

Book Review

Title: *Listening in the Silence, Seeing in the Dark: Reconstructing Life after Brain Injury*

Author: Ruthann Knechel Johansen

Publisher: University of California Press, 2002

Cloth, ISBN: 0-520-23114-7, 217 pp.

Cost: \$24.95 USD

Reviewer: Kelly D. Roberts

Listening in the Silence, Seeing in the Dark: Reconstructing Life after Brain Injury is a mother's story of a teenager, Erik, who has a traumatic brain injury (TBI). This thought-provoking book looks at life after brain injury primarily from a mother's perspective, while exploring the impact on the entire family. *Listening in the Silence* is a must read for persons working with people with brain injuries, family members of those with brain injuries, and persons with brain injury.

Near the end of Erik's sophomore year in high school, he was a passenger in an automobile accident that left him in a coma. He registered at the least responsive level on the Glasgow Coma Scale showing no motor response, no eye-opening, and no vocal response. He was in critical condition for three weeks and diagnosed with TBI.

The author presents the process involved in reclaiming and reconstructing self after brain injury. She takes the reader through this process from learning to walk, remembering family members, learning to read and write, to more personal things like re-developing a personality and interpersonal and social skills.

The author leaves the reader knowing that science still has a lot to learn about how the miraculous brain functions and the long-term prognosis for individuals with TBI. While "there is no predictability in the course of recovery from TBI," (p. 16) Erik, with the support of his family and friends, is able to recover, attend and graduate from college, establish new relationships, and obtain and maintain satisfying employment. Although Erik does not return to his "old self" he does regain physical and mental capacities that are close to his pre-accident condition.

From the bleak view of staff from the medical institutions, who did not provide much hope, "On two or three occasions the medical director, neurologist, psychologist, and even the social worker urged us to face the reality of Erik's condition and go home more [conveying their belief that Erik would probably not recover]" (p. 111), to the continued hope of family members, the book takes the reader through this life altering ordeal and provides insight into human development and resiliency.