

independence

courage[™]

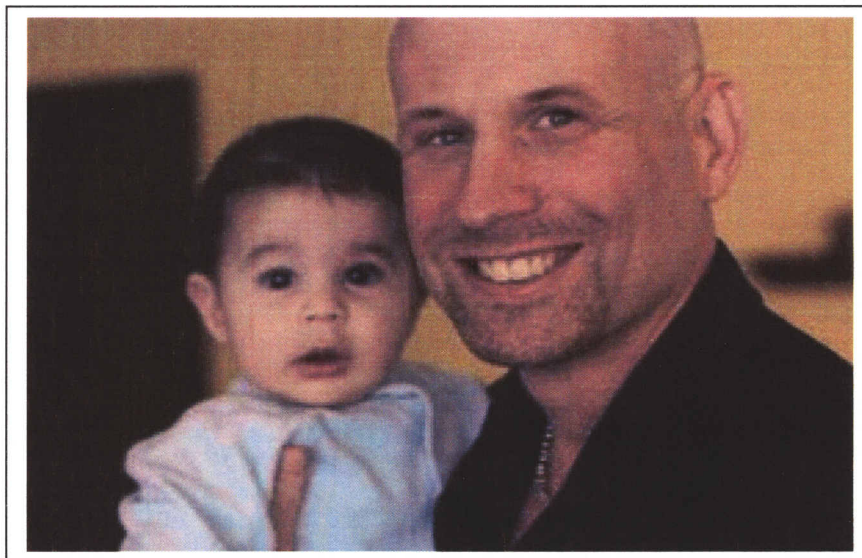
WHERE ABILITIES
AND DISABILITIES
BECOME POSSIBILITIES

Courage Center's mission is to empower people with physical disabilities to reach for their full potential in every aspect of life.

ERIC MIELKE

“Never give up. No matter how frustrated you get, keep on trying.”

Eric Mielke knows what he’s talking about. He has lived with depression, the effect of brain injury resulting from meningitis, since he was three years old. Later, in his early twenties, Mielke was in a car accident and received a traumatic brain injury (TBI). He has dealt with dozens of hospitalizations to help him through additional bouts of depression, and he continues to work on skills to compensate for short- and long-term memory issues, as well as sight, hearing, speech, motor skills and mental health issues. “I’m also very sensitive to warm and cold weather,” says the 39-year-old Minnesotan, shaking his head and smiling ruefully. His five-months-old son, Andrew, smiles up at him from the crook of his arm.



“When I first went to Courage Center, I was evaluated thoroughly, diagnosed with TBI and dysthymic disorder – severe chronic depression – and entered Courage Center’s Community Reintegration Program. That opened up a whole world of services to me: occupation therapy, physical therapy, mental health services, independent living skills and vocational services. To me, it seemed like one big service: all worked together to help me become independent.”

But Mielke admits that success didn’t occur overnight. “To set realistic goals for myself I had to know and accept my limitations. Once I did that, I set short-term and long-term goals and then began to take small steps toward achieving them.” Those goals included: finishing the Community Reintegration Program, using his daily planner, meeting with his therapist routinely, following through with physical therapy, making new friends, obtaining vocational counseling, going to college, and getting a job.

“Some of my goals took years to accomplish,” Mielke says, a touch of modest pride lifting his voice. “I have accomplished every goal that I set for myself at Courage Center. Today, I take care of my children during the day and work part-time at Wal-Mart. And my job coach helps me with work-related issues.”

Mielke and his wife, Inez, who is from Mexico, have three children: Erica, seven; Monica, five; and little Andrew. They met when both were working as teaching assistants at the same Robbinsdale elementary school.

“To me, independence means hard work,” he says. “It also means happiness, and not depending on people like I once did.”

Yet Mielke readily admits that hard work alone isn’t enough. “You need connection,” he says. “If there were no Courage Center, I’d likely be stuck in the mental health system and dependent on government assistance programs. Instead, Courage Center introduced me to helpful programs and remarkable people who care and go beyond the call of duty. And remarkable people like other Courage Center clients. It’s heartwarming to see people achieving their goals, and it made me want to work harder toward achieving my own.”

And he’s still working at it. Mielke attends a weekly CRP aftercare program, as well as a monthly brain injury support group at Courage Center. “I also volunteered at Courage Center for some time doing clerical work to improve my job skills while we looked for a job,” he adds. “That experience helped a lot.”

Smiling down at his son, Mielke’s eyes shine through soft tears. “I haven’t been hospitalized for 12 years now. Back then, I never thought my life would turn around. But it has – with the help of Courage Center.”

COURAGE CENTER'S COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

A Better Life for Minnesotans with Disabilities

A Better Deal for Minnesota Taxpayers

Courage Center's Community Reintegration Program (CRP) is an outpatient program that helps adults with mild to moderate brain injury reintegrate life tasks and roles into their community.

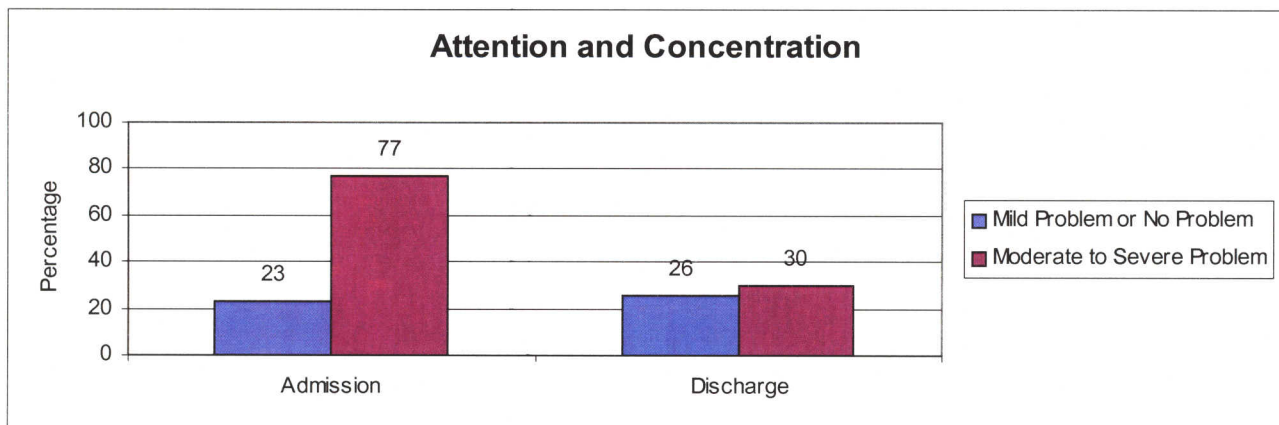
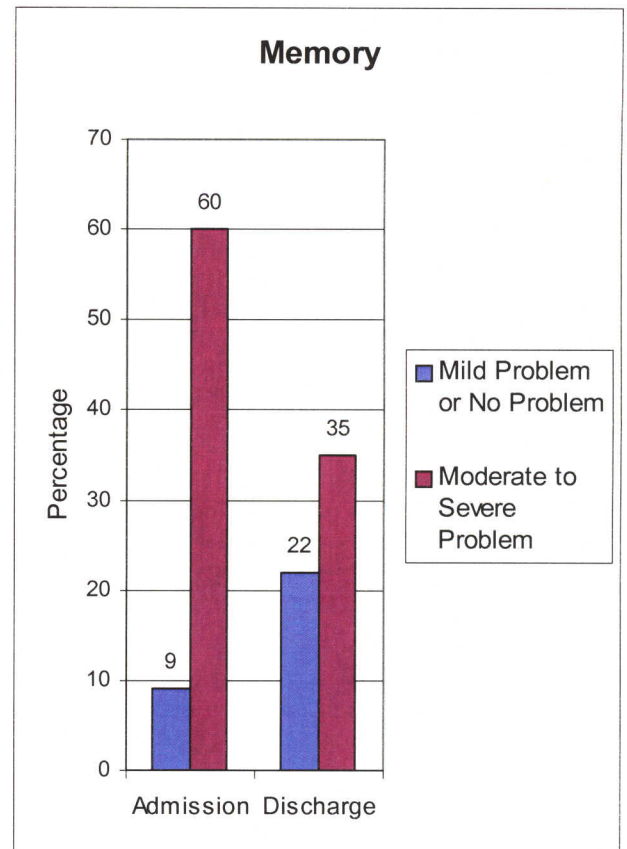
CRP's coordinated approach works with individuals to develop skills and strategies to address deficits in:

- attention
- memory
- problem solving
- awareness
- adjustment to disability, and
- other impairments caused by acquired brain injury

The program is provided three days per week. Typically individuals receiving services spend six hours at Courage Center.

CRP participants develop goals to:

- increase independence
- decrease vulnerability
- increase safety, and / or improve prevocational skills



Clients in CRP make clinically and statistically significant gains in abilities, adjustment, and participation while in the program, and maintain them for at least six months after discharge.

COURAGE CENTER is a nonprofit rehabilitation and resource center for people with disabilities, brain injuries, speech or vision impairments, and hearing loss. Since 1928, Courage Center has offered comprehensive rehabilitation services to people of all ages.

Our services are designed to empower people with disabilities to reach their full potential in every aspect of life.

For more information about Courage Center, visit courage.org.

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