

Justin Pines



Photo provided

The Tyler family from left: Tyler, Molly, Maria, Justin, Randi, Larry, and Colby

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Justin's religious faith has been critical to his recovery. As a mem-

ber of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he has found great strength in his belief in God. "I definitely had an incred-

ible community and a strong faith and a lot that laid a true bedrock and foundation so I knew that I would be

okay and that there were a lot of possibilities and opportunities ahead. He's been able to use my experience in a way that has been able to empower others. I'm always exploring what's around the next bend as I keep pulling the thread on what He's got in store but there's been a lot."

Having come so far, mentoring the younger disabled boys has brought Justin the most satisfaction. "They're excited to hear that I just got back from where? And you just did what? And you're also getting married?" Justin remarked. "Questions come up like: Can I wear a suit? Can I be attractive? They have no concept about going out on a date and wonder if that's still in the cards. A lot of paying back is having those conversations."

An unexpected bonus for Justin has been a new-found ability

to open up to strangers, in what he referred to as the "superpower of connection." "You establish more trust, by way of being more vulnerable, making you a better person," Justin said. "The hardest thing in my life has been my physical paralysis injury and that's on display wherever I go. I didn't know how to tactfully engage with someone in this situation preinjury, so I have space and grace for those who are curious and earnest, but I don't know every exact thing to say. I'm willing to engage with those people in these kinds of conversations."

Justin is currently employed by Cedar Health, a company that addresses issues that he had to confront after his accident. "I had a really terrible experience after my injury with the billing side of our health system and Cedar Health

builds software that makes the billing experience easier and more transparent for patients all over the biggest hospital systems in the world," Justin said.

When asked what Justin learned about himself through the experience of coping with his injuries, he replied "When the chips are really down and in an emergency situation, I was able to keep my head and I do know that about myself now. Honestly, with a lot of the experiences I had, pre and post injury, I've changed, of course, but the foundational components of elements of who I am as a person are not vastly different. I think they're just expressed in new ways and responded to a pretty sharp left turn from where my life was and where I was headed and where I am now."

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