

Rosen Movement: Coming Back to Life

By Maria Pia Sass

Maria is a trial lawyer who was disabled when she was struck by a car while training for an Ironman Triathlon.

I like to say that I hadn't cried for three years -- I was like Dr. Spock---and now I cry at the drop of a hat. A car injured me in June, '04 while I was riding my bike which broke my neck and sent me into a coma for just shy of three months. My spinal cord injury allows me to move and walk. My ongoing deficits that brought me to Rosen Movement are neurological and include a brain injury, hydrocephalus, and a stroke. These deficits involve poor movement, poor thinking, and poor perception of my body and the world around me. My analogy to an electrical circuit is that my transmitter/receiver is busted.

I started going to Rosen movement classes during the spring of 2007 here in Minneapolis with Marjorie Huebner; I try to attend weekly. Within a few months, I noticed that I was having emotions. Over about eight months, the range and strength of my emotions increased. At the time, I worried people close to me as I was always crying. My sadness persists although it is not constant. My highs are higher and the range of other emotions is greater. I think I am able to let things go easier than before my injury.

I am unclear about whether my ability to have emotions has re-started or if my ability to perceive emotions is the new experience. Although I am tempted by the first explanation, my ability to perceive seems to be the thing that has changed the most. For example, when I was hit, my left femur was chipped at the hip. I didn't perceive the pain of that break or that my hip was wearing down for about

ten months, and then it really hurt after a few weeks of noticing it. In late 2005, I realized that I couldn't perceive hunger and now I can. My upper body perceives the temperature of the area of my body and the air surrounding me pretty well but my lower body does not. The right side of my body is generally colder than the left side.

Also, when I started Rosen, my balance and knee flexibility was too poor for me to squat. Now I usually can squat and get off the ground without first putting my knees on the ground.

The return of my emotions has brought a time of instability of my function. If I feel that I have been yelled at, I cannot breathe or swallow as well and I do not articulate well. Emotions can put me on the sofa for a day whereas the day before I had been able to get out to therapy or an errand. While I might not hold onto an emotional response for the same period of time as before my injury, the experience of an emotion can shut down my function.

Rosen Movement and Marjorie have been fantastic discoveries. I have benefited greatly from the work and I am committed to staying with the program. I tell my physical therapists and workaholic friends about the Rosen Movement classes and have convinced several to participate.