Kevin Pearce has come a long way since his accident on December 31, 2009. He credits the support of his family, friends and fans for helping him to get back on his feet.

Kevin Pearce, 23, has no memory of the crash that brought his snowboarding career to a grinding halt. On December 31, 2009, he was training for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Park City, Utah, when he fell and hit his head on the edge of the halfpipe. The athlete had been practicing one of the sport's most difficult tricks, a soaring double-cork move.

Luckily, he was wearing a helmet. Doctors say it saved his life. But he suffered a traumatic brain injury that affected his vision, balance and memory. He spent four months recovering in hospitals in Utah and Colorado. He still can’t recall several
weeks of his life after the accident. "It's definitely strange," Pearce says, peering through thick, black-framed glasses. The special lenses keep him from seeing double.

What he does remember is watching the Olympics on TV from his hospital bed, and seeing rival snowboarder Shaun White grab the gold. Friend Scotty Lago took the bronze medal. "It was hard lying there in the shape I was in, watching those guys do amazing tricks," admits Pearce, who was one of the sport's top competitors before getting hurt.

**Moving Forward**

Today, Pearce's focus is getting his health back to 100%. So far, he's made incredible progress in his physical therapy sessions. A year ago, he couldn't walk straight. Now, not only can he walk, he can drive again too.

Pearce says he owes his speedy recovery to the support of his fans, his friends and mostly, his family. His parents and older siblings have been by his side through it all. In May, he moved back into his family home in Norwich, Vermont. His brother Adam left his job to help care for him full time. "All I wanted was to see Kevin get better," Adam told TFK. "It feels like I'm in the right place and doing the right thing." Pearce adds, with a wide grin, "He was my license."

Pearce also credits his brother David, who has Down syndrome, for playing a role in the emotional healing process. "Growing up with David has taught me a lot of patience," he explains. "He's taught me how to take life more slowly." Pearce's mother, Pia, says her youngest son's positive attitude helped too. "I knew Kevin was going to find a way to be okay," she told TFK.

**On the Road Again**

These days, Pearce is back on the snowboarding circuit. Instead of performing tricks, though, he's commenting on them from the broadcasting booth. In December, he cheered on his fellow snowboarder friends at the Winter Dew Tour stop, in Breckenridge, Colorado. He also attended another Dew Tour event, in Killington, Vermont, in January. And last month, he gave his expert analysis on the Winter X Games for ESPN.

Meanwhile, the athlete in him still craves the competition. But he understands the consequences of another fall. When Pearce does ride again, he says, "I'm going to snowboard mellow. I'm all right with just getting to cruise."