



## Dan Winston, crash survivor:

My mother and father thought I was dead. Moments earlier, on a spring evening in 2003, we were driving back from my high school band concert in Providence, Rhode Island. At the same time, a young man was speeding down residential streets, holding up a can of beer to show off for the underage girls in the car beside him. His sedan slammed into my parents' SUV at more than 60mph.

My mom, bloody and bruised in the front seat, turned back to see me slumped silently against the case of the tuba I had just used to create beautiful music. My dad, who'd been driving, was physically unharmed. He screamed my name, but I did not respond. As emergency workers rushed me to the hospital, Dad called my sister in Syracuse and told her to come home immediately. Her younger brother might not make it through the night.

I slipped into a coma for 9 days and spent another 10 days in the intensive care unit. I was transferred to a rehabilitation hospital in Boston, where I would remain for another month. I have a distinct memory of "waking up" about one month after the crash, wondering why I was in a hospital bed. I still could not walk, talk, or swallow solid foods. My days were consumed by physical and occupational therapy, surrounded by an incredible medical team, until I was released in July.

Later that summer, I didn't understand why friends cried when they saw me. On the outside, I looked normal. Back at school for my junior year, I didn't understand why I was failing classes that used to come easily. On the inside, I felt normal.

Traumatic Brain Injuries can take years to heal, a process that doctors still do not fully understand. By my senior year of high school, with lots of hard work, classes began to come more easily.

Even with halting academic progress, I wasn't quite the same. Some of my friends didn't want to hang out with me anymore. Before the crash, people used to be surprised by my self-confidence. It was unexpected for the smallest boy in the class. For years after the crash, my parents would reflect that I had lost



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that “spark.” In the fog of the brain injury, I didn’t notice anything had changed. I carried on like before. Nothing would stop me from reclaiming my life.

18 years later, I think my spark has come back. I’m happily married, fortunate to have a wonderful job and live in a community that I love.

I can’t remember the crash itself, of course, but the entire saga—struggles in school, years ago; not being able to ride a roller coaster, even today—is never far from my mind. It’s the most dramatic of a series of forces that have guided me in my career to create better, safer communities through great transportation systems.

When I was an ANC Commissioner, I reviewed road designs or development plans and considered trade-offs on parking, access, affordability, and more. For me, these trade-offs were not conceptual. Professionally, I’ve helped build businesses that reduce reliance on cars. My teams know that safety is our number one priority.

Our country’s cavalier attitude to deaths on the road is incredibly frustrating. When you’ve had an experience like mine, it is truly incomprehensible. But one of the lessons I’ve learned from the crash is that you must keep going, after any setback. Don’t be cynical. The future will be better, only if we work hard to make it so.

I’m sharing my story to help others feel the same way.

—Dan Winston

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**DC Families for Safe Streets confronts traffic violence** and its epidemic of tragic injuries and deaths. We are comprised of victims of traffic violence and families whose loved ones have been killed or severely injured by aggressive or reckless driving and dangerous conditions on District streets. We represent the full breadth of the District's diversity and demand an end to traffic violence.

**We bear witness** to our pain and suffering to press for the elimination of fatalities and injuries on our streets. Through our stories and advocacy, we seek cultural and physical changes on our streets and the rapid implementation of Vision Zero.

**We envision** a city where people who walk, roll, bike, and drive can safely co-exist, and children and adults can travel freely without risk of harm – where no loss of life in traffic is acceptable.

**We advocate** for life-saving changes and provide support to those affected by deadly crashes in our communities. We seek changes toward safer streets that might have saved our loved ones, or prevented injuries, as a meaningful way to channel our grief and honor our family members. We work so that no other families suffer the loss or life altering injuries that have impacted our families.