Remember the vision, the part about prediction charts? Well, lung cancer is the world's top cancer killer. It is rather traumatizing when you hear a doctor say that you have a 30% chance of living one year, 15% chance for 2 years, and 2% chance of surviving 5 years. It is easy to understand why someone could hear those numbers and become permanently depressed. I was comforted by the fact that we were not locked into those numbers. There was a higher power involved here. Your time is up only when He says so.

Close Call

Following 15 radiation treatments to the brain tumor sight, Gerald couldn't get his 6 feet 4 inch body to stand up out of his Lazy Boy chair to go to the bathroom during the Super Bowl game. During the struggle of at least one hour, we later discovered he fractured his back in several places, and in the emergency room, we discovered he had had a pulmonary emboli or blood clots to the lungs, which cut off oxygen to the brain.



Gerald's Cognitive Recovery Plan a Success

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Being on blood thinners too soon after brain surgery can cause you to bleed out in the brain, but blood clots to the lungs can also kill you too. Gerald has very little memory of the eleven days he was in the hospital. This patent, trademark, and copyright attorney with a mechanical engineering degree was basically in a mental fog. His brain could not process information. I could see him shutting down in front of me. He was becoming depressed and losing touch with reality.

New Horizons for the Brainworks System

Do you remember that prediction that this crisis will cause Brainworks to expand to new horizons? I began to wonder if the prediction meant that the Brainworks system could bring back the cognitive skills that Gerald had just lost. I was certain that I was going to try. Having worked with depressed students and clients recovering from closed head injuries at Brainworks, I set out on a plan to retrain the brain to process information with accuracy and speed.

However, before we left the hospital, I got doctor's orders for home therapy in speech therapy, occupational therapy to work on fine motor skills, and physical therapy to work on strengthening exercises. From February 14 to July 9, he had to finish chemotherapy treatments and 39 radiation treatments to the lung.

On April 2, 2008, Gerald started at Brainworks on a cognitive recovery plan. The assessment we give has 26 sections. He was below the 6th percentile level on 16 of the 26 sections mainly because his speed of processing was so slow he could not finish the task in the allotted time. In fact, 27% of his scores were in the second grade range.

However, Gerald had one gifted area. The area of creativity had survived the pulmonary embolism. That was the tip of his iceberg. His math skills went from the 32nd percentile range to the 99th percentile range in only 57 hours of instruction. That was a 209% improvement! After 109 hours of training, his current scores indicate he only has 2 of 26 below the 6th percentile and 10 of 26 in the high aver-

age or better range. His intellect was returning!

Never did I dream when I founded Brainworks in 1981 after trying to find a way to help my gifted ADHD son that I would find the Brainworks system being used in such a dramatic fashion with another member of my family.

As we start a new year in 2009, we have much for which to be grateful. Gerald is still recovering from the radiation to the lungs, which means he is on oxygen 24/7. He drives to his outpatient therapy and Brainworks two days a week. We have gone on short trips. What about his cancer? One doctor told us he had a 10% chance he was cured. My reply to that was the Christian church has survived for thousands of years on a 10% tithe system. I'll take those odds!

Licensing: An Opportunity to Train Others

I think I have finally learned what patience means. It means to stand fast under pressure, with a staying power that turns adversity into opportunities. I now feel morally obligated to share this Brainworks system with others. I want to train people who have a passion to change lives, to turn adversity into success. That is why I have decided to license others to use the Brainworks system that has been so successful for my family and thousands of Brainworks clients over the past 28 years.



Gerald, two days after brain surgery, and son, Howard, grandsons, Benjamin (6 months) and Cooper (2 years), and daughter-in-law, Laura.

FEAR

*To be paralyzed by fear
is an indication that
you question God's
ability to take care of
you.*

What Makes Brainworks Unique?

Not "just another test"...

Mention the word "test" and many get overwhelmed with a sense of dread. Why? Past tests have emphasized weaknesses, failures or at least a lack of preparation.

Imagine a test where your weaknesses are identified, but more importantly, *your strengths are emphasized.*

A recent adult client, who had been labeled "learning disabled" in math during her elementary school years, tested gifted in logic, abstract reasoning, and verbal skills. In fact, the career choice portion of the test actually recommended "engineer" as a possible choice!

Although she had exceptional strength in six areas of advanced science and math skills, she had never mastered the foundational skills required to meet her potential. Now, armed with this new knowledge of her strengths, she was able to attack her weaknesses with enthusiasm.

Not "one size fits all"...

Even when weaknesses - and more importantly strengths - are properly identified, most of the time a student is placed into an "assembly-line" learning system. All of us - and our learning styles - are as unique as our individual fingerprints. Since 1981, no two Brainworks students have ever had the same identical lesson plan.

Not "another brick in the wall"...

"Another Brick In The Wall," the Pink Floyd classic was actually written as a protest song against the "one size fits all" British school system. "*All in all you're just another brick in the wall.*" With our maximum of one to one client/instructor ratio, no one at Brainworks is "just another brick in the wall."

Not "boring"...

Harvard did a study, which shows that the time for maximum learning is approximately fifteen minutes. At Brainworks

our clients are rotated each fifteen minutes from one challenging and stimulating exercise to the next. It is gratifying to watch clients who metaphorically left claw marks on the sidewalk as their parents dragged them to their first lesson, later admonish their parents to hurry so they will not be late to Brainworks!

Not "divide and conquer"...

Teamwork is a fundamental key to success. It is imperative that the primary influencers in the client's life are identified and *work together* for the success of the client. For this reason, Brainworks facilitates communication between:

- **The Parents** – Many times we've found the frustration parents face has resulted in entrenched and sometimes opposite positions. It is imperative that parents present a unified front to their child in this process.
- **Parents and Children** – A parent's shattered expectations and the resulting impact on the child can result in both parties talking "at" each other, rather than "to" each other. Frank, open dialogue with clearly identified expectations accelerates the success of the child - and dramatically reduces the stress for parents.
- **The School and Parents** – With clear and consistent communication, Brainworks can bridge the frustration gap between the school and parents whose child is not an exact fit for the assembly line system.
- **The Doctor and Parents** – With so many of our clients on medication, it is imperative that a child's parents and the prescribing doctor receive direct feedback on how the dosage is impacting performance.

- **Teachers and Student Instructors** – At the end of each session, the multiple student instructors share insights and information on each client with each other and the Brainworks teachers. This information exchange is invaluable in maximizing the client's learning experience.

Not "just academics"...

Our clients and their challenges are more than just a grade on a math or reading test. A focus on just academics without addressing underlying or concurrent issues such as ADHD, social skills, study skills, organizational skills, time management, and self-confidence always produces less than optimal results. *We are concerned about the whole child.*

Not "a guess at success"...

Performance should not be subjective. Frequent monitoring during the process allows for course refinement and maximization. Post-testing clearly identifies progress.

Not "a band-aid on a heart problem"...

Tutoring has its role, but it does not result in life-changing behaviors. We teach life-changing behaviors. This is not a marketing slogan for us - it is what we do. Our goal is to identify the problems, create a customized solution for the problems, and fix the problems.

We want to see our clients at their high school and college graduations. We want to see them in their new jobs or the businesses they started. We want to see them teaching school. We want to see them living fulfilled and successful lives.

We love our clients, but we don't expect to see them back except for a friendly visit!

ATTENTION:

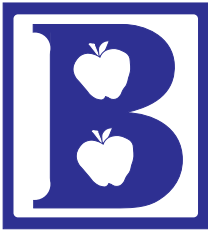
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February 17, 2009	March 10, 2009	April 14, 2009
Medication: Start Low, Go Slow	“The Apple Doesn’t Fall Far From The Tree”	Freaked Out about Middle School? You Can Survive!
Michael Kramer, M.D. Stuart Robinson, Ph.D.	Carla Crutsinger, M.S.	Becky French, M.E.
Based on metabolism, medications need to be adjusted to the individual.	ADD/ADHD parents face special challenges when raising children.	What strategies make a good transition to Middle School?



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Current SOI (Structure of Intellect) scores must be on file.