

# 2025 North Carolina Brain Injury Conference

## Repairing and Reforging How Writing Can Heal Brain Injury

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### Brain Injury Conference

April 14-15th, 2025

Lumina on  
Wrightsville Beach



**BRAIN INJURY  
ASSOCIATION**  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

# About Us

## MICHAEL RAMOS

- Iraq war veteran
- Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW
- writer, teacher, book designer, editor
- art director for *Ecotone* magazine
- focuses on dispelling myths about war, warriors, and veterans, and bringing military and civilian communities together through the power of art
- find his work in [Fourth Genre](#), [Slice](#), [PANK Daily](#), and other places.
- His essay collection *The After: A Veteran's Notes on Coming Home* (UNC Press 2024) received a starred *Kirkus* review and is available now from [UNC Press](#).

## RHONDA WATERHOUSE

- B.S. and an M.Ed. from Penn State University, where she also worked as a research assistant for the Clearinghouse for Military Readiness on the Exceptional Family Member project.
- studied with John Evans at Duke Health in his “Transform Your Health: Write to Heal” program
- more than 25 years of writing teaching experience
- MFA candidate and graduate teaching assistant in Creative Nonfiction at UNC Wilmington
- Work can be found in *Black Warrior Review* and *American Submariner* among others
- Brain injury survivor since 2022 car accident
- memoir, *Rooted in Resilience: A Field Guide to Finding Self after Brain Injury* helped her heal her brain injury.



# The Situation

“For many people with brain injury, the old story is gone or greatly changed.”

## Physical symptoms

- Loss of mobility

- Loss of memory or speech

## Emotional symptoms

- May feel grief for who they were

- May have a loss of self-worth

- May feel as if they have lost control

- Changes in mood

# The Theory

## Benefits of writing

- Returns a measure of control
- Rewires brain / creates neural pathways
- Can improve memory
- Can improves language skills
- Can improves critical thinking skills
- Can improve motor skills
- Can provide stress relief / mood boost \*

# The Practice

## Daily Writing

- Morning Pages
- 15 minutes
- No skill required
- Prompt from book or web (improve creativity & problem solving)
- What happened (improves memory and processing, symptom tracking)

# The Practice

## Bullet Journal

- Journal with dots instead of lines
- No skill required
- Affirmations (improve mood & change brain chemistry)
- Gratitude (improves mood and positive outlook)
- To do list (improves planning & goal setting)

# The Practice

## Visiting Nature

- No skill required
- Can write about it or not
- Awe (lots of brain improvement)
- Trees release healing chemicals (reduce stress and lower blood pressure)
- Novelty, navigating, planning, sunlight exposure (all help with brain)



# The Practice

## Writing for Healing (John Evans)

- No skill required
- 20 minutes/day for 4 days
- Write continuously
- Prompts to work through trauma (self-healing)
- Explore feelings
- Expressive writing, poetry, affirmative writing, mindful writing



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# Questions?