

Laurie's journey: When the dance is interrupted a new path is revealed, part 1



Laurie Kammer



Joyce Hyde
Hartford Dance Fitness Examiner
| Follow:

March 8, 2013

The Dance Extension, Mitchell College and **HelpHOPELive** have joined together to host a weekend benefit: **“Rise Up: Together we Thrive”** March 23- 24, 2013 in New London, Conn. The purpose of the benefit is to increase awareness of spinal cord injuries, and to raise funds to support an inspirational woman named Laurie Kammer. Connecticut native and former dancer in Dance Extension’s performance group, **Community Dance Ensemble, Inc,** Laurie fell from a tree in 2011 leaving her paralyzed from the belly button down. Below is the first part of an interview with Laurie from March 7th 2013 in which she shared what her personal journey has been like since the accident.

“Trauma is not always sad, it can create connections to bring people to ‘self-recover’ into a new life” is how Laurie Kammer views life today. “Before the accident I felt very disconnected, having lost touch with people I cared about. I was anxious to move forward in my life, I really knew I wanted to help people but I was not sure quite how to do that. The impatience I felt to have it all figured out left me feeling overextended and exhausted. Today I am comfortable in the fact that I am not supposed to know the ‘destination’, only experience the journey, remaining open to the new possibilities that every day brings”.

This acceptance did not come without hard work. After her fall when the platform she was standing on in an unfinished tree house gave way, Laurie was classified with a **T10 "complete" spinal cord injury** with total loss of function in the lower half of her body. Remaining completely conscious during her fall, she did not feel bitter nor cast blame for her situation which she believes was essential for her to not lose hope. The incredible love and support she felt for her caregivers, family and friends, inspired her to not feel sorry for herself and gave her the strength to believe her life was not over.

Following a 3 month hospital stay, she returned home and had to accept for the immediate future she needed to be completely taken care of as she adjusted to her new life. “I had a ton of physical challenges: needing to be carried up and down the stairs, adapting to different surfaces, even not falling over while sitting was a challenge,” due to a new center of gravity. She also knew that she had an incredible financial burden ahead of her that she could not face alone, but how to make this happen now was yet to be revealed.

The following year of rehab exposed her to a variety of holistic recoveries: such as: acupuncture, bodywork, crystal and energy medicine, music and vibrational therapy, that she embraced as a means to continue her recovery. Always having a passionate love for art, music and nature, Laurie really believed in the healing powers all of this could provide for her and others: “I know I would not have made it through my hospital stay without twice weekly art therapy!” Dedicating herself to her own healing she focused on increasing her upper body strength so she could be more independent and can get around better in her wheelchair. She also took on a regimen of proper nutrition to help her cells flourish, avoiding sugars to keep body alkaline.

Laurie knew that if she was to be able to have a full life going forward, she needed to begin to really focus on healing her inner self if in order to facilitate the maximum healing potential for her body. She suspected that she could adopt new ways to experience life: through a prism of non-judgment, a way she felt especially equipped to handle because of her own personal journey, and in turn have more compassion for others. Enrolling in the **Avatar course** which emphasized preventative care, and the exploration of consciousness through meditative tools to become more present: "I learned I could choose what my life would be vs. being a passive victim of it. I could continue to stay in negative patterns or choose to shed those old beliefs that were not serving me. When I embraced this way of thinking, I felt self-empowered, and in charge of my own recovery."

By April 2012 Laurie was able to "**shuffle walk**" with a walker and her leg braces. The braces lock at the knee and keep her feet in a flexed position, so she is limited to practicing this an hour per day. Laurie says she has "some perception of deep pressure and vibration. It is painful, but it is a hopeful sign of the axons re-growing and potentially re-connecting." Although her injury is classified as "complete" with **current medical breakthroughs** and future research, combined with her own continued hard work Laurie sees herself walking again. Although there are no guarantees "the visualizing of it" she says "is the critical first step".

*Next installment: **Laurie's journey: When the dance is interrupted, a new path is revealed, part 2***

Rise Up: Together We Thrive benefit concert Clarke Center, Mitchell College, 437 Pequot Ave., New London, CT. Saturday & Sunday, March 23 (7pm) & 24 (2pm), 2013. \$20 donation – tickets may be purchased online at **Rise Up: Together we thrive benefit concert**

If you cannot attend but wish to make a donation, and for more information, please visit the website: **HelpHOPELive** or call 800-642-8399.