Vital Visionaries: Sarah Renberg - How I Recovered From Multiple Concussions with Vision Therapy Transcript

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Introduction and Early Athletic Background

Hi, my name is Sarah Renberg. I'm from Ann Arbor, Michigan. So I got to work with Dr. Bryce for a long time. Before working with him, I was, you know, your stereotypical high achieving student athlete, ace student, and I being recruited to play ice hockey in college, And I also played soccer for my high school.

I worked with Doctor Appelbaum first after like a standard sports concussion and was able to return to playing and play some of the best hockey of my life.

And think I scored more goals after that period than I had the entire previous season.

Concussion Recovery and Return to Hockey

I later sustained more significant brain and neck injuries in 2014, which caused physical and cognitive deficits, including a severe dysfunction of my autonomic nervous system, Which created some additional complications.

Vision-wise, I had some double vision, lacked depth perception, couldn't read or focus my eyes. I got car sick, Couldn't easily tolerate movement in places with crowds or visually stimulating places like the grocery store.

So especially after the second injury, all of a sudden I was a junior in high school and I couldn't read.

Second Injury and Vision Problems

And I'm getting ready to take my SAT and that was just going to be a nightmare. I do want to make clear that vision therapy was one component of my rehab.

So I got a degree in biopsychology, cognition and neuroscience. so I've gotten to appreciate the beautifully complex sensory systems that our brains allow for.

Even something like turning your head like this. requires a vision vestibular system and musculoskeletal systems just to oversimplify it. That being said, I think vision therapy helps to train and optimize your visual skill set and was definitely one foundational cornerstone of my rehab process.

I feel it played its biggest role in my return to the classroom. So reading, screen use, tolerating busy environments and allowing me to, you know, ultimately go to college.

I definitely credit Dr.

How Vision Therapy Supported Rehab

Bryce a big portion with my ability to matriculate to the University of Michigan. Yeah, so my most recent dose of vision therapy came after a brain surgery I had this past May.

And with this run, I felt like I was getting better control of my eyes. It helped with stamina, which helped me return to work and get back behind the wheel with confidence.

So vision therapy has allowed me to do many things, like go to the big house to watch a football game with my friends, not feel nauseous and pukey. But reading is really a primary one.

So early in my injury recovery, I had to work at actually seeing the words on the page. And then once I can make them single and clear, comprehension was a factor, and then building stamina.

Reading, Stamina, and Returning to College

To get to the level that I wanted in order to succeed in college and beyond, vision therapy played a big role in increasing my comprehension and speed of reading.

And with the help of vision in addition to other rehab modalities, I graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Michigan, so you could say I read like a champ now.

You know, with the injuries, I felt like I lost everything, including any sense of control. And that's a pretty standard knee-jerk reaction to any sort of adversity.

What I've learned since is how much power we do actually have to make a difference in our outcome, and just hoping passively won't get you far. So for me, that looks like living in a way that supports my healing.

I went and got a neuroscience degree so I could be empowered in the physician's office.

Regaining Control Through Healthy Habits

fail to appreciate how much good habits can give you some sense of autonomy within your own life, you can put yourself in the best situation to have a good outcome.

Big picture, my goal or in the immediate future is to hopefully attend medical school and use what I've learned throughout this healing process from the other side of the exam table and be able to do right by my patients and really push the limit moving forward on helping others achieve optimal brain health.

And long-term, I wanna be like the cool mom that drives carpool and helps coach the sports teams and stuff like that. So I'm excited to you know, have a future with limitless possibility thanks to a working noggin.

Future Goals and Vital Visionary Mindset

So being a vital visionary to me means going through life with clarity, pun intended. The challenges I face force me to hone in on my values from a young age and trust my gut when making potentially life-altering decisions like what sort of brain surgery I should have.

And so I really think my eagerness to learn, question, and take things in like a sponge in the doctor's office were big factors in my ability to lead the life that I get to now.