



# A Dent in the Wall

February 21, 2011 By [Richard Ferri, PhD, ANP](#)

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I have been staring at the dent in wall for sometime now. It is just simple dent really. It has to be less than 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch deep. Paint still covers it. Most people wouldn't notice the dent at the foot of the stairs. Wouldn't give it a second glance. Today I can't take my eyes off of it. I guess that is because the dent was made by the top of my head slamming into the wall.

Two years ago I crashed down that flight of stairs. This tumble, preceded by a dog in dress and me in crew socks on slick wooden bare stairs, left me with multiple rib fractures, a bloody collapsed lung, and laceration on my head that ended my days of shaving my head for fashion. . . I had a hundred plus sutures zigzagged on my skull, and I bleed out several pints of blood that needed to be replaced. (A sincere and humble note of gratitude to all blood donors anywhere on this planet. Your gift of blood saved my life. You guys are heroes.) When the paramedics arrived I was, so I am told, not really conscious and laying in a pool of my blood. I do remember - or at least I THINK I remember, waking up briefly saying something inane like "I'm fine really. Just help me up so I can stir the soup." before I blacked out again. I do remember a kind and skilled paramedic who must have known me telling to stay still, calling me first Dr. Ferri then Ric, and then sternly demanding that I stop moving. I imagine I was trying to see if I could move my legs. I have a very fuzzy remembrance of thinking I am not cut out to be a quadriplegic. Well so it goes.

The *really* odd thing about death for me is the fact that I have escaped it so many times. Sometimes I get philosophical about it and wonder "why", but mostly I just snicker and take a quick peek over my shoulder looking for the next plane to drop out of the sky on my head. These things happen you know.

I don't remember much after the fall. After two years it is still a haze of blood, pain, and morphine. *Actually, one of the big issues that bothers me is that I don't know what I don't know.* This time is very loosely rattled in my mind and I can't sort out fact from fuzz. Maybe that is a good thing. God's way of getting us through a tough time by pulling down the shades on memory.

Here is what I do know. I take too much for granted. I “solidier on” past these events in my life and do not give them the notice they deserve. I am a 55-year old man with the bravado of an impulsive teen.

When these types of events happen and people write about them many readers anxiously await for the fallen’s epiphany and insight gained from such a horror. Honestly, I have none to offer. This lack of insight may just be trauma fatigue. I have been through a bizarre trajectory of events where bleeding into a lung comes across as almost playful. In a short period of time I test HIV positive, I am at the WTC on 9/11 and barely live, all three parents die within weeks of each other and out of the blue, my drinking becomes my life, my husband of 25 years, 11 months, and 3 weeks drops dead, I drink more, I get arrested, I get sober, I meet sociopaths and embrace them as friends, I get unsobber, I get sober again, my lungs keep collapsing from 9/11 inhaled grit, and I am air lifted to a big time hospital in Boston, helicopter taking me to said hospital nearly crashes in route, and so forth.

When placed in context a dog in a dress with soup on the stove that needs stirring as I lay sucking wind doesn’t seem like such a big deal. But the point is that it should be, and that is what I need to learn. Maybe that is why I am staring at the dent in wall.

Dents can be fixed. Sometimes people can’t, and the best you can hope for is honoring that and moving on. I have choices. My life can viewed as a can of lima beans on sale because the can is dinged or as a privilege of survival. So maybe I do have insight after all, but I don’t think so. I am much too practical. After all, who the hell wants a dented can of lima beans?