



# HEADSTRONG

Hamilton Brain Injury Association  
[www.hbia.ca](http://www.hbia.ca)      [info@hbia.ca](mailto:info@hbia.ca)

@TheHBIA

## CASS'S CORNER



**We Are Family** (or have I said that, before . . .?)

### **Photographs and Memories**

As per usual, I find myself confounded when deciding what to write on, for the Hamilton Brain Injury Association.

"Suppose I ought to include ABI, or the head injuries we are all familiar with, to whichever extent."

"It would be nice to write about something beautiful . . ." I continue, in my head.

I don't know, though; my mind strays so easily, these days . . .

Brain injury is a leading cause of disability in both children and adults. Every brain injury is different. We may suffer symptoms and problems, difficulties and challenges that can be very similar yet at the same time incredibly different from those of another individual. The unavoidable and, so often, regretful consequences of a brain injury will affect you and your relationships. The injury can affect what you are able to expect of yourself as well as what you may be able to do.

My apologies, dear readers. That interjection just planted itself in my head and almost upon my tongue, as the pen coursed onward.

I do not know, however, whether that is a blessing or a curse.

My head and mind are always incredibly full . . . of everything! Overflowing. The wandering mind can be a beautiful and treasured thing.

Facts and figures. Values and regrets. Experiences I have had (endured?), as well as things I may never experience.

It all comes around, however, eventually. I am able to centre my mind and experience on things that have true value.

Up and to my right, upon the wall beside my computer stand is a calendar that was given to me, last holiday season.

On it are pictures, photographs, of me, as a young child, on the two panels on the left side. On the other are identical shots of my two boys, in similar poses to the ones I was 'caught by Kodak,' in.

I sit, as a young boy of perhaps three or four years, upon a desert rock, in the desert that Phoenix, Arizona, is nestled within. Adjacent to that photo is one, on the right side of the calendar page, of Keaton, the elder of my boys. My 'Sonephews,' I refer to them as, within group and in my own head and consciousness.

It is not conceit or arrogance in my head, but MAN, that boy is cute! "He almost looks just like me!"

Beneath those two photos are two additional ones. In the picture on the left, I am shown, being tossed into the air, by my father, whilst enjoying my aunt and uncle's swimming pool, in Shreveport, Louisiana. Opposite that photo is a similar shot. In this one, my younger sonephew, Cooper, is being tossed into the air by my dear sister, Melissa.

Again, I cannot help myself; I cannot fail to say, 'How frickin' CUTE is that young boy. . .?!' And he even has my name as his middle name, Cooper Cass does . . .

No, the boys do not live with me. How can I not love them so, however, and be fortunate enough to KNOW that they are being raised in an admirable manner, by my sister and her lovely wife, Jami? Family is family.

Any time I want or need to be reminded of this, I simply turn my gaze a tad to the right, as I sit in my computer chair. There they are. Right against the wall. Family is family . . .

I can easily draw a parallel to that statement, by making an observation about our weekly group meetings, with the Hamilton Brain Injury Association. Yes, we all have something dear and intimate in common, in that we have all endured 'the similar, yet different traumas' we have each endured, to our heads and brains, within.

No, perhaps we are not all at the clubhouse, for each meeting; there are four regular meetings per week, after all. Mondays and Thursdays we enjoy our meeting, from 10:30 until noon, or so, as we share the weekly happenings. What has happened with us, as individuals, over the course of the week . . . We share, we enjoy one another's recount of their individual experiences, during each gathering. On Tuesdays, we enjoy coming together at the clubhouse, to sing, for a couple of hours. That is our 'Glee' group, our 'Greeting.' Later on Wednesday afternoon, we try to have another gathering, as well, though there are generally fewer of us in attendance.

Everybody's experience is equally important and valuable, to each one of us. Remember, 'we are family.'

I did not realize I would find myself 'talking about the 'f' word' in this piece. There it is, though. "Family."

Family, see, has a lasting value, for each of us. We may be fortunate enough to continue enjoying the family that we each grew up with, be that Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, siblings and even pets. Life is bountiful for so many and I have to imagine that we all count ourselves fortunate, to enjoy any family that we are able to maintain contact with.

It is nice to be able to enjoy things like this in multiples, isn't it? Even if we are not necessarily able to enjoy the family we grew up and went to school with . . . we still have our family in Hamilton. The HBIA family. We all have something beautiful in common that we can share with one another and celebrate. . .