

In My Own Words: Living with Traumatic Brain Injury

Ted Goodrich

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Anyone who knows a thing or two about never giving up when life takes an unexpected turn will appreciate Goodrich's inspirational story.

Ted Goodrich's memoir *In My Own Words* is the heartbreaking but inspiring story of how traumatic brain injury took the author's life on an unexpected path.

Baseball, a recurring theme in the book, was a major fixture in Goodrich's life. He was a high school baseball star and was set to play the sport in college, but an event that's not explained in the book took him in a different direction. By age twenty-two, he had a promising career in insurance sales. But over Labor Day weekend in 1990, everything changed. After playing a friendly softball game with some friends, Goodrich fell down the stairs outside his apartment and fractured his skull.

Goodrich's rocky road to recovery was miraculous. He died four times in the ambulance, and doctors said he would either be in a coma forever or have significant brain damage. While he was unconscious, his mother approved a risky surgery to remove part of his skull; this left him with post-traumatic amnesia and years of therapy ahead of him. He was later able to return to his job and eventually married and had children, while dealing with many other tragic life events.

Interviews with friends, family and doctors help relate Goodrich's full story, because he doesn't remember much of what happened. This could be why the tone of some parts of *In My Own Words* lacks emotion. The story, which has all the makings of a Hollywood tearjerker, is also quite wordy, using language that is somewhat sterile and perhaps too matter-of-fact. An entire chapter is devoted to explaining his condition in scientific detail.

In My Own Words features bursts of emotion that bring the book to life, particularly when Goodrich writes about his mother, daughters, and the support that he received from family and friends during his recovery. The parts of the book focusing on Goodrich's efforts to regain his cognitive abilities and recover memories would benefit from much more detail and emotional description. The recovery could have even more emotional punch if the lengthy portions describing his insurance career had been condensed. Some events seem incomplete and leave many unanswered questions—for example, the unexpected family road trip from Wisconsin to South Carolina, where his wife gave birth to one of their daughters.

Besides baseball, *In My Own Words* features religious undertones and numerous other themes, including goal-setting, mentoring, persistence, and keeping the faith. Anyone who knows a thing or two about never giving up when life takes an unexpected turn will appreciate Goodrich's inspirational story.

ERICA SWEENEY (November 28, 2016)

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