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The Mottley Law Firm

# NORMAL SCANS, HIDDEN HARM

## THOUGHTS ON BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month, a time to focus attention on one of the most misunderstood injuries we encounter in both medicine and life. Unlike a broken bone or a surgical scar, a brain injury often leaves no outward sign. Yet, its effects can be profound, permanent, and life-altering.

One of the most common things people say about brain injuries is also one of the most misleading: "But the CT scan was normal." That statement is frequently true, but it's also deeply incomplete.

Modern imaging is excellent at detecting bleeding, swelling, or structural damage to the brain. However, many brain injuries, particularly mild, traumatic ones, don't announce themselves so clearly. The damage may be microscopic, functional, or metabolic rather than structural. The scan may look fine, but the person may not be *fine* in reality.

As a firm that represents individuals with traumatic brain injuries, we see this disconnect often. Someone survives a crash or a fall. They walk away. They return to work. From the outside, everything appears unchanged, but internally, life has shifted in ways that are hard to explain and even harder to measure. Some of the most serious injuries leave no visible mark at all.

Memory becomes unreliable. Concentration slips. Light and noise feel overwhelming. Emotions no longer behave the way they once did. Words get lost mid-sentence. Tasks that used to be effortless suddenly require intense focus. Because these struggles are invisible, the person suffering often discounts them. Clients will sometimes tell me they feel like they're living in someone else's body.

What makes a brain injury especially difficult is that recovery is rarely linear. There is no cast to remove, nor a final therapy session to mark its end. Progress comes in fits and starts. Good days are followed by setbacks. Improvements may be subtle and uneven. This unpredictability can be frustrating not only for the injured person but also for their friends and loved ones.

The biggest hurdle for a friend or family member is often accepting that the person with this type of injury is not the same as they once were. Someone who was once a get-up-and-go person may now become fatigued, unmotivated, or overwhelmed by activities they once enjoyed or performed without issue. They may also exhibit intense mood swings, becoming angry one moment and apologetic the next.



In that sense, a brain injury is rarely an *individual* experience. It affects spouses, children, coworkers, and caregivers. Roles change. Patience is tested. Relationships are altered in ways that don't always show up in photographs or medical records. This reality is at the heart of why I do the work I do.

As a trial lawyer, my passion — and my responsibility — is to master the art of explaining this hidden injury to complete strangers sitting in a jury box. In a matter of days, I must help them understand something that doctors spend careers studying and survivors struggle to describe. I must give jurors a framework for seeing what can't be seen and for appreciating what has been taken from a person whose life may appear "normal" at first glance.

That challenge is not about persuasion for its own sake; it's about translation. It's about bridging the gap between medical science, human experience, and common sense. It's also about giving ordinary people the tools they need to fairly evaluate an injury that leaves no scar and often no clear timeline for recovery.

Brain Injury Awareness Month is not just about recognition; it's about *understanding*. A normal scan does not always equal a normal life. Understanding that distinction is the first step toward real awareness ... and real justice.

—Kevin Mottley

# YOUR CARRY-ON, UPGRADED

## A Guide to Mastering the Minimalist Travel Mindset

We've all been there: juggling bags, hunting for space in overhead compartments, and wishing we had packed lighter. But with these five simple strategies, you can pack less, move faster, and enjoy your adventure instead of dragging it around.

### Choose a smaller bag to guide your packing.

We all have that impulse to pack "just in case," stuffing extra clothes and gadgets into our luggage because, well, there's room. But here's the trick: Pick a smaller bag than usual. A carry-on around 10 liters smaller than what you usually use acts as a gentle nudge, forcing you to rethink what you need.

### Build a capsule wardrobe for travel.

Clothes are where overpacking really sneaks in. Instead of thinking in terms of outfits, think in terms of items. Build a travel capsule wardrobe of 10-12 mix-and-match pieces, including shoes and jackets. These can cover a week or more. Don't stress about underwear; pack what you need outside the capsule. The goal is simplicity, flexibility, and style without the suitcase overload.

### Maximize space with compression cubes.

Packing cubes might not reduce the amount you bring, but they sure make it fit better. Compression cubes help you organize and compact your clothing, allowing even a modest bag to hold everything neatly.

### Keep toiletries tiny and simple.

Skip the half-bottle of shampoo and overstuffed toiletry bag. Travel-size containers for shampoo, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, sunscreen, and a few first-aid essentials are all you need. Bonus: Running out of toothpaste gives you a perfect excuse to explore a local grocery store. You might even discover a quirky, new favorite.

### Think short, even on long trips.

Longer travel doesn't mean more packing. Essentials, such as your passport, phone, chargers, a water bottle, a comb, and a travel pillow, remain constant. Clothing? Keep it minimal and plan to do laundry. Sink-washing, hotel services, or local laundromats all work. A few spins in water and a quick hang to dry is surprisingly effective.

Travel lighter, explore further, and enjoy the freedom that comes from packing smart. Less baggage means more adventure, and a little extra space for souvenirs.



# TRADE YOUR EMPTY NEST FOR FINANCIAL FREEDOM

## The Tiny Home Trend for Secure Senior Living

As we grow older, we start to give more thought to the idea of retirement. After working diligently for decades, many people want to step away from work to spend their senior years traveling, enjoying time with loved ones, and taking steps to ensure they can age in place. However, retirement seems more like a dream than a reality for many Americans. While there is no magic number for how much retirement costs in 2026, experts estimate that most Americans will need over \$1 million to maintain their standard of living through retirement.

If you haven't poured money into your retirement accounts throughout your career, you may be concerned about having a big enough nest egg in the future. You may worry you'll have to continue working until your body gives out, but that's not necessarily true for everyone. Among

strategies you can use to shore up your retirement savings, one that has gained popularity is downsizing.

Once the kids leave the nest and start families of their own, you may have more space than you know what to do with. While you could move into an apartment or a smaller home in your neighborhood, you may benefit from exploring the idea of a tiny home community. In recent years, home developers have given more intentional thought to creating communities that enable older Americans to age in place.

Many have features that make our lives easier as we age. Flooring that allows medical devices to function smoothly, elevated appliances, easy-to-open shelving, motion-activated lighting, and remote-control blinds are just a few examples of the helpful elements found in many tiny home communities. The houses are usually single-level to eliminate the dangers of stairs and feature accessible bathroom designs to promote safety and more.

From Oregon to Florida, tiny home communities are popping up all over the country. If you're looking for a healthy way to age in place without breaking the bank, consider downsizing to a tiny home.



## Attitude as Treatment

### The Power of Positive Thought

What we think goes a long way in defining who we are.

With this month's newsletter focused on brain health and injuries, I want to explore a seemingly small practice that can have a tremendous impact on virtually everything in our lives: positive thinking. Although it may seem too simple to approach the most challenging situations you face with a smile and a good attitude, scientific evidence suggests that a positive outlook can vastly improve your physical and mental health. Here are a few intriguing details I recently learned about the power of positive thinking.

#### Optimism offsets bad odds.

Stress is not good for anyone, but it's especially harmful to people who have a history of heart disease in their families. While certain stressful life matters may be unavoidable, how we react to them is essential. According to a Johns Hopkins School of Medicine study, having a positive attitude through life's trials and tribulations can reduce the likelihood of a heart attack or other cardiovascular conditions by as much as 33%. Additionally, optimistic people without a family history of heart issues reduce their chances of experiencing a coronary health condition or emergency by 13%.

#### It's good to fake it until you make it.

You know those moments when you need to put on a smile despite how you may be feeling inside? Well, it turns out that even a false display of happiness can help our overall physical and mental health. According to a study conducted at the University of Kansas, *any* form of smiling (including the fake variety) can help reduce our blood pressure and heart rate during stressful moments. (*Pro tip:* If talking on the phone makes you feel uncomfortable, try smiling next time. Doing so will naturally lift your voice to a more pleasant and confident tone and help you relax.)

Feeling down now and then is normal, but carrying negative emotions for too long can jeopardize more than your mood. When it comes to our health, accentuating the positive is always the most rewarding path.

—Kevin Mottley

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## SUDOKU

## Persuasion With Proof

### THE BLUEPRINT FOR WINNING BRAIN INJURY CASES

What does it take to bring a brain injury to life for a jury?

Convincing strangers that a traumatic brain injury exists for a client, and that it has fundamentally altered the way they experience life, is easily one of my most significant challenges as a personal injury attorney.

Considering that most brain injury clients appear "normal," proving the extent of an injury and the effect it has had on their daily existence is essential. My primary objective whenever I handle a case of this nature is to prove my client's injury and help them receive compensation that reflects everything the injury has taken from them. Here are three of the most common ways I work to convince a jury that my client deserves a just legal victory.

#### Voices of Validation

Testimonials from the people who know my client best are among the most valuable tools any attorney can have. People who

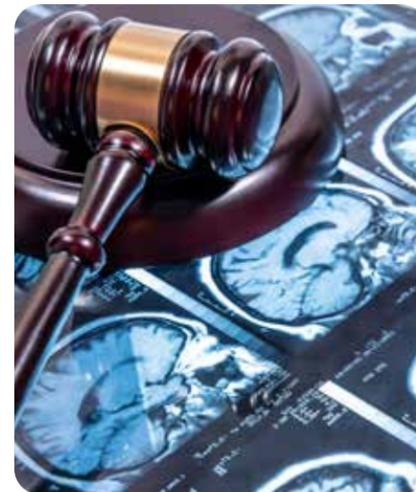
knew my client before and after the injury can help confirm and corroborate the details I share about how the event has changed them and how it has impacted their quality of life. A client's family members, friends, coworkers, and fellow parishioners are among the folks I've called on to help enlighten the jury on what life was like before the trauma.

#### Science Everyone Can See

While words from the right people are incredibly helpful, it's sometimes beneficial to also let *fingers* do the talking. Brain models and other demonstrative aids allow jurors to touch, feel, and see how the soft tissue inside a hard skull can be injured in various situations. In some cases, I utilize expert testimony from medical professionals to further explain the issues these visual aids represent.

#### Photos That Prove the Point

Of course, the third way to help a jury understand a brain injury's severity is to show scenes of the accident. Of all the



options available to me, this one is often the most difficult. After all, we may have little more than images of a benign-looking crash scene or a pristinely intact windshield. However, we're sometimes fortunate to have photographic proof that clearly demonstrates how a brain injury could have taken place.

*If you or a loved one has sustained a traumatic brain injury, please contact me for a consultation.*

—Kevin Mottley



## ST. PATRICK'S DAY SHAMROCK SWIRL PIE

Need a St. Paddy's treat to bring to the potluck? This green mint chocolate pie will save you from a few pinches!

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup mint chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup green food coloring, for vibrant color
- 1 premade chocolate pie crust
- 1/2 cup chocolate syrup, for drizzling

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a mixing bowl, whip heavy cream until stiff peaks form.
2. In a separate bowl, beat softened cream cheese until smooth.
3. Add powdered sugar and vanilla to cream cheese, mixing until well combined. Then, gently fold whipped heavy cream into the mixture.
4. Divide mixture into two bowls. In one bowl, add mint chocolate chips and green food coloring.
5. Layer mixtures into chocolate pie crust, alternating between mint mixture and the plain mixture.
6. Drizzle chocolate syrup over top.
7. Cover with cling wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours to set. Slice and serve chilled.

Inspired by MixUpRecipes.com