

Lorenz, L. S. (2010). Using visual metaphors to communicate lived experience with an invisible injury. Communication, Medicine and Ethics Society (COMET), Boston University, School of Public Health and College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Boston, MA, June 28-30.

Abstract. Brain injury can be a life-disrupting event that affects cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of a survivor's life—consequences that pose challenges to understanding brain injury patients' perspectives on living with their injury. Furthermore the injury may be invisible, even clinically, causing additional confusion for affected individuals, family members, coworkers, and clinicians. My study used photovoice, a participatory research approach that uses photography and narrative, with eight adult brain injury survivors so they could communicate their experiences living with brain injury. Participants took photographs, discussed them together, selected some for written captions, and prepared outreach products. Almost half of their 50 exhibit images are visual metaphors for their feelings about living with brain injury. One of the greatest challenges of living with an invisible injury such as brain injury is emotional—wrestling with the grief of losing former abilities and finding new meaning and purpose in life. This paper explores how visual metaphors contribute to meaning-making and coping with the realities portrayed, and play a pedagogic role in communicating lived experience and emotional reality.