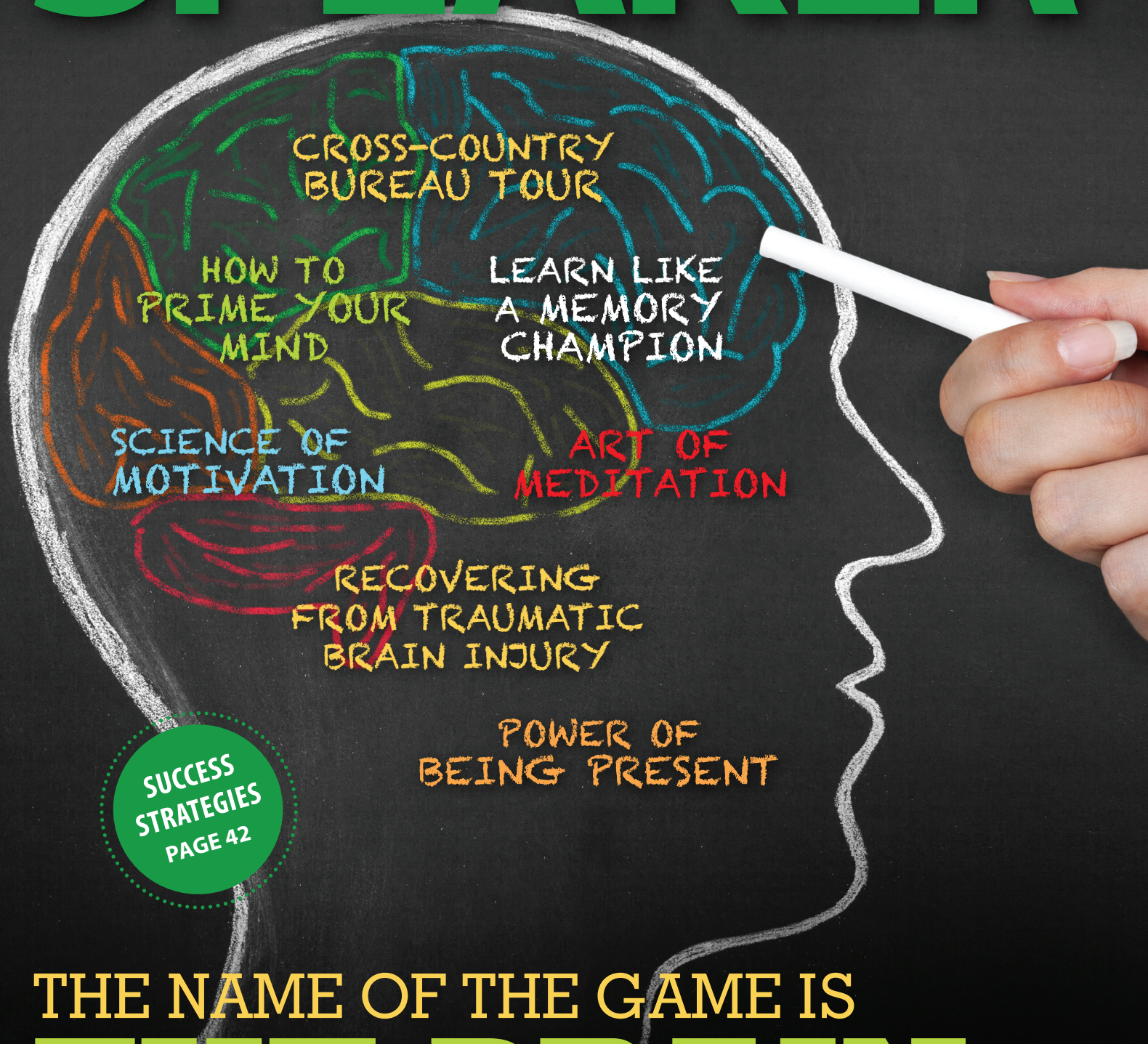
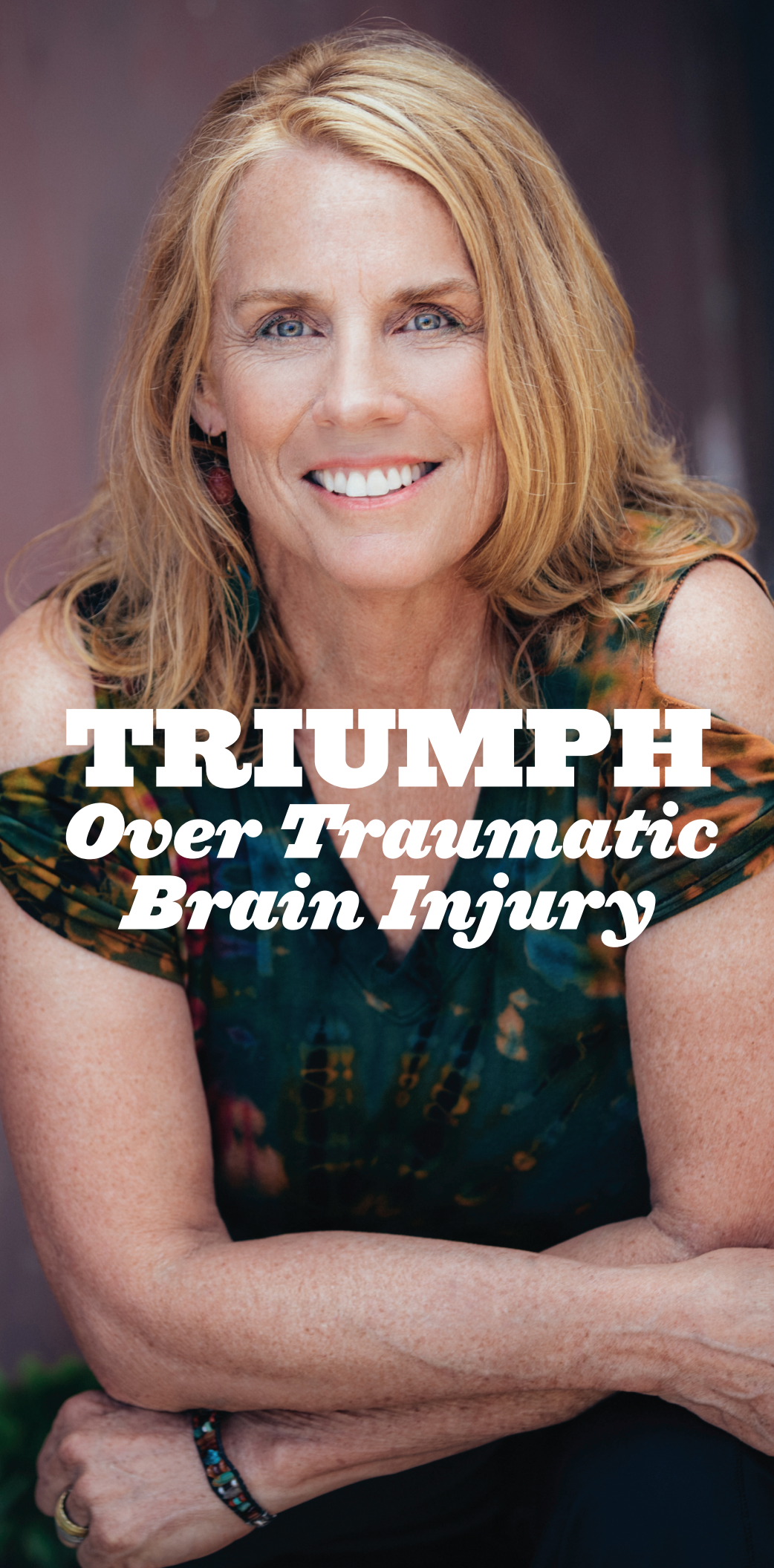


# SPEAKER



THE NAME OF THE GAME IS  
**THE BRAIN**





# TRIUMPH

## *Over Traumatic Brain Injury*

BY KATHLEEN KLAWITTER

**H**ave you ever experienced a time when everything was going your way, you were making a difference, then suddenly someone or something took it all away? I did, in a big way.

In the late 1980's, I resigned from a stressful job in Chicago, sold my home and moved to California to become a golf professional. In one year, I had my LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) card to play, compete and teach. I would hit hundreds of golf balls on the range each day, and people would ask me how I hit the ball so far and so straight. I started to coach them one by one, and I soon realized my true gift and fulfillment came in helping people to believe in themselves so they could become better golfers.

As a teaching professional, my entrepreneurial skills soon kicked in. Besides golf lessons and short-game clinics, I facilitated a one-of-a-kind ladies' golf league for beginners with on course instruction—and no score was kept. It was very popular and the players had fun while learning to make golf shots.

I coached a women's college golf team, where we remained undefeated, won a couple of championships, and I was named Coach of the Year. I wrote golf articles on the body, mind and spirit of the game, not just the mechanics, and offered guided meditations to quiet the mind for higher golf performance. I was a pioneer in this new golf approach, which was cutting edge in the early 90's. I was guest speaker in the Fall Health Classic Series in California, along with Dr. Benjamin Spock, Mishio Kushi and Dr. Saul Miller. I was on top of my game, making a difference not only for people in their golf performance, but their daily lives as well.



## A Direct Hit

On the afternoon of July 28, 1998, I was walking down a cart path that led from the parking lot to the golf clubhouse. Suddenly, without warning, something struck me in the head. It felt like a railroad tie had been driven into the top of my skull, and out my left eye socket. The pain was excruciating, as if a bowling ball had fallen on my head—not an errant speeding golf ball that was hit from the 9th tee. The black asphalt and the green grass were spinning like a plate atop a long thin stick, knowing it would fall in just matter of time. In seconds, darkness consumed me and I crumpled to the ground. I lay motionless, glassy eyed and drooling.

My very young, vibrant and motivated life changed in an instant. My entire career and everything I had worked for was gone. Everything I lived for was shattered.

A few months later, after grueling neurological testing, I learned I suffered a traumatic brain injury. The rehabilitation process was long and painful. I had to relearn to speak, read and write. I worked with a neuropsychologist, speech therapist, cognitive therapist and vision therapist. Although it was challenging, I persevered because I wanted to live. I continued to forge ahead, but at a turtle's pace.

Along the way, I have learned something quite profound: The brain is magnificent, resilient and changeable. Moreover, having an enriched and stimulating environment was conducive to being a better learner, so I chose things of high interest to strengthen the weaker parts of my brain. One of the first uplifting sounds I heard after my accident was my dad's polka band. When I walked to my medical appointments, I would turn my backpack around and pretend I was playing the accordion. It was very familiar and gave me hope.

I started communing with nature for comfort and guidance, especially by laying on the earth. My brainwaves would synchronize with the natural rhythms of the earth. It was very grounding. I also started remembering the body, mind and spirit methods I used to teach my golf clients. I started rebuilding my life by using these methods. Just doing the breathing exercises gave my brain a surplus of oxygen. I began to think more clearly and felt more vitality. Instead of breathing with my clients, I was breathing with the trees!



Since the accident, Klawitter earned a black belt and became a certified archery instructor.

The way I access information is ever-evolving. After almost 20 years, I am still practicing these skills and strategies. The more I practice, the stronger the new pathway or brain circuit becomes. Now, I can create my life with purpose, passion and power. I am human proof it can be done.

I am finalizing a survivor's memoir, and I want to speak to people about how they can be courageous and fearless by adopting some of the strategies that have worked so well for me. I joined Toastmasters almost two years ago to help me become a better speaker and listener. I practice my improvisational speaking with table topics and keep those brain neurons firing. I have achieved the Competent Communicator Award and recently placed third in my first area speech contest.

As a new NSA Academy member, the educational webinars have already increased my business acumen. "Three Ways to Get Booked and Paid" by Laurie Guest, CSP, helped me change from a sliding scale, to creating a pricing menu that allows for the "sweet spot" price to pop for a particular organization. The webinar featuring Lou Heckler, CSP, CPAE, titled "The Pause that Builds Applause," showed me that my delayed processing was really an asset. My organic pauses encourage more participation from the audience, as they can



learn by internalizing the true meaning of my relived story.

I am thrilled to be a part of this new family. I have been a guest speaker at civic organizations, such as Rotary Club, and some paying gigs at country clubs. I can travel again and drive myself to these speaking engagements.

Sometimes life takes an unexpected turn and you may lose everything. But, you can come back because you have the power and resources within to overcome any challenge or seeming obstacle. Be courageous and believe in yourself.

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*Kathleen Klawitter is a speaker, writer and former LPGA teaching professional. A pioneer in holistic golf, she has more than 20 years of experience in holistic modalities, including Science of Mind, psychology, nutritional macrobiotics and breathing techniques. Contact her at [kathleenklawitter9@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenklawitter9@gmail.com).*