

# Creating a Positive Family Environment

By Emilie Godwin

**Worry often** becomes a big part of the lives of many survivors of brain injury and their family members. Anxiety is a normal part of the recovery process. However, frequent worrying and recognizing only barriers or failures can keep you and your family from developing happiness with your new life post-injury.

In order to notice all of the ways you and your family are getting better, your family must first create a positive family environment. Typically, many families in recovery struggle to see the progress they are making. To see if your family is having a hard time thinking positively, take the Family Environment Quiz to the right. Count how many you mark true, and then continue reading on page 6!

## Family Environment Quiz

1. We argue all of the time in our family.  
True\_\_\_ False\_\_\_
2. At least one person in my family is always in the middle of some disaster or another.  
True\_\_\_ False\_\_\_
3. I can't count on anyone in my family but me.  
True\_\_\_ False\_\_\_
4. My family often makes my stress worse instead of better.  
True\_\_\_ False\_\_\_

(contd on page 6)



## Survivor Stories Wanted!

Recovering from a brain injury can be very difficult. Sometimes, one of the most helpful and inspiring things is simply hearing from other survivors who have gone through recovery and faced the same challenges. Are you a survivor with a story you'd like to share? If so, then we'd like to hear it, and it might get into a future issue of TBI Today!

Submit to: [jhmarwit@vcu.edu](mailto:jhmarwit@vcu.edu)

or

TBI Today, VCU P.O. Box 980542  
Richmond, VA 23298-0542



**HAVE YOU MET LINDSAY FARRAR, B.S.?**

**Lindsay F. Farrar, B.S.**, has been working in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation since 2008. Farrar began her involvement in the department working on a Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative (CNI) grant, researching the effectiveness of a community-based intervention in brain injury clubhouses across Virginia. In August 2009, Farrar transitioned to the Neuropsychology Division of the department, where she is presently involved primarily in conducting neuropsychological evaluations. She also works on the TBI Model Systems project, as well as on a research study concerning drugs which may improve the rate of recovery and function after brain injury.

Residing in Buckingham, VA for 18 years, Farrar moved to Lynchburg, VA for four years while pursuing an undergraduate degree. She graduated cum laude from Lynchburg College in May 2008 with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Psychology, and a minor in Interdisciplinary Studies/Teacher Education. While at Lynchburg College, she was an active member of Psi Chi: The National Honor Society in Psychology and the Lynchburg College Emergency Medical Services team. Farrar moved to Richmond in 2008 and is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University, with plans to graduate in December 2010. She is also currently interning at VCU's Center for Psychological Services and Development as a student therapist.



In her spare time, Farrar enjoys spending time with her husband and their dog Bo, hiking, camping, and participating in other outdoor activities.

**(Family Environment contd from page 5)**

The more items you marked true, the more likely your family is having a hard time maintaining a positive attitude. Instead of feeling down about your true responses, first – remember that worry and focusing on the negative can be a very normal part of recovering from TBI for both survivors and family members. Next, take a look at the tips listed below. These ideas will help your family begin to change your environment from a focus on the negative to one that is hopeful and positive. Pick one strategy that you have not tried before and use it regularly for one month. At the end of the month, take the above quiz again and see if you have made some progress in developing a positive family environment.

**Creating a Positive Family Environment**

- ❑ Schedule a family meeting and ask all family members for one idea about how the family can try to create a more supportive and positive home life. Write the ideas down and vote as a family on the two that will most likely work for your family. Work together as a team to make the changes. In two weeks, see how you’ve done. Reward yourselves with something that will be fun for the whole family.
- ❑ Create a family sheet of personal and family gains and accomplishments and make a rule that every person must write at least one accomplishment on the list every day. To show how everyone is working together, give each person their own color to write with and display the list in a room your family uses often.
- ❑ If your family conversations seem to always be centered around the negative things in your lives, come up with a system for helping one another by noticing and pointing out negative talk. When you are helping someone else in the family to change the focus, ask, “Can you think of any ways this might be a good thing?” Even if the answers seem silly, say them. A good laugh can change the mood of the conversation and create an opportunity for positive thinking!



**JUST FOR FUN! SOLUTION**

WASHINGTON (4, 2, SE)  
 TRUMAN (9, 13, NW)  
 ROOSEVELT (9, 1, W)  
 REAGAN (5, 6, NE)  
 OBAMA (14, 1, S)  
 NIXON (4, 10, SE)  
 MONROE (11, 2, SW)  
 MADISON (12, 7, N)  
 LINCOLN (8, 10, E)  
 KENNEDY (7, 7, SE)  
 JEFFERSON (11, 4, SW)  
 JACKSON (9, 12, NE)  
 HOOVER (6, 13, W)  
 FORD (13, 1, SW)  
 EISENHOWER (1, 2, S)  
 COOLIDGE (12, 8, NW)  
 CLINTON (3, 5, S)  
 CARTER (13, 7, N)  
 BUSH (13, 15, W)  
 ADAMS (11, 12, E)  
 (Over, Down, Direction)

