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## 'Look how far he's come'

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It started out an ordinary trip up the stairs in his Mississauga home, but when Frank Teepell had an epileptic seizure on the way, he fell backwards down the stairs, hit the wall and broke his neck. Life changed forever for Teepell and his wife Adele.

"I was totally paralyzed," Teepell says. "The doctors said I would never walk again. I had very little sensation — I couldn't feel my body from the neck down."

It was July 1997. Teepell, then 54, learned that the fall had broken his spine, but had not completely severed his spinal cord. After surgery, he was able to lift the forefinger on his left hand and barely budge one toe, but had no other movement.

He spent three months in hospital and nine more months at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute's Lyndhurst Centre.

"When I came home from Lyndhurst my head was in a sling and I operated my wheelchair by moving my head," he says. "I wasn't communicating well. I got things mixed up, trying to say them. If I wanted to read, I used a mouth stick to turn pages."

His wife used a lift to get him in and out of bed.

"He came home and he could do almost nothing," she recalls.

Today, after Chinese herbs to strengthen his body and eight years of acupuncture from traditional Chinese medicine doctor Jia Li, Teepell communicates clearly. He can produce some movement in both arms and both legs, and can push himself back in his wheelchair.

He can write a little with his left hand, and use it to turn book pages. He operates his wheelchair with his left hand. He gets in and out of bed with the use of elbow canes and his wife's help.

He can stand up with her support, and walk the length of his house with the support of his trainer, Chris Brownell.

"I'm going to be able to feed myself, too," says Teepell. "That's on its way. I need to have patience and never give up."

He believes Brownell's three years of work with him have been of some help, as well as two years of treatments from reflexologist Anne DeSouza.

But Li has worked with him since the first months after his fall and his successes have come gradually through steady progress over those entire eight years, Teepell says. "I could never have come this far without Dr. Li's acupuncture."

Adele Teepell says the couple believe in natural health approaches, which first led her to research acupuncture options in Mississauga. Teepell has had acupuncture treatments from Li every two weeks since. Over the years, Teepell says, he has had acupuncture needles placed at various points on his legs, shoulders, neck, head and across his abdomen.

"There was one point on my abdomen, and when he put the needle in there, I felt a real flow of sensation right away."

Thanks to the continuing acupuncture treatments, says Teepell, he can now move all the fingers on his left hand. "My arms can move further back all the time, and I can raise my arms over my head with a little help."

His progress has been slow but sure, Adele Teepell says.

"He has so much more movement now than we were told he ever could have," she says. "Look how far he's come. I think it's wonderful."

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