



BRAIN ENERGY SUPPORT TEAM

engage, energize, empower

8 June 2020

Dear Friends,

There are many words that come to mind when I think of what's happening in our local communities, our country and our world right now. From the worldwide health pandemic to community unrest and anger, and everything else in between, it is *overwhelming* to say the very least. So many changes all at once can be hard to process and sometimes, downright painful.

I know that there's a deep sense of uncertainty that comes with all of the changes we are experiencing. The Brain Energy Support Team (BEST) has not been immune to the challenges and difficulty of these stormy times. Specifically, COVID-19 changed the way we work and connect with one another and with you, our network of support group facilitators; our friends.

As you know, we quickly stepped up to meet the needs of our support group network when WA implemented the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" shutdown guidelines in March and continue to work with you to keep your group members connected. Many of you have taken advantage of our facilitator chats, online content, activities, and virtual connections. We have been working together with you to support physical distancing while maintaining social connectivity, provide alternatives to in-person group meetings, and develop necessary resources to support your success as you plan toward resuming in-person meetings.

For the past 10 years, as partners with WA Department of Social & Human Services (DSHS) and the WA TBI Advisory Council, BEST administered the direct support group funds your group used to do valuable, and often exciting, activities that improved the quality of life for each and every member of your support groups. Activities that included accessible camping, monthly discussion meetings, whale watching, accessible kayaking and other outdoor activities, booths at community health fairs to raise awareness, theater nights, personal education forums, community speaker panels, Christmas dinners, and so much more.

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I'd like to share some of the comments we received from so many of you, and that are representative of community feedback overall:

- *It's good to know you're there to help support us in these uncertain times. Thank you for all you do!*
- *You are a godsend. You have no idea how much gratitude I have for you. I just love you guys!*
- *If it weren't for your support I wouldn't be a facilitator. What a difference that has made for me.*
- *You give us many reasons to smile!*
- *If it weren't for BEST my support group would not have the chance to meet at all. Thank you for all you do for support groups.*

And all of us at BEST are deeply appreciative for all that you give of yourselves to your group members and each other. We know how important kindness and support mean at the best of times and more so in times such as what we are living through now.

However, even though we were quick to adapt to change so we could support our community the best way possible, change continues to happen, and sometimes, it is not the kind of change we expect.

BEST has been informed by DSHS that our contract will end as of 30 June 2020. David Minor, the WA State TBI Council & Fund Coordinator, emailed us stating, "Under the current "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" mandate from the Governor's Office we will not be funding in-person support groups. The current contract will expire as written on 30 June 2020. DSHS continues to evaluate other opportunities and options that meet a longer term mandate of limiting contact and social distancing."

What does this mean for you and your group members? First, and most importantly, **BEST will still be here for you!**

Though BEST will not have a contract with DSHS to administer the direct support group funding that is legislated in [RCW 74.31.050](#) we are committed to continuing to support facilitators in WA as best we can knowing this may look differently as we move forward.

We talk a lot about superheroes at BEST and helping real-life superheroes just like you to *soar!* We remain committed to continuing the adventure with you. Some of the things we are working on include

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continuing our Facilitator Chats, BEST online courses, our annual Virtual Worlds CogniCon, and the online Brain Energy Summit in September. We've also brought our Superhero Shoppe online at <https://shopping.brainenergysupportteam.org>. We are, also, working with a team of experts to bring our related training program online in the coming months.

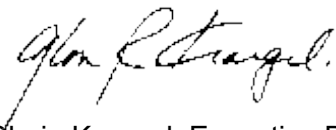
In March we launched our virtual Facilitator Chats (every two weeks). These meetings give facilitators the chance to remain connected with one another, share ideas, and learn new things. It's a chance to talk with friends who understand what it's like to support individuals with brain injury and their families through feelings of isolation and disconnectedness.

If you haven't had a chance to join us for one of our discussions over the past four months, please join us on June 13th. If you haven't seen the invitations we've sent please contact us.

Change is hard, as I said, but change can also be fresh, exciting and positive. I know we will navigate the changes of today to create a better tomorrow. Together, we can continue to share our love, kindness, care and support with one another, our support group family, and the world (and the world really needs that right now).

As one we are super; as a community, we are superpowered.

Again, thank you for everything you do and all that you give of yourselves.



Gloria Kraegel, Executive Director
Brain Energy Support Team