



## *Finding the Words*

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### Gary's poems:

Brain dead, fecking dead  
Not brain injured  
Need explained how to close an envelope  
Jeepers I get annoyed,  
You can't say anything.  
Just sit in silence,  
Let the dark clouds form  
Then slide into them in silence

You can't do right for doing wrong,  
Your thinking is always wrong,  
The more you think the more you're wrong  
You...that's me, I'm a fool, cos being changed,  
That's my fault.

I don't protest,  
I just detest what I've become.  
A fool, ideas, thinking clouded.  
Still paying the price.  
Thinking of others.  
Just by living, others benefit.  
When do I let go?

The clouds are low,  
The water is calm.  
Under the surface, turmoil is on the up.  
The brave face is on.  
The make-up is cracking.  
I'm tired, tired of repairing what can't be fixed.  
Tired of covering the cracks.

Journey's end nearly there.  
Where it ends nobody knows.  
How it ends, I don't care  
The route's not one I chose.  
It's not what I can change.  
What happens when you stop stepping out.  
If I don't care, why should others?  
Why should I worry more?

I'm not dead, I am alive  
My thoughts are mine, are not wanted  
My opinion isn't sought, so no longer given  
My brain ain't dead  
My brain was injured  
Amazing, I'm just changed

My poetry group is very good  
All on a journey don't know where  
We share, we grow  
We all have been changed  
The poetry group brings a smile on my face

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## Martin's poems:

### **Fuck it!!! The tale of 3 fucks**

Fell down the stairs and busted my head, woke up again in a hospital bed.  
Family and friends worried and stressed. Ah fuck it I can't even get myself dressed.  
Lying awake and feeling like shit. Why can't I just have a titter of wit.  
Mad to get home, away from this strife but anxious and scared of this my new life.  
Back home and settled it's time to begin. This battle within I'm determined to win.  
Sitting about day in and day out, will I ever be strong or what's going on?  
Sometimes I just want left on my own. Recovery is hard but I'm not alone.  
Get up in the morning on the sofa I sit, watching tv that's so full of shit  
Snacking and smoking each hour of the day, wondering is it always going to be this way?  
Fuck it, I tell myself this battle I'll win, I'm determined to get shot of all these chins  
Some days I feel in a much lower mood but fuck it I tell myself today will be good.

### **Midget Gems and Coke**

Fell down the stairs and busted my head, woke up again in a hospital bed  
Tired and frustrated, fed up to be there, but knowing I'm getting the upmost of my care  
Procedures and bed baths, continually woke when all that I wanted was sweeties and coke  
The day then arrives when they say "you can go" but the fear still kicks in as I travel back home  
Exhausted, frustrated but glad to be home as the days carry on more afraid of the unknown  
Now weak and helpless, this just isn't me. I wish sometimes everyone would just leave me be  
Ups and downs. Bad days and good. But the thoughts of my progress has strengthened my mood  
Appointments ongoing, each one a bright light, time still marches on, but I'm winning this fight  
Wanting to run but still needing to crawl. Seeking the finish line as an end to it all  
Still mourning the person that I used to be but falling in love again with this new me

# Sarah's poems:

## **Identity theft**

I feel I've been a victim of identity theft which has me feeling up the left!  
My usual personality has disappeared and where it's gone is very unclear!  
Caution replaced spontaneity and exhaustion replaced living life freely  
Everyone says I'm doing great so why do I feel such a fake?  
Trying to regain my usual roles but why is everything so very slow?  
If anyone finds my identity please return it at once, yours gratefully.

## **From Sarah with love**

The start of the journey is full of fear and unknown but please know you are not alone  
Lots of twists and turns and many dead ends but please don't despair there is an end  
You feel like a passenger in your own life story but please don't hurry this is your recovery  
You'll start to recognise the route on the way and signposts in the distance will guide your way  
The last few miles can feel like forever but it's ok we will walk it together.

## **Life is not a bed of Roses**

As I appreciate the beauty of the roses in full bloom I know that they will be gone all too soon  
Petal by petal they'll lose their purpose and become almost invisible on the surface  
But their roots are strong and with some time, love and care they will return  
Stronger and more colourful than before standing proud now after what they endured.

## **Navigator**

Trying to navigate my way through life sometimes feels like a whole lot of strife  
Often things don't go as expected and it leaves me feeling quite dejected  
The difficult days will hopefully fade and I'll step out of this imposed shade  
I'm just trying to tread my own path and on the way have a few laughs!

## **Cake**

I have many emotional states as I eat a pile of cake!  
I'll have to walk a few more yards to burn off all these extra carbs!

## **Forever grateful**

Forever grateful to my  
Family and friends  
They gave me the strength to mend

# Anne's poem:

## **My Journey - Ode to Brain Injury Service**

What an eventful year 2023 has been  
Seizure, CT scan, brain aneurysm seen  
Blue lighted to neurosurgical unit, stent and coiling for me  
Also diagnosed with a spinal fracture or maybe there were three!

Home with a cocktail of drugs, with side effects to endure  
Lethargy, headaches, communication issues for sure  
No driving, unsteadiness on my feet, but at least I'm on the move  
Referral made to Brain Injury Team, maybe they can help me improve.

3 months later, social worker and occupational therapist I see  
But why do they keep talking about brain injury, that's not me!  
The more we discuss my list of symptoms, I sadly realise  
That surgery to the brain means brain injury, much to my surprise.

The next step is a home visit from Fiona, the OT  
Lots of practical advice, compassion and empathy  
Hats and ear plugs for sensory issues, so a shopping trip ensues  
Lethargy requires a lie down, not caffeine, who knew!!

Communication difficulties are next to be addressed  
Input from Jacqueline, SLT, she really is the best  
She clarifies and we agree some goals, as I try to accept the new norm  
She excelled in marriage counselling, and this improved my form.

Various groups were suggested but I was sceptical at the start  
The recovery support group and lethargy group had good info to impart.  
But when the poetry group was mentioned, I almost opted out  
However, this new venture was worth it, of that I have no doubt.  
I am really not poetic, but how I love to read the Psalms  
They help me with my emotions and provide a sense of calm.  
Shelley led our group with some poems, which helped us write and talk  
We listened to each other, different stories but a common walk.

So, as I finish my reflections, I am filled with gratitude  
To God who answered many prayers and developed my positive attitude.  
I count my blessings on a daily basis, as I have come a long way  
And know that with God's help, my anxieties will be kept at bay.

# Group's poems:

## **Blessing Poem**

May you know you're not on your own,  
That we have walked this journey to recovery as well.

May you see this as a blessing,  
And become stronger than you ever were

May you always have cake and sweets.  
May you enjoy experimenting with cookies

May you rest in God's peace.  
May you find happiness soon, peace and comfort.

May you achieve all your goals soon.  
May you never lose hope.

May you all realise you're special,  
Realise you're unique.

May you all share in the beauty of your change.  
You're a new person, unique and a survivor.

## **Go and Open the Door**

Who's there? What's there?  
Do I need to step outside?  
Should I close the door quickly?  
Will I get another chance to open the door?  
Will the door open easily? or will I struggle with it?  
Am I inside or outside?

Go and open the door –  
Step into the unknown.

Go and open the door  
Fresh air  
People  
Life  
No fear  
Awareness  
Challenge  
Hopefully no rain  
Pathway to other things  
Beauty – flowers  
Existence

Go and open the door  
the adventure begins  
or maybe it doesn't.  
Go and open the door  
Or you really never will know.  
Just go and open the door.

Go and open the door.  
Maybe there's a friend waiting to see you.

Go and open the door  
And see what God has planned for you.  
Be courageous and take the next step.  
There's beauty in your future,  
Trust and see.

Go and open the door  
The whole world is waiting for you  
The possibilities are endless  
You can and will achieve anything you put your mind to.

### **The Journey (read by Sarah)**

What we bring along –  
Hope  
Taking time to rest  
Patience  
Confidence  
Flexibility  
Our mindset – slowing down, taking time to notice and enjoy things

What we do on the journey –  
Listening to music  
Watching films  
Reading books  
Cleaning – "tidy house, tidy mind"  
Having a coffee  
Swimming in the sea  
Cooking and making things from scratch  
General sports and moving my body  
Just getting outside.

What we have learnt from this journey/ experience –  
A new perspective on things  
From the window, we see people rushing and being so busy,  
But this experience has helped us to be calmer,  
To be more present,  
To notice and appreciate things.

What we appreciate –  
Seeing flowers  
Hearing and watching the birds  
Listening to the sound of water  
Being in awe of nature  
Being amazed at how it knows what it's doing  
Noticing clouds  
Being with pets and other animals –  
They just know to sit with us and when we need comforted  
Quality time with people I love,  
taking time for a chat,  
being with my children,  
dancing with them and hearing them laugh.

What we know -  
Listen to your body  
It's a slow journey; the destination is the 'new you.'

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## Aideen's poems:

### **What's all this?**

My head is going to explode, I said  
Lying on the floor they thought I was dead

Waking up from my slump, wondering what was the fuss  
Looking at their faces; something was suss

The scans say I've got a very large tumour  
The only way I'd cope was with some humour

My life as I knew it ceased to exist,  
Everything changed; I couldn't resist

Emotions, creativity and mood all removed  
Will they come back is still to be proved

All the noise, bright lights I never noticed before  
Take me back to my sanctuary, to the calm, to restore

### **A thought before surgery**

I've nothing to give away in my Will  
But they'll need my passwords to pay the bills!



## **It's all linear (sort of)**

Rest and reset and try again  
Move forward a bit and try to retrain  
It works for a while and then I get drained  
But it's OK, just ...  
Rest and reset and try again.

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## **Mark's poems:**

### **Tinnitus: the Sound of Inner Conflict**

It all started with a buzz in my left ear, then came 7yrs of torture and fear  
  
One minute living the dream then goodbye confidence, hello low self esteem  
  
The noise never stops, a constant screeching, so intense, leaves me helpless with no defence  
  
No-one can hear or feel the pain, it's a mental battle that leaves the best of us completely drained.  
  
I used alcohol to take away the pain and to help me sleep, unfortunately it left me broken and weak  
  
I went to Leeds and had gamma knife radiation, came home optimistic but with lots more medication  
  
But nothing seemed to work and the noise got louder .....

I numbed myself until I could feel nothing at all,  
My health suffered and I could no longer pretend and stand tall  
  
I lost my best friend along the way but I've accepted it now and no longer let it sadden my day  
  
I had surgery in the Royal Hospital ward 4F  
My tumour's now gone but I've facial palsy and I'm permanently deaf  
  
My mental health has been challenged beyond belief  
I still cry sometimes and beg for relief  
  
Communication and fatigue are now a real issue  
My eye won't close and I always need a tissue  
  
But all is not doom and gloom.....

I began to read up on my condition  
Experiment with natural highs and focus on my nutrition  
  
The best thing for my mental pain was to hit the gym and train  
It's my place of sanctuary but I avoided in January.

Nature walks and the occasional cold water swim helped me feel better and my outlook began to not look so grim

My parents, wife and daughter continue to help me navigate through unknown water

The brain injury team have also been great,  
Offering so much kindness and support and introducing me to others who could relate

I still find it hard to communicate but my journey isn't over and I'm prepared to work hard and continue to wait

I started a journey using meditation and prayer,  
Before soon I had many tools helping me repair

I've learnt about patience and compassion although I'm not sure if my glare free shades were ever in fashion

I've lost some weight and my health is back under control  
I'm determined to get better, mind body and soul

I'm not walking with a stick and the days are getting longer,  
I'm so happy now I'm finally getting stronger

Some days are still very hard but now I journal and plan and I honestly think it's helping me become a better man

All the work on myself and self-reflection has helped me more than any medication or injection

I've turned to God and offered repentance but I still haven't fully come to terms with this word acceptance

Be kind to yourself, growth and repair takes time, never give up  
This journey is one hell of a climb.

## **Train Journey - Destination New Me**

Screeching and scrapping noise -kids scraping nails on a blackboard - represents noise in my ear

The unknown - big road sign with red x black circle (next turn to unknown)

Rubbish - old medicine boxes and empty tablet packaging needles band aids etc

Tombstones - lost my best friend just before surgery /grieving old me also

People smiling and dancing, shopping, fine dining, planes taking them on holidays, busy bars and restaurants and offices - Everyone moving forward and having fun, progressing

Tumbleweeds - Time standing still  
Nothing, lonely, sadness

Scorpions with x friends heads on them, enemies - people who have hurt me along the way, friends?  
Were they ever real friends?

Cactus - forbidden fruits, alcohol etc

Scorching sunshine but too hot to enjoy

Derelict houses / villages where once there was life and parties and fun

Tunnel - light at end

Wife, daughter happy and safe and clapping on platform  
Family close friends welcoming me at station with open arms

Sky opening up. Beautiful fluffy clouds. God / best friend smiling with his mum at peace

Flowers and new buildings - What represents new opportunity, beginnings, hope

Nature, birds, waterfalls. Water, mountains, beautiful scenery, vibrant colours, greens, blues, browns

New avatar body to climb into new ear, liver, heart, head, new me

Peace /Silence

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## Brenda's poem (read by Jeff):

### **Carers**

Kaylee you must be the worst carer by far  
Because every day coming up here in the car  
A plan about pulling out Brenda's hair, in the car

Kaylee she calls me Johnny Joe Magee  
"Because she sounds like a farmer", says she

## Jeff's poem:

### Time

Have you ever watched a mountain grow or a beach erode?  
No, we don't have enough time.

Have you ever watched clouds form or the tide go out?  
No, we don't have time.

Have you ever watched a bud burst or leaf unfold?  
Have you ever watched a massacre form or a snowflake melt?  
No, we don't make time.

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## Natasha's poems:

### The Journey to my Destination

Life has thrown me an unexpected curve ball,  
But it will not break me, I will not fall.  
In a moment of reflection, which isn't rare,  
I think to myself, this destination,  
how am I going to get there?  
Some days I feel like tearing out my hair,  
While others are like a breath of fresh air.  
As I travel along this rocky road,  
I feel like my life has been forcibly slowed.  
One step forward but fall back five more!  
This non-linear recovery, it has become such a bore.  
I'm trying to find out who I am now on this journey,  
I figure I'm going to learn a life lesson here surely?

For now I just need to accept,  
That everyday I'm going to feel wrecked.  
I need to take each day as it comes,  
Write my Ta-Da Lists and be happy with my outcomes.  
I will play my brain training apps,  
And ensure I have my daily naps.  
I will spend time with my family and pets,  
And not worry about the small stuff - no need to sweat!

This word acceptance hasn't come easy, but,  
In my moment of reflection, which isn't rare,  
I need to remind myself, not to despair.  
Be compassionate, chill out, relax and unwind.  
Listen to my body, and with all this combined,  
I might just learn how to navigate my journey,

Arrive at my destination which I'm sure it will be worthy.  
I will have overcome my obstacles,  
Shared my darkest moments with pride,  
Because one day my story will become  
Part of someone else's survival guide.

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## Nafra's poems:

### **Train journey: destination new me**

At the beginning-numb, unaware, stressed. I see lots of visitors, carry on with normal life  
Along the way - challenges, disappointment, self-awareness, angry, people moving along, you staying  
still. Qualifying as nurses which could have been you. Dog and parents aging. Satisfaction, dealing with  
who you are going to be in the future. Finding new friends, challenges, taking life one step at a time  
New you-happy, know your limits, have plans for everyday, thankful, try to enjoy things you like, bringing  
happiness to others back to the gym with a more suitable training plan. Able to deal with anxiety. Use  
trains, planes, buses. Challenge myself everyday

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## Natasha's poems:

A note for those who is at the starting line of recovery...

### **The Early Days**

Give yourself time and you will see,  
The improvement on yourself & what group therapy can mean.  
Special bonds are formed, not just with fellow survivors,  
But with staff who are equally as vital.  
Take all the rest required & let 'your' people help,  
It would be a harder journey on your own with what you've been dealt.  
You don't have to talk, you can just listen too,  
Because just being present is part of the healing journey for you.

After surgery I wish I had of been better informed for what lay ahead,  
So it wasn't as scary and full of dread.  
A journey of self-discovery - what am I capable of?  
A surprising result - a pull on my inner strength of self-caring love.  
I have to admit, there were hard times and I still have my 'off' days,  
But realistically what can I expect, to myself I say...  
"I've been through brain surgery and now I have a brain injury,  
I will not let it stop me, I'm plotting a personal piece of history."

I still sometimes think is it always going to be this way?  
I can get frustrated, have a down day.  
But I must remind myself it's normal to have these thoughts,

My body got me this far, it is not helpful for my mind to be fraught.  
Attending group sessions showed me we have all thought this way,  
Which honestly to me is encouraging, It gives me hope and some days I am flourishing.  
I discovered there are different stages I went through after diagnosis and surgery,  
I thought I accepted it immediately but looking back I didn't, I gave myself no mercy.

I started group therapy in February, which has been hugely beneficial in recovery so far,  
Being surrounded by likeminded people was comforting, I no longer felt bizarre.  
Getting it out in the open and coming to realise what I'd been through,  
In my journey to healing, slowly but surely I started to feel positive and new.  
But for you to be able to move on you must face what you're feeling,  
You will surprise yourself in your own journey of healing.  
It is hard, let yourself accept that it won't be easy,  
You will however learn to be compassionate and appreciate yourself deeply.  
Please don't put up a guard,  
It will make recovery too damn hard.  
Embrace your mind and body and ensure they are connected,  
Be compassionate and kind to both, neither one ought to be neglected.

## **Finding the Words: The Journey**

What we bring along –  
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Patience  
Confidence  
Flexibility  
Our mindset – slowing down, taking time to notice and enjoy things

What we do on the journey –  
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Cleaning – “tidy house, tidy mind”  
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But this experience has helped us to be calmer,  
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Being in awe of nature  
Being amazed at how it knows what it's doing  
Noticing clouds  
Being with pets and other animals –  
They just know to sit with us and when we need comforted  
Quality time with people I love,  
taking time for a chat,  
being with my children,  
dancing with them and hearing them laugh.

What we know -  
Listen to your body  
It's a slow journey; the destination is the 'new you.'  
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