

Title: Immanuel Approach for person with PTSD and traumatic brain injury

November 19, 2023

Greetings all,

Just wanted to send a quick note to share an encouraging story about Immanuel Approach work with a person with PTSD and traumatic brain injury (sent to me from a mental health professional in the wider Immanuel Approach community).

Hopefully I'll be able to send out a follow-up story regarding the next chapter in their ongoing Immanuel Approach adventures at some point in the future.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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<https://www.immanuelapproach.com/supporting-lehmans-immanuel-approach-work/>

Immanuel Approach work with middle aged male with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) – shared with permission:

“I began to use the Immanuel Approach (among other things) with this man in hopes of reducing his PTSD symptoms which included intense and highly disruptive nightmares experienced seven out of seven nights each week. He was suicidal when I began working with him 4 years ago and had quit every other therapist he'd been assigned to. I was fresh out of grad school and willing to do home visits.

We began with positive memories and appreciation which helped to refocus his mind and to build rapport. Over many months we moved toward his experiencing the interactive presence of Jesus, and this has been real and life changing for him. At times he experiences Jesus only in the memory, and at other times he experiences Jesus right there in his living room. We invited Jesus to join him at the scene of one of his most traumatic events (the murder of a friend), and Jesus spoke meaningful and healing words to him.

Many sessions have been frustrating because this client often seems to only be able to talk *about* God in a religious sort of way. Nothing much is accomplished during these sessions.

My perception is that the IA sessions that have gone well have reduced his nightmare frequency to four or five nights/week. He tells me that his nightmares are now much less intense than when we started working together and that he no longer experiences flashbacks or hypervigilance upon waking. His sleep is better, but is still disrupted (generally 0-4 hours/night, and occasionally 5 hours/night). He's on a significant number of medications, including Seroquel which he takes at bedtime for sleep.

My client's TBI-related memory loss has been, and continues to be, an issue. He faithfully completes a daily log so we can review how his week has been, as he would not otherwise remember. The log has expanded and includes many things including sleep hours, whether or not he has had a nightmare, daily nap hours, self-reported degree of depression and anxiety, and quite a few other things. When an Immanuel session results in him having a significant interactive connection with Jesus, I *always* need to review the notes the following week because he has no memory of his experience and what transpired.

One particular conversation was quite interesting. As I reviewed the play-by-play notes of the previous IA session, I asked, "Do you remember what happened next?" He replied, "No." I continued (for example), "You experienced Jesus sitting over there in that chair." With great gusto he replied, "Yes!" This went on for several rounds until I finally said, "You say you don't remember, but when I tell you, it seems you *do* remember." He responded with emphasis, "I *don't remember* it. What I remember is the *feeling*."

In closing I'll mention that, just as you have stated regarding the purpose of the Immanuel Approach, this unchurched man now has a relationship with God. He told me last year, "I'd rather have a traumatic brain injury and have a relationship with God than *not* have a traumatic brain injury and *not* have a relationship with God." This is very real for him. He talks with Him regularly throughout his day and out on his doorstep at night while looking at the stars. (His previous nightly pattern was to wake from nightmares, and then in a hypervigilant state, practice martial arts moves in the dark until sunup - ready for imminent home invasion.) He doesn't have his mind nor his theology together (frequently asks me to clarify the Trinity), but he does experience and have a relationship with God and Jesus.

We've recently begun to work from an Internal Family Systems perspective, and he has been encouraged to realize some of his inclinations as parts activity. Speaking with his "Loner Part" enabled him to join family members for a quiet cabin vacation at the end of August, during which time he slept 6 hours/night and had NO nightmares for five out of seven nights!

I hope to return for another round of facilitating Immanuel Approach sessions to address additional traumatic events and their related nightmares. Jesus was very real for him at the scene of his friend's murder, yet his nightmares became more frequent and severe for several weeks afterward - not unlike what can happen with EMDR [when working with trauma that gets activated during the therapy work, but is not yet fully resolved]. Given his memory loss and the fact that he lives alone, I decided to ease up for a while. I've attempted to facilitate the interactive Presence for him since then, but his God talk has become more religious in nature lately and the interactive connection more difficult to establish."