

Sharing **OUR** Recovery

A quarterly newsletter designed to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Sign up here!

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Connecting Crash Survivors
One Step at a Time

The Smell of Fall is in the Air

I love fall for plenty of reasons, including the cooler temperatures, witnessing the leaves change into vibrant colors, wearing my cozy sweats and the smell of hot chocolate. Fall was also my mom's favourite time of year as she always loved to be outdoors in the garden this time of year and as kids, she always looked forward to celebrating Halloween. This issue is dedicated to my mom, who passed away suddenly just a couple of weeks ago. She was truly one of the strongest women I knew.

This past summer, the Crash Support Network continued to connect with so many wonderful organizations and individuals. From being a guest on a highly informative podcast to being interviewed by an award-winning road safety advocate, I am so grateful for these wonderful opportunities and so pleased to share these positive experiences with you in our Fall Issue. For those of you that follow the Crash Survivor Blog, you may have noticed that I have been quiet this past summer. I have been taking some time to re-charge and re-focus, and I look forward to sharing highly supportive blogs with you in the very near future.

My book, **Talk Crash to Me** – *What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Crash and How to Manage Your Recovery* has also proven to be quite a success as I continue to receive so many wonderful reviews. Many thanks to the Organizations and Businesses that have bought quantity orders of my book, "Talk Crash to Me" to give to their clients. This means the world to me and this is a book I wish someone handed to me when I first started my recovery. I cannot thank you enough for your support!

In this issue you will hear how Caitie was an ordinary 24-year-old driving home from work and how her life changed forever. We also share wonderful resources from the [Brain Injury Society of Toronto](#) who offer free and accessible support for those living with the effects of brain injury and you will hear from our Guest Blogger, Andrew who shares his journey with us and hopes that fellow survivors find some encouragement with the stories that he tells.

The Crash Support Network is so grateful to our [sponsors](#) and supporters for their continued support who make it possible to provide this valuable free resource for survivors of motor vehicle crashes. Thank you!

As always, I am thinking of every crash survivor that is recovering from an unexpected motor vehicle crash and want to remind everyone that every step counts whether big or small.

- Dawne



How A Millennial Car Crash Survivor Turned Her Suffering Over to God

Submitted by Caitie Crowley

Have you ever asked how a good God could let bad things happen? Where is God in the midst of suffering? Is there any hope left for me?

One moment Caitie Crowley was an ordinary 24-year-old driving home from work, and then next moment her life would be changed forever. Due to a poor decision of another driver, Crowley was in a rollover car accident a little over two years ago. As a result, she was hospitalized for 11 days and had multiple surgical repairs. She spent time in a wheelchair and had to rely on crutches, braces, and other assisted devices to relearn how to walk again. She couldn't walk for 10 months. Even once she could walk, it was not easy or normal to walk for almost another year.

During that time, she wrote a book about her experiences and how her faith in God carried her through her pain. Her book takes the reader through Crowley's physical struggle of learning to walk again and her interior struggle of learning to walk with God through the cross.



Her book focuses not only on her medical and rehabilitation journey but also on redemptive suffering. That is that even through difficulty there is hope and that even through difficulty God can bring good out of it.

"There were months that seemed to drag on so slowly. At some points, I didn't even know if I would ever recover," described Crowley. "It's amazing to think about how I felt then and what was still yet to come. I wouldn't have believed it if you told me at the beginning."

A year and a half after the traumatic car accident, Crowley went on to graduate summa cum laude in information design and strategy from Northwestern University and landed her dream job doing human resource communications at a Fortune 100 company.

Crowley remarked, "Even if you can't see what is ahead and you don't see how things could ever get better. Through Him, you can find hope when it appears hopeless."

"There were many long, difficult days. Days where nothing seemed to change, nothing seemed to get better," relayed Crowley. "I didn't know if I was ever going to get better. Despite all circumstances that seemed rather bleak, I knew I had to put my trust in God."

For more information please visit:
<https://enroutebooksandmedia.com/steppingup/>

Looking to connect with other Survivors of Motor Vehicle Crashes?

We welcome you to join our Facebook Family at [Crash Support Network Group](#)

Is your loved one, friend or colleague recovering from a motor vehicle crash or have you met another victim of a motor vehicle crash? Please ask them to [subscribe](#) to our informative newsletters and tell them about the [Crash Support Network](#).



Free & Accessible Support to Those Living with Brain Injury

Submitted by Meri Perra, Communications Manager

Despite the fact that brain injury is more prevalent than rates of MS, breast cancer and HIV/AIDS combined, many people living with brain injury are misunderstood, under-supported, isolated and alone. Relationships with family, friends and spouses may become strained or lost altogether. Those who are fortunate enough to have a family doctor, may find their own GP does not understand brain injury and are then forced to try and educate the person who should be helping them.

The Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) is a free service where people living with the effects of brain injury can connect with each other, access support groups and learn about the condition they are living with. We do not require medical documentation of brain injury to access our services and programs, we simply ask that you become a member of our organization (cost is \$5, which can be waived) and you are good to go.

All our services continue to be online due to the Pandemic. Call-in options via Zoom are available. Our goal is to return to in-person programming when it is safe to do so.

Temporary Case Management Services

BIST offers temporary case management services to people living with brain injury who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Social work placement students are available when schools are in session to offer additional support, such as resource finding and form filling.

Programs

All program information, including links to register for the following programs can be found at: <https://bist.ca/event/>

Support Groups

WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Groups

Wellness Recovery Action Plan® or WRAP®, is a self-designed prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to get well, stay well and make their life the way they want it to be." BIST offers WRAP Groups geared towards people living with brain injury. Groups run weekly for 6 sessions.

- Trauma Informed Group: Starts Monday September 13th, 11 AM - 1 PM
- Housing Advocacy Group: Starts Wednesday September 15th, 2-4 PM
- LGBTQ2S+ Group: Starts Friday September 10th, 11 AM - 1 PM
- ABI Support Group: 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the Month, 6:30-8 PM
- Women and ABI Support Group: 1st and 3rd Thursday of the Month, 6:30-8 PM
 - * This group is inclusive of women of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, gender and queer identities, including trans women. People who identify as non-binary are welcome to attend groups of their choice and can speak to our programs coordinator with any questions or concerns: connections@bist.ca or 647-990-1485.*
- Peer Led Caregiver Support Group: LAST Wednesday of the Month, 6:30-8 PM

Meetings & Workshops

Concussion Series

Runs Mondays in November, 6 - 7:30 PM

More information will be available in the upcoming weeks at:

www.bist.ca/concussion

* Once a year, BIST runs a 4-week series for adults living with concussion symptoms. The goal of the groups is to learn how to manage your fatigue, regulate mood, improve sleep and cognitive function.

Community Meetings

Community Meetings are mini-workshops, typically with a guest speaker who presents on an issue relevant to brain injury. September's Community Meeting is our Annual General Meeting, which is a great chance to be introduced to BIST programs and services. LAST Wednesday of the Month, 6:30 - 8 PM

Projects & Advocacy

ABI Justice

With funding from the Law Foundation of Ontario, BIST launched www.abijustice.org, the first and currently the only resource in Ontario that aims to decrease common barriers that become present for persons with brain injury when faced with legal matters. Through simplified terms and brief education of the legal system and supporting resources; ABI Justice is a porthole for legal information as it pertains to those who have sustained or those who assist clients who live with a brain injury.

Brain Injury & The Law: A Functional Support Initiative

In partnership with the Brain Injury Association of North Bay and Area, the following services are provided by supervised Social Work students for people living with brain injury who are dealing with legal matters, throughout Ontario:

- Accessing and planning transportation
- Advocating for courtroom accommodation
- Giving reminders of court or other important dates
- Providing support referrals
- Providing assistance in managing documents
- Assisting with communication needs
- Connecting with Vulnerable Persons Registry
- Getting a Brain Injury Identification Card
- Provide VIRTUAL meeting support (note taking, advocacy etc.)

Movement for a Hidden Disability Symbol in Canada

Because so many of the effects of brain injury are hidden, BIST has become a co-founder of the movement to adopt a nationally recognized Hidden Disability Symbol in Canada. Find out more, including how you can easily become a part of this movement, at: <https://hdscanada.wordpress.com/>

Questions?

Contact BIST at 416-830-1485 or info@bist.ca | www.bist.ca



Happy Summer!

In traffic safety, we talk a lot about crashes, their causes, how to prevent them, and even fatality statistics, but oddly enough, hardly any attention is paid to those who survive serious ones, even with life-changing consequences. We need to change that.

*This month, I'm super-pleased to introduce Dawne McKay, founder of the Crash Support Network and the author of a book called *Talk Crash to Me*. Dawne survived a horrific motor vehicle crash that left her with multiple injuries, including brain trauma, caused by a distracted driver. As she faced her long recovery from this life-changing incident, Dawne took it upon herself to not only build the support she was seeking but to spread it to others in similar situations.*

She has since created a unique, one-of-a-kind, highly informative website that provides helpful resources—“created by a crash survivor for crash survivors.” And Crash Support Network is truly remarkable, covering medical, legal, rehabilitation, insurance, transportation support, and mental health issues as well as survivor stories. Her book is equally invaluable, offering nitty-gritty practical advice for both the immediate aftermath of a traffic crash and the longer-term recovery challenges.

Read our interview below. Sadly, almost all of us either know someone who's been in a serious crash or have experienced one ourselves. Help spread the word! —Mi Ae

ML: How did you get interested in creating Crash Support Network? After all, most kids don't think, “When I grow up, I want to survive a crash and become a road safety advocate.”

What a great question! I will admit that, as a child, I never thought I would survive a horrific, life-changing motor vehicle crash and become an advocate for crash survivors. Although I had great support from family and a wonderful rehabilitation team in place as I started my recovery journey, I still felt terribly alone and desperately needed to speak to another survivor facing the same challenges as myself.



Dawne McKay in the hospital after her motor vehicle crash.

When I started searching for support groups, I was shocked to realize there wasn't anything. I took it upon myself to not only build the support I was anxiously seeking but also to spread it to others who were in similar situations by creating the Crash Support Network.

ML: What is Crash Support Network?

Launched in 2019, the Crash Support Network is a unique, one-of-a-kind website that provides helpful resources for crash survivors. Our mission is to provide online support and resources and to raise awareness for survivors and loved ones affected by motor vehicle crashes. Although I run both the website and the online support group virtually from my home in Ontario, Canada, we have members, followers, and subscribers from all around the world.

ML: How exactly does CSN help crash survivors and their families? I have not heard of that many resources for crash survivors—and do you feel that your organization is unusual in serving them?

You are absolutely correct—there aren't many resources for crash survivors, and I thank you for acknowledging this. When I was recovering, I desperately wanted to connect to another crash survivor who was experiencing the same feelings as I was, because I felt so overwhelmed and isolated. I was also suffering from a huge sense of loss.

Recovering from an unexpected motor vehicle crash is a daily constant struggle because you're not only recovering physically, but you're also struggling financially and emotionally.

Crash Support Network's online support group has proven to be extremely beneficial, and we have close to a thousand members. Many supportive, inspirational conversations take place in our online support group on a daily basis and when other people share similar experiences, there is extraordinary empathy, encouragement, and understanding.

ML: Tell us about your quarterly newsletter. What does it feature?

Our *Sharing our Recovery* newsletters are designed to help pick up the pieces after you've been involved in a motor vehicle crash. We're pleased to have just surpassed 1,000 loyal subscribers! Our quarterly newsletters are filled with highly informative articles and survivor stories that have been created specifically to support victims, survivors, and loved ones of motor vehicle crashes. If you or a loved one is recovering from a motor vehicle crash, we encourage you to [subscribe](#). It's free!

And we're always on the lookout for contributors, so if you are a survivor of a crash and want to share your story, or if you're a business or organization that supports crash survivors, we need you! Please mail us at info@crashsupportnetwork.com.



ML: Do you have a particularly moving story or testimonial from a crash survivor who sought help from your organization?

I am so grateful to have virtually met so many wonderful and courageous crash survivors from all across the world. I am always moved when a crash survivor shares their story with us. Every survivor story is filled with such strength, resilience, and inspiration. Last year, a man shared a video of himself in our online support group taking his first steps in a rehabilitation clinic while his fiancée patiently waited. It wasn't only the remarkable strength that he was showing us, but it was also his beaming smile directed at his fiancée that will forever leave a lasting impression on many of us.

Life continues for our loved ones while many crash survivors feel stuck trying to regain their lives back—they need encouragement. So many moments need to be acknowledged and celebrated as you're recovering from a motor vehicle crash.

ML: Since you started CSN, what kind of feedback have you heard from crash survivors?

I am so thankful and grateful that I continue to receive such positive reviews from so many crash survivors. I have heard time and time again from survivors, "I wish I had known about you a long time ago, but I'm so thankful that I finally found you," or "I felt so alone with my struggles after surviving a crash but I'm no longer alone." Crash survivors are beyond grateful to have found their "safe space" as well as a highly informative website.

ML: What advice would you tell to any survivor of a crash?

Although it may seem extremely overwhelming and exhausting as you start your recovery, you will get through this. You are not alone. It is critical to your recovery that you have a rehabilitation team in place to support you, and you must always remember that every victory, whether big or small, is worth celebrating. I welcome you to join our online support group where we cheer each other on through encouragement, positivity, and inspiration.

ML: What advice do you have for any family member or friend of a crash survivor?

Whether it's through friendship or family love, supporting recovery is one of the most profound ways to impact the life of a crash survivor. Please be patient, praise our progress, and be there for us when we need you. Connection, compassion, and understanding play unimaginably important roles in our recovery.

Friends and family sometimes experience a form of survivor's guilt or feel uncomfortable around a crash survivor (like not knowing what to say or how to relate). Do you have any tips for how to constructively handle these awkward moments? Or what not to do or say?

As a survivor of a crash, our life is unexpectedly turned upside-down in a matter of seconds. We'll be struggling physically, financially, and emotionally. Many survivors of a crash endeavor to find their new normal, and it is extremely difficult when they're faced with significant changes in independence, job stability, and social life.



Many family members and friends will also feel anger toward the other drivers in the crash. Who can blame them? After all, surviving a crash can be life-changing, and they're about to see their loved ones go through one of the most challenging times of their lives.

And please don't blame us for behaviors that are out of our control, and do not rush a survivor's recovery. Our injuries may or may not be visible or apparent to you, and our recovery could take years.

ML: Is there anything else you'd like us to know or how others can support Crash Support Network?

Survivors of motor vehicle crashes need to be aware that they're not alone and support is available. If you or a loved one are recovering from a motor vehicle crash, I encourage you to join our online support group, subscribe to our newsletter, and have a look at my website (crashsupportnetwork.com), which is full of wonderful resources and articles.

I also recently self-published a book, *Talk Crash to Me: What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery*, which is available on Amazon. In *Talk Crash to Me*, I share my personal experiences post-crash and what to expect as you recover, because it's not just about surviving the crash as it's much more than that—recovery can take months and possibly years. Where does a survivor find hope when they are left to face a life-changing incident that carries so many struggles? How do survivors feel less alone and move forward? Crash survivors want their lives back, and this book offers a template outlining what to expect after a crash and how to manage physically, emotionally, and legally.

Talk Crash to Me continues to receive remarkable reviews; many crash survivors are telling me that "it's like a giant hug they desperately needed" and "I wish I had had this book when I started my recovery."



Watch "After the Crash" Podcast Episode 11 where Dawn McKay speaks with attorney, David Craig about her book and shares her insight as a survivor.



The 'catastrophe' was not the fault of the motorcycle

Submitted by Andrew Lawlor, Guest Blogger

*It was a cold, rainy night, at least it sounded of rain.
I was trapped, laying on my back in a box car of a train.
Pinned down on my back, unable to get up.
I couldn't see the restraints, like a turtle on its back - straining but
never getting up.
There were breaks in the wall of the boxcar.
I could see we were stopped at a railroad crossing, but there were
no flashing lights or ringing bells.
Voices... outside the car.
My people, they were looking for me, asking someone if they had
seen me.
My captors lied, they answered no.
I tried to call out, tried to yell, but nothing, and the train pulled
away.
I now know these were the dreams of my coma.
But at the time, they were as real as anything I have ever felt.*

Words matter.

Collision, mishap, smash, MVA, wreck, shunt, car v motorcycle?
What do I call the event that caused all of this? The event
that changed my life and the life of others... Disaster, crash,
misadventure, fender-bender...?

I know what not to call it. I bristle every time I hear the word.
Accident.

An accident is "an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly
and unintentionally." Accidents **happen**. But this didn't just happen,
it was the only logical conclusion of a series of stupid and selfish
decisions.

So not an accident, then what?

Catastrophic is the label I've lived with for three years now. So, if
I'm catastrophic, I guess the event itself was the catastrophe. Yup,
catastrophe works.

*I can see the streetlights reflect on the interior of the car.
I see them blip by in rapid sequence
The car smells, that smell of sweat that builds up in winter overcoat.
Aa smell that is only set free by heat.
I am in the back seat, but not on the back seat.
I am on the floor, laying on my back, again.
Trapped on my back. Again.
The back seat is full of people.
it's one of those wide sedans from the 70's, like my father's Caprice
Classic.
Big, long, wide, and a floor in the back with a hump in the middle.
The people in the back seat all have their feet, their boots, on me.
It's cold outside, I can feel the cold air invading the heat of the car.
My people were outside the car, asking if anyone had seen me.
No, they lied, we've not seen him at all.*

The 'catastrophe' was not the fault of the motorcycle. Nor was it
caused by the weather, traffic, alignment of zodiac signs or feng
shui.

It wasn't even caused by the other vehicle (though the Honda
S-2000 is a symptom).



There is only one person responsible for this collision.

One person responsible for:

- the injuries
- the pain
- the expense
- the thousands of man-hours spent in hospital waiting rooms
- the physical therapy, gait therapy, psychological therapy
- my inability to work, to drive, to play sports, to travel, to dance
- lost memories
- 45 fractures
- 6 months in hospital
- 3 months of dialysis
- 21 surgeries after the initial critical care
- countless plates and screws
- hundreds of staples
- transplants
- transfusions
- tendon transfers
- skin grafts
- the functional loss of one hand and one foot
- the actual loss of one eye and one leg...

One person is responsible for all of this. Vin Diesel...

I can sense your uncertainty.

I do not believe Tarantino films incite violence; or that video games
make people buy and use guns. I do not believe song lyrics inspire
anti-social behaviour or that Breaking Bad inspired anyone to
become meth cooks.

I do, however, believe that the (horrible) Fast and Furious movies
have spawned a generation of kids with too much time on their
hands, access to daddy's credit card, and a sense of entitlement on
the road. I'm only half joking when I say I would like to file suit
against the stars and producers of the whole suite of F+F movies,
all 14 or whatever of them, for irresponsibly spawning an entitled,
over-horsepowered and under-talented generation of spoiled brats.

continues on page 7



The 'catastrophe' was not the fault of the motorcycle

continued from page 6

No, driving cars fast is not new. They say the first auto race took place when the second car was built. But this phenomenon is new, believing they can weave in and out of regular traffic - people transporting their families, commuting to work, going for an oil change....

Ironically, I love auto racing – Formula One, IndyCar/Cart when it was good, NASCAR before it became WWE on wheels.... Racing comes with risks - I have watched heroes die on the track - Villeneuve, Senna, Moore, Earnhardt. These were tragic events, and tragedies by the true sense of the word. However, they all signed up for the risks - risks that belong on the track, not on our roads. Go to the track - sign the waiver - have at it.

Go ahead and take risks, just don't take innocent with you.

Lying in bed in an abandoned hospital.

I'm alone, but I hear groans and moans from creatures unseen. I can't see them, but they are here. I am on a gurney, flat on my back.

The hospital is in complete disrepair.

It resembles the opening scenes of the Walking Dead.

There is sound coming through the PA system, not music exactly...

More like an old, warped LP played at a fraction of normal rpm.

It drones on and on, and on.

I don't know what the sound is, but I know why the sound is.

Mind control.

I am trapped on my back, again, turtled.

The mind-control noises are keeping me trapped on my back.

I can't sit up; I can't look around.

I can't get away; I try to call out.

I have no voice.

I have vivid memories of laying facedown, in the middle of the road, in the pouring rain. Nope. It didn't happen that way, just one of many false memories I have, my brain's way of filling in the blanks.

Fire, then ambulance, then police arrived – (as stated in the report) I was awake but going into shock. Among a few other bumps and bruises, I had severed the femoral artery in my left leg – I was bleeding out, my bp was bottoming out, I lost consciousness and I was in trouble.

There are at least five hospitals close to the collision scene, one less than 5km away. Five state-of-the-art facilities filled with nurses, doctors, medicine, equipment – all ready and waiting for a case like mine. We bypassed them all.

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre is the first and busiest (and best) trauma centre in Canada. Equipped and trained for everything from large-scale disasters to complex and life-threatening mva injuries, it is the best of the best, and would become my home for the next 6 months.

Full sirens and lights, we travelled 28km to Sunnybrook as I clung to life. We bypassed multiple hospitals in favour of the only one they knew had a shot at pulling me through. This is the second of three reasons why I am still alive, and as logical a place as any to take a break.

To be continued.

Andrew Lawlor is a motorcycle crash survivor. Since July, 2018 he has drawn on the love and support of his family and his community, working to repair body, mind and soul. Andrew knows everyone's journey is unique, and hopes that fellow survivors might find a new perspective, or encouragement in the stories he tells. The Crash Support Network is thrilled to announce a collaboration with Andrew as he shares his journey through ongoing contributions to our Crash Survivor Blog. For more information on Andrew's journey please visit: [The Catastrophic](#).



available at
amazon

"As a victim of a life-changing motor vehicle crash caused by a drunk driver, I didn't even know where to begin. I cannot begin to tell you how much this book has guided me in my recovery journey. I think "Talk Crash to Me" touches on every concern that I have as a survivor and it's an easy read. This book is also something that I can easily look back on for direction when I may feel lost and overwhelmed. Thank you!"

– Samantha, Crash Survivor

"It's like having someone right there beside you, holding your hand, telling you it'll be alright and here's what you can do. Talk Crash to Me does that and more with helpful tips and information about Ontario's auto insurance claims system and how to navigate through it. Dawne shows us a path to get on the way to a better and more balanced new post-accident self." Bravo Dawne!

– Rhona DesRoches, FAIR Association, Chair

"Dawne writes with courage. Her book is a beautifully crafted checklist for crash survivors. It's like sitting down for a coffee with a close friend who isn't afraid to give you a hug and share the tips you need to survive the best way you can. It's called support for a reason. 'Talk Crash To Me' is a must read for car crash survivors, their families and lawyers. Dawne gives readers the supportive practical tools they need. Dawne let's readers discover how strong they truly are."

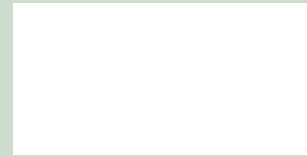
– Shelley Martin, Martin Law Office

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Email us at info@crashsupportnetwork.com.



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By sponsoring the *Sharing our Recovery Newsletter*, you are supporting the continued growth of this valuable free resource for crash survivors.

Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

Articles/Stories:

We are always looking for articles or stories, and we would love to hear from you!

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CRASHSUPPORTNETWORK

Our Mission is to provide online support, resources and to raise awareness for survivors that have been affected by a motor vehicle crash.



CrashSupportNetwork.com

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Meet Dawne McKay – Founder

Dawne McKay is a survivor of a horrific motor vehicle crash and is the creator and editor of *Sharing our Recovery* as well as the Founder of the **Crash Support Network**. Dawne is not shy about what happened to her because she has become an advocate for other crash survivors. She had to go through her own struggles to create a community of courageous survivors who continuously fight everyday. Dawne resides in Ontario, Canada and manages both the *Sharing our Recovery* Newsletter and the **Crash Support Network Group** virtually from her home. The Crash Support Network Group consists of members from all over the globe and her highly informative one-of-a-kind website is attracting thousands of visits a day.

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