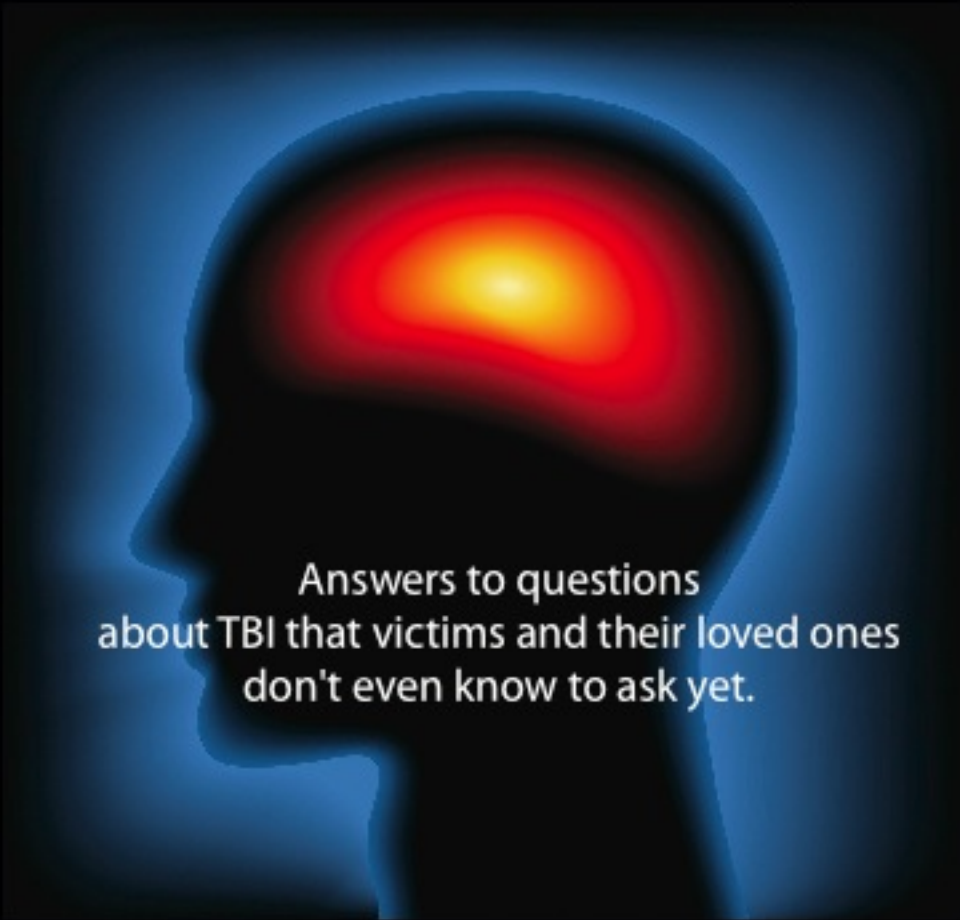


*"Four stars out of five. A painful personal story to aid others in medical crisis. A testament to a family's love and courage."*

— FOREWORD CLARION REVIEWS

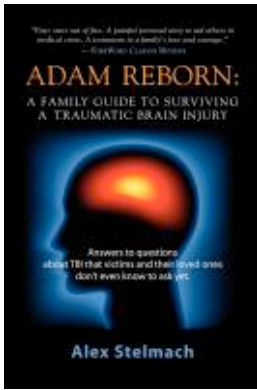
# ADAM REBORN:

A FAMILY GUIDE TO SURVIVING  
A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



Answers to questions  
about TBI that victims and their loved ones  
don't even know to ask yet.

**Alex Stelmach**



*Lives are changed forever in this inspiring story of a small family banding together when one of their own falls forty feet into darkness and is diagnosed with a Traumatic Brain Injury. An emotional, uplifting true story of a young man's struggle to overcome life threatening odds. The book contains many pages of practical tips and TBI information to help guide victims and their loved ones back towards the pathways of hope and recovery.*

## Adam Reborn

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ISBN 978-1-62141-222-9

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Printed in the United States of America.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2012

First Edition

## ZERO SOUNDS GOOD TO ME

I don't know why horrible things happen to certain people at certain times in their lives. I wish I did. Then I could warn them. It's as if life itself isn't tough enough to get through without some sort of large game show wheel hovering overhead. "Destiny's Wheel." Its arrow spinning wildly past the numbers and categories.

10. Death.

9. Suicide.

8. Cancer.

7. Crippling disease. (Never heard of it. Can't pronounce it. Can't spell it. Yet, somebody gave it a name.)

6. Rape.

I'll stop there for now. That's enough pain. And I hadn't even gotten to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Is that worth a five on the wheel? When your loved one can't remember what they had for breakfast. Can't walk. Can't talk. Can't drive. Can't socialize.

Can't...can't...can't.

I feel no young person needs to be in a hospital bed at age twenty-one. They need to be out in the sun, laughing and chasing after their dreams. But, that's a little of what this story is about. Trying to fight through a nightmare and make a dream come true. As of this writing these personal events have just reached three years in the happening and are ongoing. There is no ending yet. The family is scared to death of an ending. Because with TBI, "ending" means that's it. As good as it gets. As good as it's going to be – from now to forever.

Dear friends, with TBI, two words you don't ever want to hear are "peaked" or "plateaued." So, we the family hang on. Day by day. Week by week. Month by month. Wishing for an end and hoping one never comes. If you've ever been involved in a prolonged family medical trauma, you know the feeling. If you haven't, bless you and stay safe, because what it does is grind down on you until you cry out loud,

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wondering why you were fated for the so many heartaches to come your way.

This world is such an easy place to live in...if you don't love someone.

But, if you do, nothing can prepare you for...

## THE PHONE CALL

Monday, 11:00 at night. Not unlike thousands of other nights that came before this one. You lay down in bed letting the thoughts that lead to sleep slowly filter by. What project to finish first at work tomorrow? Do some planting in the yard this weekend. Hope the Cowboys make the playoffs this season. And as long as you're dreaming, maybe win the lottery. I mean how tough can it be? Six lousy numbers.

Then you focus from what could be, to what really is. Jill, your hard working, loving wife sleeping next to you. Lisa, your recent college grad and soon to be high school biology teacher snoozing across the hall, instead of being up until four in the morning studying. Your eighty-nine year old dad and widower living downstairs in the guest bedroom, and slowly delving deeper and deeper into dementia. You know you can't watch over him much longer, that he's going to need professional care, and you try and figure out how you're going to juggle the finances to do so.

You slowly start to drift away as one more thought crosses your mind. Adam. Your twenty-one year old, fun loving bartender of a son. The dude who's got a joke for all the guys and a hug for all the girls. Not to mention that million dollar smile. Half of which belongs to you and Jill thanks to those orthodontist bills.

11:00 at night. Everyone home in bed, but not Adam. The party must just be revving up somewhere.

You feel better when the kids are home. But they're grown. Ready to move out. You can't watch over them forever, so just turn over, leave the family analysis for the dinner table and go to sleep...go to...

And then what can be one of the worst sounds in the world cuts through the slumber.

The phone rings.

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Not the faraway kind of ring that goes on gently, melodically, somehow getting incorporated into your dreams, making you not sure if it's real or not. No, this jarring, sharp pitch is real all right.

I woke up startled and grabbed the phone on that first angry ring. For me phone calls late at night are like the ones just before you're ready to step out the door for that much awaited, much anticipated summer vacation. Bags in hand, you set one foot out the door and the phone rings. You want to ignore it, but maybe it's the airline calling about your flight...or maybe something worse.

"Hello."

"Adam fell off the roof of the mall parking lot!"

This was worse. So much worse. We just didn't know it yet.

I sat on the edge of the bed trying to comprehend what I had heard.

*Fell off the roof? How? Why?*

"What?" was all I could barely mutter. A confused plea for some sort of explanation.

"He fell off the roof! The ambulance is coming! I gotta go!"

I hung up the phone, sitting in the darkness, thinking maybe, just maybe I was dreaming and...

"Who was it?" asked Jill sleepily.

At that point the dream vanished and the nightmare came to full life.

"Dave just called and said Adam fell off the roof."

"Dave, who?"

"Dave Stein. We have to go to the hospital."

I remember jumping out of bed but not moving. Being stuck in some sort of physical, emotional neutral.

*Adam fell off the roof of the mall parking lot.*

Ours is a fairly large mall. Spread out over several blocks. On the rare occasion when I go, like for holiday shopping, I usually park in the open street level areas surrounding the main stores. But, Dave said roof. I tried to imagine which structure. There were several, and all were at least four to five stories high.

"Alex, what do you mean Adam fell?" asked Jill, her voice full of concern.



“I don’t know,” I answered, unsure of what the bits of words over the phone truly meant.

Jill hurried out of the bedroom as I stood in my daze for a moment then I walked over to the closet and grabbed for my wallet and cell phone. I eyed what clothes to wear when Jill came back in.

“Dave didn’t call. I just talked to him. I woke him and Susie up.”

“It was Billy,” said Lisa sleepily.

Jill and I turned and faced Lisa leaning in the closet doorway.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“I stayed on the line after you hung up. He said Adam fell.”

Billy was one of Adam’s closest friends.

“Call Adam,” said Jill.

“I did. He doesn’t pick up,” answered Lisa.

“We have to go to the hospital now,” I said.

Dear friends, at this stage I want to point out that what we had were three individuals standing around in assorted sleepwear not exactly sure of what happened, not exactly sure of how “the what” happened, but in my mind we needed to get moving. The answers weren’t waiting for us at home. If you are ever in this situation, plainly state to whomever you’re with that an immediate course of action is necessary. Try and be calm. (I wasn’t.) In our immediate area we have only one main hospital. Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial. Our destination was easy. If you live in a greater metro area you may have to split up, take separate cars and head for different hospitals. Make sure your cell phones are turned on. You’d be surprised how many times you grab the phone, but forget to turn it on. That leaves your other loved ones cut off, desperate for information.

If time permits, call the hospital emergency rooms. Ask for recent admissions.

Lisa walked out. Jill and I headed into the bedroom closet, fumbling for whatever clothes were closest to our grasps.

“Alex, what did Billy say?” The concern in Jill’s voice was of a mother’s anguish.

I paused, searching for meaning in the words that I had heard over the phone. “Adam fell off the roof of the mall parking lot.”

*ADAM REBORN*

Jill's eyes focused far away. What thoughts, what images ran through her mind I didn't know. Maybe of her son hurtling down through the darkness.

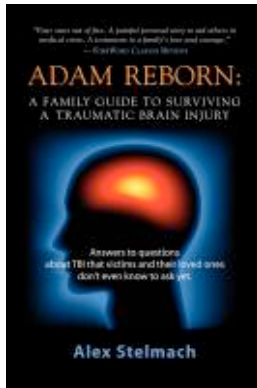
Dear friends, one point to bring up here is to make sure you have cell phone numbers of your kid's friends. Your children may hesitate to give them out, feel like you're going to check up on them, but gently insist. Do not surrender. Reassure them that it's for emergencies only. That circle of friends ranges far and wide. In time of need you'd be surprised how fast kids can get the word out and information back to you.

"What's going on?" Dad called out from downstairs.

I couldn't rewind the conversation for a third time. I had a feeling of doom all around me.

"Adam had an accident! We're going to the hospital! Keep an eye on the house!" I yelled back, hoping that giving a chore of watching the house would pacify my dad until we got back with the news.

And good or bad, we were heading straight for it. We'd know something soon. But somehow, deep down inside, I felt I already did. Because when the phone rings at eleven at night...well, you know.



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