

## **“Rebalancing the Mind”**

### **Emily Wright, It’ll Be Alright**

### **International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference 2023**

### **November 10**

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[Hello everyone.

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Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.

The transcriptionists are:

Elektra Panthar

Lorivonne Lustre

The speakers will be identified by initials as they speak.

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:

EW: Emily Wright]

[2023/11/10 08:32] Voltek Atansoff: ♦ Hello there, lovely people.

(I don't use voice )

♦ Welcome to Virtual Ability's 2023 International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference (valDRAC).

♦ I'm Orianna Howlingwind and for the savvy ones, you can fetch my legacy name.

♦ I'm a chronically depressed, transgender person, and under suspicion of having some degree of ASD. I live in France and English is not my native language.

♦ I've been in SL for 17 years, intermittently at times, a long time resident at Cape Able. I love to build things, when I have ideas, and to explore other sims to be inspired.

And now let me introduce you to "Emily Wright".

♦ A multifaceted talent, rising voice of a generation.

♦ As the rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, she will take us on a journey from chaos to calm after receiving multiple traumatic brain injuries.

♦ And as always, questions are welcome, but only after the end to leave room for the presentation.

That's all folks :)

[2023/11/10 08:34] Elektra Panthar: EW: Thank you everyone for being here

Thank you to Gentle and VAI

I'll share my journey today

Born in UK, moved to NZ at 9 and then to Canada at 14 so my accent changes a bit

Child care and education

- Nanny and child care centers  
extracurricular teacher/tutor (English, reading, math, skiing),
- Service industry
- Hospitality, retail, food and beverage  
Worked up to Management and marketing

Pandemic

- general manager of grocery store, online delivery service  
community donation pool to get groceries to families in need, worked with local charity to raise money to reach out to isolated individuals (particularly elderly)  
Select and support small businesses. Helped multiple start-up businesses, able to be first retail location for many  
Administration, theater

Rich history of mental health challenges and conquests

Depression for about a decade and suicidal for many years.

- My overthinking was a big contributor and my thoughts ran so fast and full I felt like I was out of control of my mind  
Struggled with intense emotions that changed drastically very quickly
- Through theater learned how to express and understand emotion
- Eventually - through my concussion experiences learned I was sensitive to other people's emotions. Used to get overwhelmed with strong, conflicting emotions which contributed to depression.

Learned to relinquish ownership of thought and emotion and to observe my thoughts and feelings without getting tangled up

Needed to learn how to center my self and bring my own

I was able to give myself time to reorganize my thoughts and emotions through mindfulness

It's important to give ourselves time for selfcare every day

It's important to be aware of others' feelings and adjust behaviour accordingly.

Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs)

calm to detach from my emotions as well as the emotions of everyone else.

- My multiple TBIs helped me to find this stability, and I shall be sharing that in more detail
- Incorporated daily mindfulness and self care practices

Learned how emotional intelligence can be an asset and not just a burden.

Being sensitive to emotion means I can help people navigate their own emotions and internal conflicts

- My friends call me "The Shamen" because I am the person that they go to for advice, including spiritual advice

A big part of the reason I was able to overcome my mental health challenges was because in 2017-2018, I had three severe concussions within a year

- Doctors told me to lay in a dark room with no stimulation until I experienced 24 hours without symptoms. Then I could stand up and move around, but if I had any symptoms at all, I was to lay back down and wait until I had 24 hours of no symptoms, then I could try standing up again. If I had no symptoms after getting up, then I had to wait 24 hours and if I still didn't have any symptoms, I could take a short walk around the house. If I had any symptoms, I had to go back to bed until I had 24 hours no symptoms then try standing up again. This progressed to slightly longer walks, around house, end of street etc. but back to bed if experience any other symptoms.

- As a result, I spent over an accumulated year in near-complete sensory deprivation, with eye blinds on in a pitch black room doing nothing and my condition deteriorated, because use it or lose it.
- At worst: could barely open my eyes and it was painful and exhausting to do so.
- I needed help sitting up, and getting to the bathroom.

Eventually I was able to crawl and then pull myself along the walls, but it took ages and it would wipe me out and I wouldn't be able to move for hours afterwards.

- Finding words was a challenge, let alone speaking them, and I struggled with amnesia and cognitive difficulties

- I was in constant pain, like every cell was wrought in an icy fire, and I had intense fatigue, dizziness, and nausea that spiked with attempts at movement.

- Basically existed in bodilessness and had to consciously reintegrate into my body to take care of the basic needs (eat, water, toilet) but it was exhausting each time I did.

The time gave me a chance to heal

### The Four Stages of Thought

It was like walking through a mansion and turning a light on in each room, but the mansion is full of sticky putty that you have to swim through.

- In our society, we don't fully appreciate how much energy it takes to do simple things. We abuse our bodies and work ourselves to the grave, because we do not value an individual on their potential energy, but on their kinetic energy. We judge a person on what they can do and not who they could be.

- I was on disability benefits but the amount you get for that is not congruent to the living wage, and it is hard to stay afloat.
- Out of financial necessity, I would go back to work when I was not in a fit state to do so, and would get another concussion and have to do it all again. The immobility contributed to my depression
- Used to be terrified of my mind and then I found myself trapped in the chaos of my thoughts and feelings, unable to get away or distract myself
- I had already been severely depressed and suicidal, but during this time I was unable to physically do anything about it

- There is a point of psychological agony where it becomes physical, and I felt like my soul was trying to tear itself from my body. However, this experience forced me to take the time to heal.

- I went into this experience depressed and struggling with overthinking and a chaotic mind

But I was forced to stop and internalise my consciousness to unravel my tangled thoughts and feelings

In the end,

I found clarity and came out at peace

- I wouldn't wish this experience on anyone, but it gave me the tools to heal my mind and now help others to do the same.

Once upon a time, Silence terrified me, and now I embrace it and actively seek it.

As the months of immobility rolled on, I realised that I had to make a choice. Especially in my later concussions, I knew I had months ahead of me of doing nothing, so how was I going to use this time?

- Made a choice: either go insane, or I figure out how my brain worked. Chose the latter.

- Completely internalised my consciousness and focused on my mind. Felt how everything was working and learned about connectivity in the brain and body through internal observation

Let my thoughts unravel and followed them backwards to the source. In doing so, I found patterns and connections

and was able to untangle my mind

## Recovery

From this I created 'The Four Stages of Thought' which is based on my observations of my mind's healing. These stages reflect how I found clarity of mind and resolved my depression

In retrospect, it feels like the blows to the head shook apart the tangled pathways in my mind and then I was able to rebuild and forge new connections, but do not try this at home!

### Stage 1: Distraction

- We keep our selves and our minds busy to ignore and avoid the conflict

### Stage 2: Introspection

- We look inwards and commit to self-reflection to understand how we feel and why

### Stage 3: Extrospection

- We look out to see how our behaviour is impacting those around us

### Stage 4: Resolution

- We make decisions about how we want to change and integrate them into our daily lives

- This is a generalisation of how I understand the procession of thought and emotion as it seeks resolution

Eventually I basically begged my doctor for an alternative to lying in bed doing nothing and she put me in an information session for new concussion patients.

From this meeting I got in with the University of British Columbia concussion research study which worked with Mindfulness and Occupational Therapy. This was amazing and set the foundation for how I manage my self now.

- Also found a physiotherapist that specialised in concussions
- Learned everything I had been told by multiple doctors in multiple medical facilities and provinces was out of date and actually made things worse. This was hard to process and there were a lot of emotions that came with this information.

But these experiences made me who I am today and gave me the tools to help others

- Now I meditate multiple times a day and consistently practice mindfulness

Time management and taking regular breaks crucial to make sure I don't get overwhelmed  
Super sensitive to light and sound (especially) after being in a sensory-deprived state for so long, so reintegrating into society was a challenge

- screens are challenging

- Feels like my eyes are burning and I find it strange now that we grow up being told not to stare at lights because it will damage our eyes, and now we have this whole system of technology, work, and schooling that demands we spend most of our days staring at a screen of light.

- I do public speaking events which are primarily virtual, but I have to keep my focus on the screen because of the camera. My vision goes blurry, the colours pulsate into different blobs of light and eventually the whole screen goes blank so I can't see anyone's faces. I get dizzy and it burns my eyes and my brain and I feel like I'm going to pass out, but it's live and being recorded so I focus on my breathing and keep my expression passive. It's harder to focus on what is being said.

- more sensitive to electromagnetic fields

- hear electricity more keenly, and there is a lot of it in this world so I can get overwhelmed by the constant noise. Sometimes can hear when a phone is fully charged

- high-pitched squealing noise like trapped boiling water o electric/hybrid cars are a challenge (dizzy, fatigue, headache)

- air gets thick and buzzes, pressure on the front of my head, fatigue, hard to keep eyes open  
Screens in newer cars are a combined challenge. My car is a gas-powered analogue car (no screens, only buttons and knobs) so it's ok. When I use a share car or am in someone else's car and there is a screen, wear glasses/sunglasses and if I am in the back passenger seats close my eyes and try to use the front seats to block my view of the screen.

Fully charged phones squeal and bother me

Impressions of stimuli

Looking forward to progression of e-paper and e-ink

technology that are e-reader/kindle style screens, more matte and less sharp

I use a brain training app called Elevate. It is pretty cool

I wear yellow tinted glasses a lot. Not only do they look good, but they really help me  
Mindfulness and meditation is key, practices every day

- Life management is crucial to make sure I don't get overwhelmed
- Taking breaks, reducing input.

Giving your mind time to process

I try to keep a clear slate in my mind.

Mindfulness and meditation help to clear the slate to focus better

My goal each day is to keep a clear slate

Imagine that everything leaves an impression.

- Every stimulus in your life leaves a mark/ an imprint. These imprints need to be effectively processed
- otherwise they pile up and make it harder to process new information.
- This negatively impacts our decision making and
- contributes to heightened emotions

Mind management

Setting up a process in our mind

Each month I present different tips across my social media platforms

Here is Mind Tip #1

Count to 10

Between each task for the day, count to 10. Then prepare for the next one

This helped me to learn to be patient with myself

Feel free to follow me on social media for more mind bites

I have written several books.

Be aware of algorithmic bias

Through social media we have great reach, and with AI these unconscious biases can expand

I did an experiment with Spotify looking at the algorithm

It was so interesting to see how the recommendations changed as I modified my likes

We have to address our subconscious bias if we want to affect algorithmic bias

Next, I would like to discuss lucid dreaming

Learned to lucid dream during concussion phase

- Write everyday in dream journal which I will be publishing as a series of volumes

It explains what I call "Lucid physics"

Discusses the composition of Dream Scape, how it is built by the Subconscious Mind and how it relates to our waking/conscious experience

My understanding of how to manipulate the dream scape, which I experience as a vibrational matrix Fun for me to both experience and write because it is presented through the stories of dreams

This has been a great experience for me

Finally, running

I used to be very active. The concussion made this very difficult

Big one for me considering I once didn't know if I would ever run again and every step was painful and would send a shockwave through my system.

Now I have a running coach and we've been training for a half marathon

Ran 14km in September which is the longest I've run so far

。 However, I pulled my hip flexor and haven't been able to run as much in the last month or so, but I know that it is a temporary set back and with patience and listening to my body I will recover and complete my goal

This is important for me

Thank you so much for listening

Thank you for being here

Feel free to reach out to me

Questions?

[2023/11/10 09:19] Gentle Heron: Thank you for sharing with us today Emily. You talked about how to be kind to yourself. How do you go about helping someone else learn to be kind to themselves?

[2023/11/10 09:16] Gingerjoy (Joycie String): Thank you so much..Nature environments can be soothing. Some doctors recommend going to green spaces for part of our health plans.

[2023/11/10 09:17] Shiloh e. (Shiloh Emmons): I applaud you for your work focusing on concussion and head injury. Q: Have you worked with tonal meditation and or color meditation? And, how has much of your creativity returned, as well as rational deductive reasoning? As a survivor of traumatic head injury(ies), I understand the sensitivity you experience and changes in hearing, light, etc. I can assure that things improve, and creativity can return, memory can return, and you can actually rewire your brain through meditation. I had to go through speech therapy, and my coordination was skewed (but as a young adult rectified through dance). Via visual meditation, I used to do that often as a child (not calling it mindful meditation) I repaired myself. And I have delved into tonal meditation, working with sound, and I also practice 'mindful meditation' today.

[2023/11/10 09:18] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: good comments and questions

Yes, rewiring is important

I feel like the blows to the head shook loose the connections

[2023/11/10 09:20] Shiloh e. (Shiloh Emmons): nods...

[2023/11/10 09:20] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: I was able to rewire. I am a different person today than I was before

I know that there has been good success with tonal and colour medication, especially in VR environments

I am very aware of colour

[2023/11/10 09:21] Shiloh e. (Shiloh Emmons): good

[2023/11/10 09:22] Gentle Heron: Eme's design team carefully chose the colors for this auditorium to be calming.

[2023/11/10 09:17] Mook Wheeler: COMMENT: You noticed that your visual and sensory overload was "not too bad here because it is a different setup". Many people with disabilities find Second Life uniquely accessible because almost everything can be customised to accommodate their disabilities. I have never found a better digital environment than SL in which to interact and share, in spite of my various needs & limitations stemming from ASD. This conference is an example of that accessible reach. And SL doesn't use algorithms or ads in its usage model. I hope you will come back and experience more with us!

[2023/11/10 09:19] Buffy Beale: QUESTION: Has being in Second Life been helpful or inspiring for you?

[2023/11/10 09:21] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: this [SL] space is so inspiring!

I have found that I don't have to be 'present' in the same way as physical presentations

[2023/11/10 09:21] Buffy Beale: Thank you Emily, you are very inspiring!

[2023/11/10 09:21] Itico: QUESTION: Do you have a "safe space" where you go, mental or physical, that you "retreat" to when things get too much? Certainly not the total blackout space like which was recommended.

[2023/11/10 09:24] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: Yes, I use tapping on my forehead

It helps me to find the peace I need

I easily spent more than 10000 hours of medication in my recovery -- and I can easily tap into it

I create physical spaces that are calming and reflect your purpose

[2023/11/10 09:23] Ava Dougall: Your eloquence is absolutely inspiring. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us... I consider myself a 'slow processor'... and recognize my Need for processing the information and experiences of each day.... and felt that the world does not encourage that. I look forward to reading more on your links and sharing the video

[2023/11/10 09:27] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: thank you Ava

Slow and fast are relative

Have the confidence in yourself to slow down if you need to

Being yourself is the strongest form of rebellion

[2023/11/10 09:28] Ava Dougall: beautiful thank you soooo much.

[2023/11/10 09:28] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): EW: thank you so much!

[2023/11/10 09:28] Sheila Yoshikawa: Thank you so much!

[2023/11/10 09:29] Elektra Panthar: 🎵🎵🎵🎵 Applauds 🎵🎵🎵🎵

[2023/11/10 09:29] Pecos Kidd: Great job!!!

[2023/11/10 09:29] Buffy Beale: Thank you and keep up the awesome work! Cheering!!

[2023/11/10 09:29] Lyr Lobo: Great session, thank you!

[2023/11/10 09:29] ♡ Andee ♡ (Andee Cooper): awesome presentation

[2023/11/10 09:29] Tori Landau: Applauds! That you for such an inspiring presentation.

[2023/11/10 09:29] Inquisitive Loon: Applause.

[2023/11/10 09:29] Elli Pinion: \*\*\*\* applause \*\*\*\*

[2023/11/10 09:29] Lizard of ARS (Marylou Goldrosen): Thanks! Learned a lot!

[2023/11/10 09:29] Keif Denimore: Applause



[2023/11/10 09:29] DeeDeeBeaker Resident: Thank you for the wonderful presentation

[2023/11/10 09:29] Itllbealwright Resident: Thank you everyone! :) x  
Feel free to reach out to me @itllbealwright

[2023/11/10 09:29] LV (LoriVonne Lustre): <<transcription ends>>