

# ROLLING INSPIRATION

The leading magazine for people with mobility impairments

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# Embracing Ubuntu


Personal struggles and experience has Richard Barron committed to grounded leadership as he steers QASA

A wise man reminded me that as leaders, especially in serving the most vulnerable, we must be mindful of the isolation of our “ivory towers” and instead stay attuned to the reality on the ground. This resonated deeply and prompted a renewed commitment to being more mindful of those less fortunate. As I reflect on the concept of *Ubuntu* (“I am because we are”), it is clear that our collective strength and unity are paramount in overcoming challenges. I am always humbled by the resilience of our members and their ability to endure the toughest socio-economic challenges. Reflecting on time spent in the Northern and Eastern Cape brings bittersweet memories of the getting by with scarce resources after my accident and somehow making it through.

Before my accident, I was fortunate to have loving parents who ensured I did not lack the basics. Despite our limited resources, we shared what we had with struggling neighbours and family. Tragedy struck when my father passed away two weeks before my accident. The combined weight of these events left me numb, and my daily goal was mere survival. My mother and I relied on my disability grant of about R1 000 at the time. Through sheer grace, we navigated those difficult years. Despite our hardships, my mother managed to stretch our limited resources, often sharing what little we had. This spirit of generosity amidst adversity is a reality many of our members still face.

I share this personal story for two reasons. First, to provide context for my dedication and the source of my drive. Witnessing

my parents’ selfless care for others, even with so little, planted a seed of empathy and service in me. Second, I share this to emphasise my understanding of struggle and the belief that we owe it to those striving to better themselves to offer support wherever possible. Empathy towards your neighbour can be greatly enhanced by our presence and engagement. In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, we must remember that our individual wellbeing is intrinsically tied to the wellbeing of our community. By staying attuned to the needs of those we serve and maintaining a grounded presence, we can foster an environment where every member feels valued and supported. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that each of us has a responsibility to become the best version of ourselves.

At QASA, we are committed to supporting you every step of the way on this journey. This includes personal development and understanding and asserting your rights, which is fundamental to achieving true empowerment and equality. By embracing the principles of *Ubuntu*, striving for personal growth, and advocating for our rights, we can build a stronger, more compassionate community. Let us continue to work hand in hand, lifting each other up and creating a future where everyone can thrive. 

## About The Author

Richard Barron serves as the General Manager of QASA. His journey began as a member, where he actively engaged with the organisation’s empowerment programmes. Over the years, he transitioned to serving on the board before assuming the role of General Manager.

## WRP graduate banks permanent employment


QASA Work Readiness Programme (WRP) graduate Leroy Julie was offered a permanent position with La Belle Q4 Fuel following his five-day work placement at the company. Participants of the programme are offered the opportunity to work in the formal work environment after completing the training aspect of the programme.

The aim of the placement is to introduce candidates to the formal environment and give them an opportunity to practice the skills that they learned throughout the programme. For those who are proactive, this can also be an opportunity to secure permanent employment as QASA aims to partner with businesses that are serious about employing people with disabilities.

Leroy expresses his gratitude: "I sincerely want to thank everyone who had a hand in making the programme a success. It truly taught me a lot and I feel I've grown not only in terms of the skills I learned during the course but also as a person."

He also thanked his fellow participants: "I also want to thank my colleagues. We as the WRP candidates had to learn to work together as a team, but we became a family. I value and cherish each and everyone in the programme and I am grateful that I had the chance to work with and learn from my colleagues."

"Despite facing various challenges related to their disabilities they've managed to navigate and overcome the obstacles. Their drive and determination made me want to push harder and strive to be a better person."

Congratulations to Leroy! We are incredibly proud of his dedication, commitment, and positive mindset, which contributed to his successful employment. A heartfelt thank you to La Belle Q4 Fuel for giving Leroy this fantastic opportunity and for being a strong supporter of disability inclusion. 



**ABOVE:** QASA WRP graduate Leroy Julie is now permanently employed at La Belle Q4 Fuel.

### Save the date – QASA AGM


The QASA Annual General Meeting (AGM) is scheduled to take place on Saturday, 21 September 2024. The yearly event provides the organisation with an opportunity to give feedback on its activities throughout the year. Members are encouraged to attend as they could learn more about the QASA programmes and services, get feedback on activities in their region, and ask any pressing questions.


If members aren't able to attend, they can request the QASA Annual Report, which is made available a few weeks before the event as well as thereafter. Keep an eye out for more information on the time and venue for this year's AGM. Further questions or concerns can be directed to [info@qasa.co.za](mailto:info@qasa.co.za). 

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# Wheelchair users soar with adaptive paragliding

Wheelchair users can take flight thanks to the paragliding wheelchair introduced by Matthew van Zyl, founder of Square1 Paragliding





**A**s a young boy, Matthew van Zyl dreamt of flying; Running, jumping and finding himself soaring above the skies. After his first tandem paragliding experience, he was hooked.

Now, nine years, thousands of hours in flight, several instructor courses and his own aviation school ([Square1 Paragliding](#)) later, Matthew dreams of gifting this incredible experience to people with disabilities.

“Paragliding is the most amazing experience. You break the bonds of gravity and glide through the sky with no noise; flying like a bird. Paragliding is my passion and I want to share my passion with as many people as possible,” he says.

“

**You break the bonds of gravity  
and glide through the sky with no  
noise; flying like a bird.**

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Part of his passion for paragliding stems from how the sport has broadened his mind.

He shares: “My mind was opened to a world that I never knew existed. I was totally captivated. Now, I want to offer it to people, specifically those who never even realised something like this is possible.”

Matthew isn't the first paragliding instructor to take a person with a disability on a flight; however, his approach is vastly different to what has been done before.

Traditionally, the passenger is strapped to the pilot. They would run off the mountain together. This always poses a threat as someone can lose their footing and fall. For passengers with disabilities, especially wheelchair users, this poses a bigger challenge.



According to Matthew, other paragliding instructors in South Africa would make use of a standard harness to strap the passenger with a disability to the pilot.

An assistant will then run alongside the pilot, holding the passenger's limbs and flinging them from the mountain when the pilot jumps.

The risk of falling is just as prevalent if not more. If the pilot stumbles and falls, there is the risk of them landing on the passenger.

On landing, the assistant needs to catch the passenger to prevent them from injuring themselves or others.

Matthew has even witnessed an instructor ask a passenger to hold their own legs up – not entirely a safe solution. In the end, he found the experience to be invasive and unsafe.

“The person is already nervous. For some, this might be the most adventurous thing they do, and now you have strangers touching you,” he comments.

Matthew “felt it necessary” to import an paragliding wheelchair – a device used in adaptive paragliding globally, but which isn't readily available in South Africa yet.

With this chair, passengers are able to safely and effortlessly transfer from their own chair into the paragliding wheelchair.

They are strapped in with Matthew attaching himself behind the chair. This allows him to control the take-off, running and pushing the chair off the mountain, as well as the landing.

The swivel wheel at the front of the chair ensures for a smoother and safer landing, while the bars at around the headrest act as a roll cage. If an incident or accident occurs, the passenger's head and shoulders will never make contact with the ground.

“

**Passengers are able to safely and effortlessly transfer from their own chair into the paragliding chair.**

—

The paragliding wheelchair offers a more independent, dignified and pleasant glide for passengers with disabilities.

Matthew currently offers adaptive paragliding sessions in Cape Town and parts of the Garden Route. Passengers can look forward to a jump off Signal Hill, a glide on the wind currents before landing in Sea Point.

The flight can be anything from five to 20 minutes. It depends on the air currents






**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Matthew van Zyl shares his love of paragliding with the disability community by offering adaptive paragliding sessions and training through [Square1 Paragliding](#). He currently operates in Cape Town and parts of the Garden Route.

on the day and the passenger's request. If a passenger would like to land early, for example, the pilot can assist.

For those who find themselves passionate about the sport, it is possible to become a pilot and fly independently. Matthew is certified to provide training and assisted Ajmal Samuel to become a [qualified adaptive paraglider](#).

A paragliding session is about R1 800 per jump, but Matthew hopes to offer the service for free to people with disabilities in the near future.

Currently, he operates under his paragliding business, Square1 Paragliding, but he working towards establishing a non-profit organisation that will allow him to provide free sessions. He is currently also accepting donations for those who want to sponsor a flight.

Matthew's vision is to make the sport more accessible with hopes of importing more paragliding wheelchairs, encouraging inclusivity in adventure sports, and promoting adaptive tourism so that everyone can experience the freedom of flight. For more information, visit the [Square1 Paragliding website](#). 





# Hospital Admission Challenges and SCI

Ensuring good care during a hospital visit can be a challenge for people with a spinal cord injury due to their unique, individual needs. George Louw advocates for more accountability among hospital staff

**A** good friend with quadriplegia from a spinal cord injury (SCI) recently sent me this e-mail:

*"I was admitted to hospital overnight so that a couple of tests could be done. Just as a precaution, I provided a detailed insight into my condition as a quadriplegic; what I could and couldn't do for myself in advance, so I expected the staff to familiarise themselves with how to manage me. We agreed on a turning protocol of every two hours.*

*"Alas, I was only turned twice in 14 hours. When it came to inserting a Foley catheter, the nursing sister put her gloves on, then disappeared out the ward for a while and came back after handling a few other items with her hands to then insert the catheter. She was not sterile at all anymore.*

*"When I insisted that she not continue the procedure and use another set of gloves and sterile catheter, her attitude changed for the worse. I realised that I had to stay awake the whole night to ensure self-preservation. It really was a nightmare. The hospital management seem to close ranks on my complaint and it was a while before they took what happened to me seriously.*

*"Hospitals are not safe spaces for us with spinal cord injury and so keep your eyes open and make sure you exercise your rights."*

Two accounts of negligence are evident: Negligence in the care of a person with quadriplegia, and gross negligence in the performance of a sterile procedure. The third account of hospital management closing ranks could also be construed as being negligent of good governance.

So, what to do?

Let us consider the “easy” negligence first: The abuse of protocol in the performance of a sterile procedure. The first line of action (which my friend did) was to directly confront the nurse performing the procedure.

Second, lay an immediate complaint with the matron in charge of the ward as the matron is less likely to close ranks with the offending staff member.

Medical litigation for negligence is very prevalent in South Africa, as evidenced by explicit TV and media adverts. Senior hospital staff and management are very aware of the risks associated with litigation. In instances where corroborative evidence of an accusation is lacking, closing of ranks may be attempted, but if the evidence is there for all to see, disciplinary action should take place.

If there were no consequences to the negligence, the matter will usually rest there. If, however, the hospital’s response to the negligence was not satisfactory, report the incident to the doctor that is treating you. The doctor will be sure to escalate the complaint as he is ultimately held accountable for the wellbeing of his patients.

In private hospitals, doctors also are not employed by the hospital, and the hospitals depend on doctors to fill their beds and make use of their services. So, doctors have authority in hospitals, especially if they have a reputation of excellence to uphold. Although doctors are hospital-employed in public hospitals, the senior doctors hold similar authority.

Now, for the more difficult situation of nursing care of a person with SCI, the information sheet in figure 1a and 1b was provided by Ari Seirlis, former CEO of QASA.

FIG. 1A: ADMISSION INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS WITH QUADRIPLEGIA OR PARAPLEGIA.

Relevant Clinical Information	
Information	Yes / No / Comment
Level of spinal injury	
Date of injury	
Do you have loss of sensation? Where?	
Do you have spasms which we should be aware of?	
Do you have specific areas of pain?	
How do you manage your pain or spasms?	
Do you need a special mattress or cushions?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Communication	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
Can you use the hospital nurse-call system?	
What other calling device can you use?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Eating and Drinking	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
Can you feed yourself?	
Do you use specialised feeding utensils?	
Can you pour your own drink?	
What do you drink from (straw, feeding cup, glass)?	
Is there a special diet that you want to maintain?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Toilet Routine	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
What is your regular bladder routine?	
What is your regular bowel routine?	
Do you require the use of a commode?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	

FIG. 1B: ADMISSION INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS WITH QUADRIPLEGIA OR PARAPLEGIA.

Personal Hygiene and Dressing	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
What is your personal bathing routine?	
What assistance do you require to bath/shower?	
What assistance do you require to shave?	
Are you able to judge the water temperature?	
What assistance do you require to dress?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Controlling Body Temperature & Skin Integrity	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
Do you have difficulty maintaining normal body Temperature?	
Do you have any area that is vulnerable to skin breakdown?	
What is your pressure relieving routine?	
What assistance do you require?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Mobilisation	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
Are you able to pull yourself up in bed?	
Are you able to roll in bed?	
Can you transfer independently?	
How many people do you require to transfer bed-chair-bed?	
Do you require a hoist / special equipment to facilitate transfers?	
What is your preferred transfer method?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
Sleeping	
Activity	Yes / No / Comment
Do you have a preferred side to sleep on?	
Do you have a specific way to be turned at night?	
What is your night-time turning routine?	
Do you require extra pillows at night?	
Do you require a CPAP / BiPAP machine?	
<i>Action Plan:</i>	

Information sheets with action plans such as in figure 1 are a very useful point of departure, but it does not hold anyone accountable.

The action plans at the end of each section must be converted into a nursing activities record for patients with an SCI, where actions are recorded under headings that include time, action, patient status, nurse name, and nurse signature.

The nurse in charge of the patient must understand the assigned duties and be held accountable.

When nursing shifts are changed, the handover must include information sharing so that the newly assigned Nurse also understands the assigned duties and is held accountable. In this way duties are clearly stipulated and the accountable persons are known.

In order to facilitate appropriate hospital care for persons with an SCI, it is recommended that QASA designs a generic "Nursing Activities Record for Patients with SCI" as a supplement to the information in figure 1.

PDF templates of both documents should be placed on the QASA website so that it is available for future admissions of patients with an SCI.

On admission, these documents must be handed to and discussed with the sister in charge of the ward. The responsible sister must participate in completing the information sheet, setting up the action plans per category and creating a dedicated nursing activities record.

As a final word, in all likelihood these lists could be met with resistance in some hospitals, especially where nursing activity records have been digitalised and standardised on electronic devices.

There is no point in losing your temper when this is the case. Be aware that SCI admissions are rare occurrences in most hospitals and staff are not geared up and knowledgeable of your needs.

Therefore, be patient and explain the potential consequences should the routines not be followed, and request supplementing the standard (digital) records with the hard-copy patient with a disability action-plan activities record.


As a last resort, escalate your needs to your attending doctor. Should hospital staff not be accommodating of your needs and serious complications arise as a result, please report this to QASA, for them to escalate the matter.



**As a last resort, escalate your needs to your attending doctor.**

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QASA and rehabilitation hospitals must also advocate for the incorporation of disability-related nursing activities onto electronic recordkeeping devices; not just for patients with an SCI, but also for strokes and other causes of mobility impairment. However, the diversity of needs is so great that the possibility of patient-specific free-text options on the devices should be considered.

From all angles, routine admissions of patients with mobility impairments have many and diverse issues that fall outside routine nursing care. Patience and a friendly but assertive attitude will, in the long run, achieve more than throwing your toys around would. 

**About The Author**

Ida's Corner is a regular column by George Louw, who qualified as a medical doctor, but, due to a progressing spastic paralysis, chose a career in health administration. The column is named after Ida Hlongwa, who worked as caregiver for Ari Seirlis for 20 years. Her charm, smile, commitment, quality care and sacrifice set the bar incredibly high for the caregiving fraternity. email: yorslo@icloud.com



## Experiencing the special vote

Richard Barron applied for and cast his vote in the national election through a special vote. He shares his experience

As a committed citizen, the right to vote in national elections is something that I hold dear. This year, I decided to apply for a special vote. I had heard mixed reviews about the process, so I braced myself for potential complications. However, my experience turned out to be exceptionally smooth and efficient. The first step was to submit my application for the special vote. I visited the official elections website, where I found a clear and user-friendly guide on how to apply. The instructions were straightforward, and I quickly filled out the form, providing necessary details, such as my reason for my special vote request. Within minutes of submitting my application, I received an automated confirmation e-mail, reassuring me that my request was being processed. A few days later, I received another e-mail confirming that my application had been approved, which included the date and time when the IEC officials would visit my home to facilitate my special vote. I appreciated the prompt communication as it allowed me to plan accordingly without any uncertainties. I also received a reminder a day or two before the elections that the officials will be coming at the confirmed date.

The day before my scheduled special vote, I was surprised by a knock at my door. The IEC officials had arrived a day early, accompanied by a police escort. Fortunately, I was able to accommodate the early visit. The presence of the police added an extra layer of reassurance, highlighting the importance and integrity of the process. The IEC officials were professional and courteous. After verifying my identity, they

handed me my ballot paper and provided clear instructions on how to cast my vote. I could vote in my room to ensure privacy and secrecy. Once my vote was cast, my ballot was placed into an envelope, which was then placed into another envelope. This double-enveloped ballot was then secured in a sealed bag. This thorough process emphasised the seriousness with which the IEC handles the voting process, and the importance of maintaining the integrity of each vote. The entire procedure was completed efficiently and discreetly. The officials ensured that I was comfortable and understood each step, making the experience smooth and stress-free.

As the IEC officials and police left, I felt a sense of pride and gratitude. Despite the unexpected early arrival, the process was seamless and efficient. It reassured me of the robustness of our electoral system and the commitment of election officials to ensuring that every citizen's vote counts, regardless of their circumstances. Overall, my experience applying for and casting a special vote in the national elections was positive and encouraging. It reinforced my belief in the importance of participating in the democratic process and made me hopeful for the future of our nation's elections. **R**

### About The Author

Richard Barron serves as the General Manager of QASA. His journey began as a member, where he actively engaged with the organisation's empowerment programmes. Over the years, he transitioned to serving on the board before assuming the role of General Manager.



**MAIN PHOTO:** Casa iLanga in Somerset West boasts an impressive five accessible bedrooms.

# Casa iLanga staff go above and beyond

On a recent trip to Somerset West, Mandy Latimore stumbled across Casa iLanga which boasts several accessible rooms and wonderful service

**O**n my recent travels for lawn bowls, I needed to find accessible accommodation for more than one person requiring an accessible room. Usually, there is only one room per establishment.

So, I proceeded with my usual internet search and came across Casa iLanga Guest House in the town of Somerset West where we were going to be playing our competition!

The guest house is owned by Geertje who was a carer for persons with disabilities in Belgium, and, after a couple of visits to Africa and South Africa, decided to make it her home. In order to generate an income for herself and her son, she purchased a property and decided to convert it into an entirely accessible property.

Situated in a quiet safe street with ample accessible parking which unfortunately isn't covered, there is a double automatically opening door that allows access to the property.

There are five rooms of differing sizes that all offer step-free showers. One has a small kitchenette for a self-catering option. Each room has a colour theme and is adorned with amazing local art works.

All have air-conditioning and a tea and coffee station. The best feature is that the entire property is off the grid and so there is no hassle with loadshedding.

There is a lovely garden and pool (which is not wheelchair accessible) and the breakfast room has tables that accommodate people in wheelchairs.



**TOP:** Casa iLanga Guest House is situated in Somerset West, Cape Town.

**MIDDLE:** There is ample parking and an automatic double door provides access to the property.

**BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT:** The bedrooms boast beautiful accessible bathrooms complete with step-free showers and floating basins.

## TRAVEL

**RIGHT:** Each of the five accessible bedrooms boast a different colour scheme.

**BELOW:** The showers have fixed shower seats, but a commode wheelchair is available on request.

There are fixed shower seats in most rooms, however there is a commode wheelchair available for those who prefer to use this. Geertje is looking at installing fold-down shower seats in some of the rooms as well.

Geertje and her staff go above and beyond to be of assistance, even assisting us with getting into and out of our cars. She will arrange for nursing facilities if required.

If you are thinking of visiting the Winelands or are in the area, this is definitely the place to stay! For more info visit [www.casailanga.co.za](http://www.casailanga.co.za).

Safe travels! 

### About The Author

Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access. email: [mandy@noveltravel.co.za](mailto:mandy@noveltravel.co.za)







# Ticking all the boxes

During a recent visit to Johannesburg, Ari Seirlis stayed at City Lodge Hotel and found it ticked all the boxes

My two days at the City Lodge Hotel at OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA) in Johannesburg impressed me and ticked all the boxes in terms of location, access and service. The Hotel is perfectly located – an easy wheelchair push from arrivals to the reception. It is also, and significantly, an easy push to the Gautrain station in ORTIA. So, you can circulate Jozi and even get to Tshwane.


Thereafter, you can use Rea Vaya bus rapid transit (BRT) system located in the Johannesburg metro and the A Re Yeng BRT in Tshwane for those suburbs. This alleviates the need to hire a vehicle or use a wheelchair accessible van from the airport (a big saving).

Let's start with the infrastructure. The wheelchair accessible rooms are interleading, which is so convenient if you travel with an assistant or caregiver. There are roll-in shower facilities in the large bathrooms. The conference facilities are universally accessible and the dining facilities accessible at all tiers of seating. Although it is not easy to view all the buffet offering as it is placed on higher tables, the attending staff were excellent in showing and describing the food on display.

Most impressive is the service, which is fantastic. The reception staff are informed and efficient. The security are willing to



ABOVE: City Lodge Hotel at ORTIA boasts beautiful rooms and many amenities including a restaurant and swimming pool.

assist, and housekeeping always prompt. What more can anyone expect?! The City Lodge Hotel at OR Tambo International Airport is worth a visit, and a great base for when doing business or visiting Gauteng. 

### About The Author

Ari Seirlis is the former CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa and, presently, a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disability. He is a wheelchair user and disability activist. Ari has recently published his biography, which can be found at [www.wheelsoffire.co.za](http://www.wheelsoffire.co.za).



## Navigating mental wellbeing

Clinical and neuropsychologist Teneille Evans shares some advice on managing your mental wellbeing after a spinal cord injury

**S**ustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI) is a life-altering event that brings a multitude of physical and psychological challenges. The emotional and mental toll can be profound, affecting not just you but also your family and loved ones. Understanding and addressing your mental wellbeing is crucial for fostering resilience and aiding in recovery.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES FOLLOWING SCI

After an SCI, it's common to face a range of psychological difficulties. One of the initial hurdles is the adjustment period.

During this time, you might feel tearful, anxious, frustrated, or withdrawn, with these states fluctuating daily. These emotional responses are part of the natural process of

coming to terms with such a significant life change.

Depression is another prevalent issue, characterised by persistent low mood, changes in appetite, disrupted sleep patterns, and a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. This condition often lasts for two weeks or more and can severely impact your quality of life.

Anxiety also frequently accompanies an SCI. You may become excessively worried about your future, overthink situations, feel restless, and ask numerous questions seeking reassurance. In some cases, anxiety can manifest as traumatic symptoms, such as flashbacks, nightmares, and mood, cognitive, and physiological reactions to reminders of the injury.

Pain management is another critical factor affecting mental health. Chronic pain is common with an SCI, and emotional turmoil can lower your tolerance for pain, making it even harder to cope. This often creates a vicious cycle of pain and mental distress.

Other important considerations include your pre-existing personality traits, personal relationships, financial and occupational pressures, and potential reliance on previous unhealthy coping strategies.

If you also sustained a brain injury, you may possibly be experiencing a decreased ability to regulate your emotions and behaviours, which can exacerbate an already stressful situation.

### STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING MENTAL WELLBEING

Addressing mental wellbeing after an SCI involves a holistic approach. A useful acronym to remember is BASICS:

**Body:** Maintaining physical health is foundational to mental wellbeing. Pay attention to nutrition, sleep, exercise, and personal hygiene. Getting adequate vitamin D and fresh air can significantly impact your overall mood and energy levels.

**Achievement:** Setting and achieving goals can provide a sense of mastery and purpose. This could be as simple as completing a small task or challenging yourself with a new hobby. These achievements, no matter how minor they may seem, contribute to a positive self-image and a sense of progress.

**Social:** Limiting screen time and fostering real-life connections are vital. Catching up with family and friends can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation. Human connection plays a critical role in our mental health.

**Interests:** Engage in hobbies or activities that you enjoy. Reconnecting with past interests or exploring new ones can provide joy and a break from daily stressors. This engagement is crucial for mental stimulation and satisfaction.

**Clean:** A clean and organised environment can significantly affect your mental state. Tidying your room, cleaning out your phone, and organising your thoughts can lead to a clearer mind and a more peaceful living space.

Another helpful acronym is IMPROVE the Moment, which offers various strategies to enhance mental wellbeing:

- **Imagery:** Visualise a relaxing scene to calm your mind.
- **Meaning:** Find purpose and meaning in your experiences.
- **Prayer:** Engage in spiritual practices to find peace.
- **Relaxation:** Use techniques like deep breathing, peaceful music, or half-smiling to relax.
- **One thing in the moment:** Focus on being present and practice mindfulness.
- **Vacation:** Take mini-breaks throughout the day to recharge.
- **Encouragement:** Provide yourself with positive affirmations and self-talk.

### SEEKING FURTHER HELP

If you find yourself struggling with your psychological wellbeing, various resources are available. Mental health apps, peer support groups, and adaptive sports/activity organisations can offer significant help.

Additionally, you can visit your nearest clinic and speak with a mental health nurse for guidance. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide subsidised counselling services, and private psychologists can offer assistance.

In conclusion, while an SCI presents immense challenges, focusing on mental wellbeing through structured strategies and seeking support can lead to a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Prioritising mental health is essential in navigating the complexities of an SCI and achieving a balanced and resilient state of mind. Remember, you are not alone in this journey, and help is available to guide you toward a brighter future. **R**



## Value of learnerships

There are so much more to gain from learnerships than just an income as Rustim Ariefdien explains

**L**earnerships play a crucial role in empowering individuals with disabilities in South Africa. These structured programmes combine theoretical learning with practical work experience, providing participants with valuable skills, knowledge, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Let's delve deeper into the significance of learnerships for persons with disabilities and highlight the benefits they offer.

### EDUCATION

Learnerships promote equal access to education and training for persons with disabilities. By participating in these programmes, individuals can acquire qualifications and skills that enhance their employability. Whether it's vocational training, technical skills or soft skills development,

learnerships create a level playing field for all, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities.

### EXPERIENCE

Learnerships provide hands-on experience in real-world settings. Participants learn by doing, gaining practical skills that are directly applicable to their chosen fields. For persons with disabilities, this practical experience is invaluable.

It bridges the gap between theory and practice, preparing them for the workforce and increasing their chances of securing meaningful employment.

Consider the example of Naledi, a young woman with visual impairment who participated in a learnership programme focused on web development. Through hands-

on coding projects, she honed her skills in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Her confidence grew as she built accessible websites, and the experience opened doors to freelance opportunities and eventually a full-time job as a web developer.

### SELF-CONFIDENCE

Participating in learnerships boosts self-confidence and self-sufficiency. As learners acquire new skills and overcome challenges, they develop a sense of achievement and belief in their abilities.

For persons with disabilities, who often face societal barriers and stereotypes, this confidence-building aspect is transformative. Learnerships provide a platform for them to prove their capabilities and contribute meaningfully to society.

Imagine Thabo, a young man with a hearing impairment who joined a learnership programme in hospitality management. Through practical rotations in hotel operations, he learned to communicate effectively with guests, manage reservations, and handle customer complaints. Thabo's newfound confidence allowed him to excel in his role, and he eventually became a supervisor at a prestigious hotel.

### NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

Learnerships foster social connections and networking opportunities. Participants interact with peers, mentors, and industry professionals. For persons with disabilities, who may experience isolation or exclusion, these interactions are vital. Networking opens doors to employment prospects, mentorship, and community support. It also breaks down stereotypes and promotes inclusion.

Zinhle, a wheelchair user who participated in a learnership programme for graphic design, collaborated with fellow learners on creative projects, attended industry workshops, and connected with established designers. Through networking, she secured freelance gigs and even exhibited her artwork at a local gallery.

People with disabilities can rest assured that accommodations can be made during the learnership programme. These might include:

- **Accessible Learning Materials:** Braille textbooks, screen readers, and large-print materials ensure that information is accessible to all.
- **Assistive Technologies:** From speech recognition software to adaptive keyboards, assistive technologies empower learners to overcome barriers.
- **Flexible Schedules:** Learnerships accommodate medical appointments, therapy sessions, and other disability-related commitments.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** Physical modifications, such as ramps or elevators, make training venues accessible.

The ultimate goal of learnerships is to facilitate a smooth transition from training to employment. By equipping learners with relevant skills and practical experience, these programmes enhance their employability.

Employers recognise the value of learnerships and often hire participants as permanent employees. For persons with disabilities, securing sustainable employment is a significant achievement, leading to financial independence and improved quality of life.

Learnerships empower persons with disabilities by providing education, skills, and opportunities. They contribute to a more inclusive society where everyone has a chance to thrive. As South Africa continues to prioritise disability inclusion, learnerships remain a powerful tool for positive change. **R**

#### About The Author

Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert extraordinaire who assists businesses to "let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility" through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.



## Langa flourishes in lab

An accident that resulted in amputation turned into a beautiful opportunity for a lab assistant to give back to his community

**B**orn in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in 1981, Langa Lakhe Ndlovu came to South Africa in search of greener pastures in 2001. He found a job at a fish distribution company. A mere three years later, he was involved in a truck accident while delivering products to customers.

He was admitted to the Union Hospital in Alberton and spent two months in a coma. At the end of the two months, his leg was amputated without his knowledge. When he woke, he had to come to terms with the fact that he lost a leg below the knee.

We met Langa for the first time at Netcare Rehab shortly after. His stump was very

short with lots of scar tissue. To manufacture a leg for him was a constant battle of skin breakdown and pressure sores and countless consultations. He had a very physical job with an unforgiving boss.

Out of desperation to find solutions for all his physical problems and constant attention needed, we employed him as a cleaner with light duty work. However, we soon discovered that Langa was a very handy guy. We started to teach him how to manufacture prostheses and do leather work.


Today, almost 20 years later, Langa is one of our top laboratory assistants! His prosthetic challenges were all addressed



**MAIN PHOTO:** Langa Lakhe Ndlovu works as a lab assistant at Arc Studio.  
**ABOVE:** Langa makes first-class prostheses.  
**LEFT:** After changing careers, Langa and the Arc Studio team was able to resolve all the complications with his prosthesis.

and solutions were found for all his complications.

He spends his days in our lab interacting with all the qualified prosthetists. He manufactures first-class prostheses. He gives so much back to us and to our patients. As he is an amputee himself, he interacts with other amputees on a different level.

What a testament to the will to survive and play your part in a community despite your circumstances! What a man among men! 

**About The Author**  
Heinrich Grimsehl is a prosthetist in private practice and a member of the South African Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (SAOPA). email: [info@hgprosthetics.co.za](mailto:info@hgprosthetics.co.za)





## Adapting as you age

Small adaptations can make ageing with a spinal cord injury much easier as Jessica Morris, spinal unit manager at Rita Henn & Partners Rehabilitation, explains

**S**pinal cord injuries (SCI) across South Africa have devastating effects on individuals given the multitude of secondary conditions that can arise from these injuries or illnesses.

In addition to this, one must consider the many environmental and psychosocial barriers imposed on South Africans when considering many of these injuries occur in those from low economic-income classes.

It is well recognised that with the advances of medicine across the globe, people are able to live longer and healthier lives when managed adequately.

This is known as 'healthy ageing'. We often undervalue the benefits of small yet crucial changes or adaptations into everyday to accommodate the ongoing physical changes we experience throughout our lives as a means to remaining comfortable.

These small adaptations allow us to live with as little residual disease and disability as possible considering the already imposing functional limitations the ageing process brings.

Those living SCI are not immune to this ageing process. In fact, it is thought that this process in conjunction with the limitations brought



on by disability often accelerates ageing given the many co-morbidities associated with SCI.

Rehabilitation and maintenance plans often aim to encompass this unavoidable phenomenon in a bid to reduce the effects of premature ageing and its consequences on the individual and look to promote active and healthy ageing thereby preventing pathological ageing.

Two common influencing factors which affect the rate at which SCI individuals are prone to ageing include the age at which one was injured and the length of time since the injury.

Fatigue, weakness and weight gain also influence ageing as this affects the amount of help an individual may require and therefore not only affects the SCI individual's ageing, but also that of their family/carer.



**Fatigue, weakness and weight gain also influence ageing as this affects the amount of help an individual may require.**

Common areas of concern that tend to accelerate ageing or complications in persons with SCI include:

**Shoulders and upper limb joints:** Increased loads are placed onto these joints and therefore they are prone to additional wear and tear which can increase pain and restrict movement.

**Bladder:** The ageing bladder often loses its muscle tone, which is further heightened with an abnormal bladder such as that with SCI. This poses an increased risk of developing urinary tract infections (UTIs) or bladder stones which may cause further illness.

**Bowel Dysfunction:** The bowel system tends to become slower with ageing which can result in complications such as constipation, incontinence or leaking, haemorrhoids, bleeding and pain and even bowel cancers.

**Skin:** Skin fragility is common with any ageing process and frail skin in SCI can cause complications such as increased pressure injury risk which leads to infection and severe wounds.

Managing these risk factors becomes an important part of therapy to minimise early-onset ageing and increased complication risk. Such management includes:

- Maintaining healthy weight to avoid unnecessary strain on arms during propelling of wheelchairs or transferring, which in turn reduces early osteoarthritis;
- Ensuring equipment is ergonomically safe;
- Maintaining hand hygiene during bladder and bowel management;
- Going for frequent doctor or medical reviews to monitor a changing bladder or bowel programme;
- Drinking plenty of water to remain hydrated and ensure healthy organs (including the skin and kidneys); and
- Stopping “bad” habits that hasten the ageing process, such as smoking which impacts blood flow.

The journey of ageing is unavoidable but is more comfortable if one is well prepared and realistic about the future. Asking for advice from others with SCI, and discussing appropriate home adaptations or routine changes to implement with the multidisciplinary team is useful.

Being honest and realistic about what the situation will be like in three to five years can better prepare one for the unavoidable changes with age.

Remember, prevention is better than cure. Ageing is a normal human phenomenon but it is accelerated with SCI. So, it is important to be prepared and to monitor changes in the body to prevent secondary complications where possible. **R**



# Embracing imperfections



Following on his previous article on the impact life coaching has had on his life, Len Davey notes how it has helped him embrace imperfections

**I**n the previous issue of *Rolling Inspiration* (Issue 1 2024), I ended with a comment made by my wife: “If you never coach one client, the course has paid for itself.” Let me explain...

The open market is tough and as a business owner I worked very hard to get to the top. I became so competitive – not that competition

is bad. It drives one to become the best you can be in that field. The danger, however, is that it tends to carry over into your private life.

I worked long hours, didn’t take much care with my health and became quite emotionally distant. Emotion didn’t play a big part in my life and perfectionism drove me crazy. I tended to give my staff all my attention and

**MAIN PHOTO:** Kintsugi (translated to “golden joinery”), also known as kintsukuroi (“golden repair”), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery using lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. The philosophy is that broken objects are not inherently worthless and that their brokenness can be seen as a part of their history and beauty.  
(Photo sourced from *Wiki Media Commons*)

compassion. By the time I got home, I was all out of energy for myself.

Becoming a Life Coach taught me that taking care for oneself is equally important; one understands the value of selfcare. It is important to recharge and replenish your energy no matter the role you play in your daily life.

I learned to be kind to yourself first and then others. As Dr Wayne Dyer explains, you cannot give someone six oranges, if you do not have six oranges. In other words, you cannot give someone love or kindness if you do not have those properties yourself. Cherish these things in yourself first before you can give it to anyone else.

Before my accident, I was a sportsman and a musician (drummer), and was plagued with perfectionism. I learned from my coach Jenni Burrige that embracing imperfection (as hard as it may seem) allows one to truly appreciate our authenticity.

Rather than striving for flawlessness, I now try to celebrate the uniqueness and genuine aspects of myself. Here is an additional thought: Imperfections are like brushstrokes on a canvas, they add depth, character, and beauty to the masterpiece that is You.

In my business life, I devoted significant attention to achieving success, believing it would lead to happiness. However, there was an elusive element missing.

It wasn't until I transitioned into becoming a life coach that I discovered a profound truth: Happiness comes first, and it is the foundation upon which success is built.

When we prioritise our wellbeing, fulfilment and inner joy, we naturally attract success and abundance.

Embracing the wisdom that happiness precedes success has profoundly influenced my coaching approach. As a life coach, I prioritise helping clients discover their inner joy, purpose and fulfilment.

When they align with their authentic selves, success naturally follows. I encourage them to celebrate imperfection, recognise their uniqueness, and cultivate a positive mindset. By focusing on happiness as the foundation, we create a fertile ground for growth, resilience and achievement.

I want to leave you with one of the most profound teachings of my journey as a life coach: The subconscious mind is where up to 99 percent of our thought processes takes place. It finds it incredibly difficult to discern between fact and vivid imagination.

For example, you are watching a scary movie. In reality you know that this is not really happening, and it was shot in a studio that is safe, with lots of people, lights and cameras around, and that it is just actors playing a part.

Yet, you are engrossed in the plot, feel scared; fear almost paralyses your top half (I am a Paraplegic, he, he). You close your eyes and squeeze your partners hand till it goes blue ... why? The movie is real to your subconscious mind. This is both a blessing and a curse.

I could write another piece on this topic alone, but the best succinct advice I can give you is to watch what you consume and what comes out of your mouth. You are prophesying. Understanding this is essential to personal growth and transformation. **R**

#### About The Author

Len Davey is a qualified life coach. To book a session, contact him via his website: [www.theworldwithin.co.za](http://www.theworldwithin.co.za). A free “goal setting” session is offered without any obligation so that you can experience life coaching first hand.



# Need to Get Out and About

With these tips and ideas, leaving the house as a family with children with disabilities might seem a little less like a mountainous challenge

**T**here are so many benefits of getting out, whether this is to a local park, shopping centre or to a friend's house.

Getting fresh air and enjoying a different scenery helps to get perspective when daily things become tough. But for many families with children with disabilities, just leaving the house can seem like a mountainous challenge.

It might seem simpler and less stressful just to stay home, but getting out is so good for our (and our children's) mood, health, and mental wellbeing. This month we look at some tips and ideas for getting out.

## **PLANNING, PLANNING AND MORE PLANNING**

For many of us, planning is key. Forgetting medication, or a pressure cushion at home can have disastrous consequences. While some people can grab their keys and leave, some of us have many logistics to take care of. Make a list of things that need to be packed and done before you leave and during your outing. Consider, for example:

- Times;
- How long between PEG feeding my child to getting in a car without them feeling nauseous;
- How many changes of clothing they may need;
- Nutrition including snacks and hydration

- especially if it is hot;
- Comfort items or toys;
- Medication;
- Blanket for stretching/relieving pressure, etc.

I suggest typing, saving them and printing them for future outings, making changes and updates as you go.

### **CONTROLLING WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL (AND LETTING OTHER STUFF GO)**

Some of us are so used to being 'logistics Kings and Queens' out of necessity. Here are some things you might want to think about:

#### **Consider the weather**

Check local weather apps or reports and dress your child (and yourself) accordingly, and then pack extra in case there is an incident or the weather changes.

#### **Prepare for travel time**

Check the travel times and avoid peak rush hour traffic if you have limited time or your child doesn't travel well. Be prepared in case there is an unexpected traffic jam or accident with backup medication and fluids.

#### **Prebook if possible**

If going to a place or event that requires a booking, book tickets online and save these on your phone or print out so that you can bypass long lines (and avoid stares and inappropriate questions about wheelchairs etc).

#### **Bring your own**

Pack your own food and snacks to save money but also eliminating the chance of there not being suitable food that your child likes or can eat.

#### **Invite a friend**

Many of us feel overwhelmed at times, and asking for help can seem very hard but many people love to help if they know what you need.

Asking a friend or family member to go with you or meet you there can help to eliminate some stress, especially if you have more than one child.

Be specific about what you need them to help you with, ideally before you leave.

#### **Deep breaths**

Try relax and enjoy being out and about. Often we are so focussed on what can go wrong, that we miss out on the little things such the joy that watching the wind in the trees can bring to our children.




**Book tickets online and save these on your phone or print it out so that you can bypass long lines.**

#### **HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY**

It is always good to have a plan B, just in case things don't go according to plan. Have low or adjusted expectations. Sometimes just getting out the house and driving around the block before the wheels come off needs to be celebrated. You can always try again next week.

Break things into small segments and prepare your child beforehand if they get overwhelmed with change (maybe a three-hour trip to the beach is too much, break down into a 15 minute walk to a local park).

Go with your gut. You know your child the best so if you noticed they are becoming tired, overstimulated or anxious, leave. While other people or family members may be disappointed, dealing with the consequences of missing your child's cues may be worse.

If things don't go well, be kind to yourself and try again in a few days or weeks! 

#### **About Author**

Dr Emma McKinney owner of Disability Included Consultancy, a company providing disability employment and educational research, training, support, and resources. email: emma@disabilityincluded.co.za



## Fighting a sedentary lifestyle

As a prime cause of obesity and all its associated health risk, countering a sedentary lifestyle with exercise is crucial for longevity and health as biokineticist at Enable Centre Dr Robert Evans explains

**O**besity, defined as having an excessive amount of body fat that presents a risk to health, has become a critical public health issue. Over the past 50 years, obesity rates have skyrocketed. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), global obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1975.

In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight of whom over 650 million were obese. Several factors contribute to this alarming rise, with the primary culprits being a sedentary lifestyle and the overconsumption of calories.

A sedentary lifestyle means people have prolonged periods of inactivity or minimal physical movement, often due to the increased use of screen-based entertainment and work. Modern living worsens this problem, with many people spending too much time on computers, smartphones, and televisions.

Additionally, the consumption of calorie-dense and addictive foods, such as fizzy drinks and fast food, has soared, making it challenging to maintain a healthy diet.

Research has shown that physical inactivity can have similar detrimental effects on health

as smoking. This is especially significant for wheelchair users, who face additional barriers to increasing their activity levels.

The WHO recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. This level of activity is marked by an elevated heart rate and breathing. Achieving this can lead to significant health benefits, including a reduced risk of death from various diseases.

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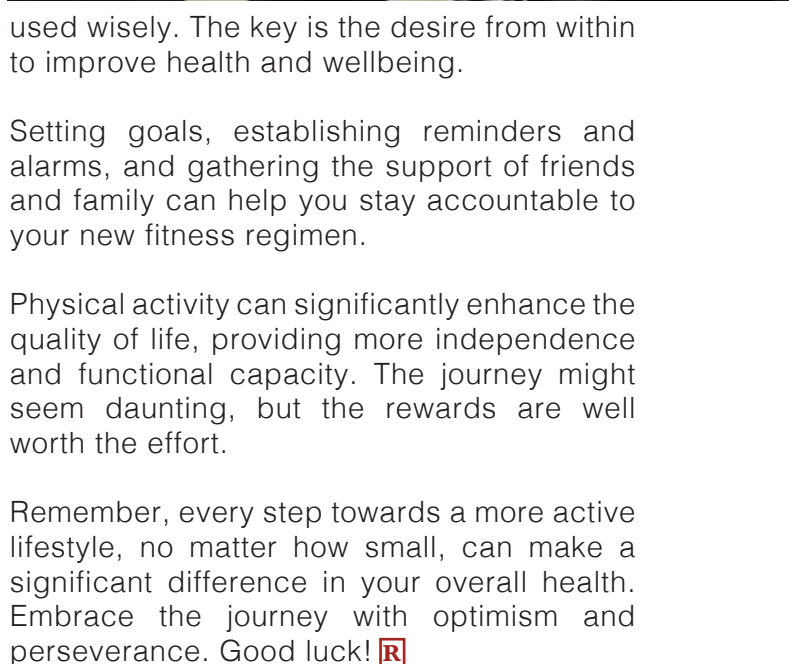
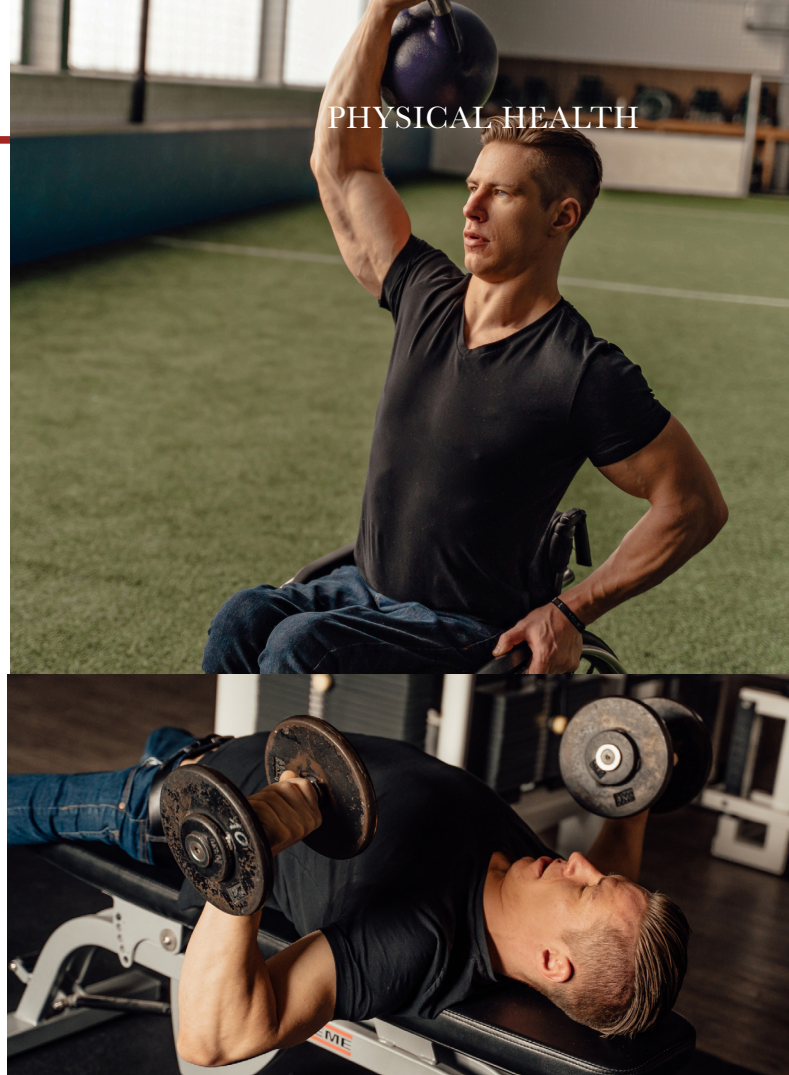
**The World Health Organization recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week.**

Maintaining muscle strength is also crucial as we age. The WHO suggests engaging in muscle-strengthening exercises twice a week. This not only helps in maintaining muscle mass and bone density but also enhances overall functional abilities and independence.

It's essential to focus on the numerous benefits of physical activity rather than fear the consequences of inactivity. For wheelchair users, the advantages of staying active are even higher. Increased bone density, improved bladder and bowel function, better circulation, enhanced functional abilities, reduced pain and spasticity, and an uplifted mood are just a few of the benefits.

One of the most significant barriers to physical activity is the misconception that it requires a fancy gym or constant supervision. In reality, there are countless resources available online that can guide wheelchair users in their fitness journey.


Reputable YouTube channels, university recommendations, and even artificial intelligence can offer valuable guidance if



used wisely. The key is the desire from within to improve health and wellbeing.

Setting goals, establishing reminders and alarms, and gathering the support of friends and family can help you stay accountable to your new fitness regimen.

Physical activity can significantly enhance the quality of life, providing more independence and functional capacity. The journey might seem daunting, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

Remember, every step towards a more active lifestyle, no matter how small, can make a significant difference in your overall health. Embrace the journey with optimism and perseverance. Good luck! 

#### **About The Enable Centre**

The **Enable Centre** is an outpatient physical and cognitive rehabilitation centre with branches in Cape Town and Durban. It operates as a social enterprise, meaning it provides therapy to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds whilst incorporating innovative technology and evidence-based treatments.



# No Equipment not a problem

Juan Vermeulen, intern biokineticist at The Enable Centre, shares some advice on designing an accessible home-based workout

**R**esearch consistently highlights the critical role of exercise in any rehabilitation journey. For wheelchair users, one of the most significant hurdles to rehabilitation is access to exercise professionals. Whether it's due to financial constraints or logistical issues, these challenges can hinder your progress. So, what can you do when visiting a rehabilitation centre isn't feasible?

Enter home-based exercise programmes – a practical and cost-effective solution. The catch? Many lack the know-how to get started. Let's dive into how you can implement these workouts, where to find reliable resources, and what to consider?

## **CRAFTING A HOME-BASED WORKOUT**

Home workouts don't need fancy equipment or complicated movements. Most exercises rely on everyday household items or, at most, an elastic band. Various YouTube channels offer evidence-based, safe exercise routines

tailored for wheelchair users. Our top picks include:

- [Adapt to Perform](#)
- [Zebrafish Neuro](#)
- [Reactive PT](#)
- [The Enable Centre](#)

Alternatively, repeating everyday movements such as picking up bottles of water or sitting up in a repetitive fashion can be very beneficial.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Once you've gathered your exercises, begin with 20 to 30 minutes of exercise, repeated two to three times a week. Your exercise should be intense enough that your heart rate and breathing are elevated.

As you build strength, gradually increase your workout frequency, duration, and the number of repetitions per exercise. Your goal should be to try and reach 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week.



## KEEPING IT UP

Starting a programme is the first big step, but there is still a staircase waiting. Keeping up your training can often be very difficult, with busy lifestyles, family, friends, appointments ... the list goes on. With this in mind, here are a few tips to keep your training running hard and strong:

- **Do What You Love:** Choose exercises that you enjoy and make you feel accomplished. This will make you look forward to your next session.
- **Find a Partner:** Having someone to keep you accountable will help you stick to your programme. Plus, exercising with others is often more fun than going solo.
- **Have a Plan:** Schedule your sessions in advance. Decide on the days and the specific exercises you'll do.
- **Mix It Up:** Try something different each week. Make exercises harder, exercise at a local park, or even join a local adaptive sports club!


## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Consult your primary healthcare practitioner if you experience any symptoms such as light-headedness, dizziness, chest pain, etc., regardless of how light the exercises seem.

If you are a wheelchair user and haven't stood or walked (with assistive devices/technology) for 12 months, a bone density scan is essential before attempting any weight-bearing activities, particularly kneeling. Prolonged periods without standing can weaken bones, increasing the risk of fractures under stress.

Diet is another key factor. Adequate protein intake supports recovery and muscle building. Swap out fizzy drinks and processed foods for whole foods, which are natural and unprocessed. Consulting a dietary professional for personalised advice can be beneficial.

## MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

Exercise is vital for everyone, but especially for wheelchair users. It enhances overall health and quality of life. So, why wait? Start moving today and remember: Movement is medicine. 



**ABOVE:** Screenshots taken from [The Enable Centre](#) "Shorts" that showcase the paraplegic exercises that includes long sit stretch, burpees, cobra stretch and four-point reaching. The [Youtube channel](#) also showcase quadriplegic exercises.

### About The Enable Centre

[The Enable Centre](#) is an outpatient physical and cognitive rehabilitation centre with branches in Cape Town and Durban. It operates as a social enterprise, meaning it provides therapy to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds whilst incorporating innovative technology and evidence-based treatments.



## Living *life* in the *fast* lane

Lafras Fritz's journey back to racing is a testament to resilience and proves that his life in the fast lane is far from over

**I**n the high-speed world of racing, few thrills match the adrenaline rush of the engine's roar, and the track's blur. For Lafras Fritz, this was life until a motorbike accident changed everything.

He used to race motorcycles, competing fiercely in the 150cc CBR Cup and 125 GP two-strokes. Lafras was on a promising path, finishing third in the 150cc championship even after an accident halfway through the season.

In 2010, a motorcycle accident left him paralysed. Despite this, his passion for racing only grew stronger.

"Racing has always been a part of my life," Lafras says. "The thrill of the track, the roar of the engine, and the rush of adrenaline became my world. The accident was a setback, but it didn't deter me."

In 2013, he transitioned to racing oval track V8 saloon cars. Adapting his car with hand controls by pressing a lever for the accelerator and pushing forward to brake, enabled him to compete effectively.

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**The accident was a setback, but it didn't deter me.**

—

By 2014, he finished second in the club championship, and in 2015, he secured second place in the South African nationals.



**MAIN PHOTO:** Lafras Fritz is still pursuing his love of racing even after an accident that left him paralysed.  
**ABOVE, TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT:** A few modifications to his bike allowed Lafras to once again race on a motorcycle.

Always looking for new challenges, Lafras bought a Yamaha R6 around 2018 and equipped it with an electric Pringle shifter from America, which allowed him to shift gears with the push of a button.

He also modified his racing boots with bicycle cleats to secure his feet to the foot pegs and added Velcro to his seat to stay in place. These innovations allowed him to enjoy track days on his bike, continuing to chase the thrill of racing.

In 2022, he started racing sidecars with his dad, using a setup similar to the Yamaha R6, but with a back brace bracket to help him stay in position during turns.

This new chapter in his racing journey has been incredibly rewarding, allowing him to share the experience with his dad while continuing to push the boundaries of what's possible.

"The first time I got back on the adaptive bike, I felt alive again," Lafras shares. "It wasn't just about racing. It was about reclaiming a part of myself."



His return to racing has been spectacular, making him a beacon of hope and inspiration. His story highlights the transformative power of adaptive sports, showing that with the right support, overcoming obstacles is possible.

At every racing event, Lafras was the star. His skill and speed on the adaptive bike were awe-inspiring, moving fellow racers and spectators. His journey sends a powerful message: Disability is not a barrier but a different path to achieving dreams.

Lafras attributes much of his success to the unwavering support of his family. He notes: "I wouldn't be where I am without my parents, my wife Himne, and everyone who has been part of my journey. Their encouragement has given me the opportunity to do all these unthinkable things."

Adaptive racing has taught Lafras resilience and creativity, proving that with determination, you can overcome any obstacle. His story is a reminder that life's challenges can be stepping stones to greatness.

Through adaptive sports, he has shown that racing, speed, and competition joy are not limited by physical abilities. His journey encourages us all to push our limits and live life in the fast lane, regardless of obstacles.

In the end, Lafras' story is not just about racing; it's about the human spirit's capacity for resilience and adaptation. His return to the track is an inspiration to all, proving that with courage and determination, we can find our way back to our passions and live life fully. **R**

### About The Author

Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF) is a non-profit company, committed to supporting individuals with disabilities and breaking down barriers and creating a more equitable and just world for all people, regardless of their abilities. and with the following objectives:

Supporting, enriching, encouraging, motivating and providing resources that empower individuals with disabilities to achieve their goals for them to live their best lives and creating a more accessible and equitable society for all.

**BELOW TOP AND MIDDLE:** Only three years after his accident, Lafras got back behind the wheel of an adapted V8 saloon car, which was fitted with hand controls.

**BELOW BOTTOM:** In 2022, Lafras started racing sidecars with his father.





# ADAPTIVE SPORTS FUND

NO LIMITS. JUST LIFE!



**OUR VISION:** is to encourage people with disabilities to have equal opportunities to participate in sports and physical activity, and where their abilities are celebrated and embraced by all members of the sports community.



## The drive to thrive

The drive to be as independent as possible has seen Gerhard van der Wath thrive following a catastrophic rugby injury

**O**n 16 April 2011, Gerhard van der Wath's life took a tragic turn in a scrum engagement gone wrong while playing for Augsburg Landbougimnasium's first 15 against Hoërskool Vredendal.

"There was a 'hit' in the scrums as were the rules at the time. The engage was from some distance away and my head got into a bad position. I couldn't get it in between the opposing loosehead prop and hooker. On the engage, my head hit the opposition's shoulder and my fifth and sixth vertebrae dislocated. I felt an electric shock through my entire body and fell backwards, unable to move anything," he recalls.

The incident left him a quadriplegic at the age of 16. The road ahead was nightmarish, but celebrating small victories got him through it.

"It was very tough, but keeping busy helped a lot. Many moments provided new

positivity and energy to keep going. Any instance when you become able or confident enough to do something yourself that you previously needed help with can be seen as a mini step towards living your 'new life,' Gerhard shares.

Speaking of his greatest driving force, the 29-year-old remarked: "Independence, for me, is the most important factor in making a life for yourself. The more independent you are, the more you can carve out a life for yourself and feel more like yourself.

"Independence is very important because you're limited in how much you can live out who you truly are, how free you are to do what you want and pursue what you want. Even if that means you have to motivate yourself to do something and to do it for yourself, or at least for reasons determined by yourself and not because someone else convinced or supported you to do so."

That desire has seen him bounce back from his life-altering injury with aplomb. He matriculated at Augsburg before beginning to coach several of the school's rugby and netball teams. He served as sports manager and marketer at the school from 2019 to 2021, during which time he coached the U11, U13A and U19B rugby teams as well as the U15 Northwest Boland rugby team.

He then obtained an undergraduate degree in mathematics and computer science through UNISA and works as a systems administrator at the University of Stellenbosch.

"I enjoy it a lot," Gerhard says of his work. "I do a lot of problem-solving and enjoy a challenge, which makes my job very fulfilling. My colleagues are also very caring and will always help where needed."

Though blessed with "amazing" support from his family, friends and the community of Clanwilliam, his pursuit of independence has seen him spread his wings to Stellenbosch where he lives with a carer. He took things a step further by setting the goal of earning his driver's licence, and is well on his way to doing so in his modified Subaru Forester.

"Learning how to drive and obtaining my learner's licence was not as difficult as I thought it would be and it feels very empowering. I'd definitely encourage other wheelchair users to get behind the wheel."

Another key driver of his journey is the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, for which Gerhard had lofty praise.

"The Players' Fund has supported me on all fronts. In the beginning, emotional support is necessary. Then comes the time when you ask, 'What now?' This is where their experience with these situations is very valuable as they know what's needed and what's important to think about."

"Everyone's situation varies to a certain degree, but there are things that are applicable across the board. They know exactly what those things are. This is where the financial support comes in."




**MAIN PHOTO:** Gerhard van der Wath found keeping busy help adjusted to his new life after his injury.

**ABOVE:** Gerhard graduated from his degree in mathematics and computer science, and has aspirations to continue his studies.

"When you need something that would drastically improve your quality of life, they are there to assist. In my case, there weren't big financial needs, but the smaller finances they assist with have helped a lot and I'm very thankful for it," he says.

Ever positive, Gerhard has big plans for the future. "Aside from getting my driver's licence, I want to do an honour's degree in mathematics and computer science and set up a Saturday morning tutoring programme where I and other volunteers help school children with mathematics."

Finally, sharing valuable lessons he's learned and offering advice to others, he notes: "When you need help, ask for it; don't suffer in silence. When things look bad and you're feeling overwhelmed, just hang in there, you'll feel better and can overcome many of your obstacles."

"Focus on the things you can do and enjoy while attempting to do the things you currently can't but want to, and last but not most important, don't use excuses in life." 

### Donate to the Player's Fund

If you would like to support the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, visit their website at [www.playersfund.org.za](http://www.playersfund.org.za) and select any number of the giving options available, which include EFT, payfast, Snapscan and Zapper.



## Wheelchair Rugby the sport for you

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby has introduced a “Fives” format to allow a wider range of disabilities in the sport

**W**heelchair rugby is an exciting paralympic sport created specifically for people with disabilities. It is an intense, yet safe contact sport that offers players a welcome reprieve from the challenges of their everyday lives.

The objective of the game is relatively simple: A ‘try’ is scored when a player crosses over the goal line while in possession of the ball. Getting to and over the goal line however is a more difficult affair as the opposition use their chairs as obstacles and a 40-second goal clock per phase adding to the pressure. Wheelchair rugby chairs are specialised sports equipment designed with wheel guards and reinforced metal plating to handle all the bumps and bashes.

The sport is co-ed for athletes of all ages. Athletes are assigned a classification number based on their degree of physical disability, ranging from 0.5 to 3.5 points. The greater the level of disability, the lower the classification number. There is a limit to the total number of points each team can have on the field at one time, which requires teams to strategically mix their high and low point players.

The sport has a long heritage in South Africa dating back to the late 1980s. Today, it is administered by South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR), an association that is deeply involved in all aspects of the sport from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league.



## WHEELCHAIR RUGBY


Teams from around the country participate at SAWCR sanctioned tournament events, building up to the national finals typically held in November each year.

In recent years, SAWCR has undertaken some exciting upgrades with a full corporate rebrand and new social media communications strategy, development programmes and the introduction of an additional format of the sport, Wheelchair Rugby Fives.

The traditional paralympic version of the sport, also known as Wheelchair Rugby Fours, has four players on each team, with greater limitations on athlete eligibility. 'Fours' requires impairment in at least three limbs, which inclines this format primarily towards people with quadriplegia.

The 'Fives' format lowers the bar on eligibility, making room for a wider range of disabilities. Five players are allowed per team, and much like T20 cricket, it is the fast-paced and electric version of the game.

The introduction of Wheelchair Rugby Fives has expanded the reach of wheelchair rugby into a new player base and signals exciting growth for the sport in South Africa. Local teams are encouraged to develop squads in both formats of the sport.

Whatever the nature of your disability, there is a place for you in wheelchair rugby. The physicality and social community nature of the sport offer many benefits for athletes and their families. For non-athletes, there are also many opportunities to get involved. If you're the kind of person who is mechanically inclined and enjoys tinkering with equipment, or perhaps you are interested in volunteering as a coach, team support or game official, wheelchair rugby is the sport for you! 

### About South Africa Wheelchair Rugby

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR) is the official administrator of the wheelchair rugby in South Africa. The association is involved in all aspects from development and local club support to game officials and managing the national wheelchair rugby league. For more information, please contact [admin@sawcr.co.za](mailto:admin@sawcr.co.za) or visit the official Facebook page at [@SAWheelchairRugby](https://www.facebook.com/SAWheelchairRugby).





# 2024 International Bowls Championships

The 2024 International Bowls for the Disabled was held at Ekuruleni. Mandy Latimore reports on the event

South Africa was chosen as the venue for the 2024 International Bowls for the Disabled (IBD) Championships and Ekuruleni was that district that accepted the task of hosting the event. Delville Bowling Club was the host club with Kempton Park and Benoni Clubs hosting as well. Teams were housed at the Benoni Lake Club Hotel. Transport was supplied by DAATS.

Disabled Bowls is divided into two main categories: The visually impaired, which has categories from B1 to B4 (in which persons who are blind are B1 and those who have some sight are assessed and placed into the other three depending on how much sight



they have); and physically impaired who are categorised according to how much balance and strength they have when delivering a bowl. Their categories are from B5 to B8.

South Africa took advantage of the home venue and hosted two teams: The official South African Proteas and an Invitational side. The country also assisted with filling up international teams that were unable to bring sufficient bowlers with local bowlers. There were nine countries who entered: South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, India, England, Scotland, Canada and of course South Africa.

Pairs and singles matches were played. The scoring was worked out so that there were selected players from each category and country eligible for points for the overall team scores; thus, the countries with more players would not dominate. Medals were awarded for individual and pairs play.

South Africa has always been at the forefront of the medals in international bowls, and managed to take the overall team trophy with a medal count of 19, which included seven bronze, eight silver and four gold medals for the individual categories. South Korea was a close second with 12 medals of which seven were gold, four silver and one bronze.

Scotland only sent three bowlers, but managed to win a gold in the B8 Men's singles

**MAIN PHOTO:** South Africa was chosen to host the 2024 International Bowls for the Disabled Championship.

**LEFT MIDDLE AND BOTTOM:** South Africa's Deon van der Vyver managed to fend off a strong challenge by South Korea's Imi Chunkya.

**ABOVE:** Nine countries participated in the Championship.

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with Stuart Stevens beating South Korea's Park Cheon Seok at the finals.

The South Korean side were in every finals match on the last day. Deon van Der Vyver from South Africa managed to fend off a strong challenge by South Korea's Imi Chunkyu and clinched it by one point, while fellow South Africans Nico Beetge and Louise Evans lost their final matches to Song Myeungjun and Yoon Bokja.

Despite the championship being a success and our bowlers being among the best in the world, there is still very little media coverage and sponsorship for this sport.

Bowling is dubbed the "one sport for life" as there are very few adaptations needed in order to play the sport (wheels and castors adapted for mobility devices). It is definitely one that can be played by those with disabilities. [R](#)

#### About The Author

Mandy Latimore is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access. email: [mandy@noveltravel.co.za](mailto:mandy@noveltravel.co.za)



## Pleasure beyond performance

Intimacy after a spinal cord injury can be a lot more enjoyable when focusing on the pleasure rather than performance

**W**hen it comes to sexuality and spinal cord injuries (SCIs), a significant shift in perspective is crucial. The common focus on physical functioning often overshadows the true essence of a fulfilling sexual experience.

The key to a positive and enjoyable sexual relationship lies in moving beyond the fixation on physical capabilities and embracing the broader spectrum of intimacy, pleasure, and connection.

After a SCI, many individuals and their partners may experience anxiety and uncertainty regarding sexual activity. This is often rooted in concerns about physical performance, such as the ability to achieve erections, orgasm, or engage in penetrative sex.

However, it's essential to recognise that sexuality is not solely defined by these factors.

One of the most empowering approaches for couples navigating sexuality after a SCI is to shift the focus from performance to pleasure. This involves redefining what sexual activity means and exploring new ways to experience and share pleasure. Here are some strategies to help make this shift:

### **OPEN COMMUNICATION**

Honest and open communication is the foundation of a satisfying sexual relationship. Discuss your feelings, desires, and boundaries with your partner. Understanding each other's needs and concerns fosters a deeper connection and reduces performance-related anxiety.

## EXPLORATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Sexuality is a broad and diverse spectrum. Explore different forms of intimacy and pleasure that do not solely rely on genital stimulation.

This could include sensual massages, oral sex, mutual masturbation, or the use of sex toys. Experimenting with these alternatives can open up new avenues of pleasure and satisfaction.

## SENSATE FOCUS EXERCISES

These exercises, originally developed by Masters and Johnson, emphasise focusing on the sensations of touch and the pleasure of being touched without the pressure to perform.

Sensate Focus is an approach that can help both partners reconnect with their bodies and rediscover the joys of physical intimacy.

## EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Building a strong emotional connection can enhance the sexual experience. Engage in activities that strengthen your bond, such as spending quality time together, engaging in mutual hobbies, or simply talking and sharing your thoughts and feelings.

## PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

Consulting with a sexologist or psychologist who specialises in sexual health and SCI can provide valuable insights and strategies tailored to your specific situation.

They can help address any psychological barriers and provide practical advice for enhancing your sexual relationship.

The ultimate goal is to make sexual activity a source of joy and fun, rather than a task to be performed. Here are some tips to infuse fun into your intimate moments:

- Create a relaxing atmosphere. Set the mood with soft lighting, music, and comfortable surroundings. A relaxing environment can reduce stress and enhance the pleasure of the moment.
- Laugh together. Humour can be a powerful tool in alleviating tension and fostering a positive experience. Don't

be afraid to laugh and enjoy each other's company.

- Celebrate small victories. Recognise and celebrate small achievements and moments of pleasure. Every positive experience, no matter how small, contributes to a more fulfilling sexual relationship.
- Be Present. Focus on the present moment and the sensations you and your partner are experiencing. Mindfulness can enhance the intensity and enjoyment of your intimate moments.



**Building a strong emotional connection can enhance the sexual experience.**

Sexuality after SCI requires a reimagining of what a fulfilling and pleasurable sexual experience is. By moving beyond the narrow focus on physical performance and embracing a broader understanding of intimacy and pleasure, you can discover new depths of connection and enjoyment.

Remember, the essence of a positive sexual experience lies in mutual pleasure, emotional intimacy, and the joy of being with your partner. Let go of performance pressures and focus on the unique pleasures you can give and receive, creating a rich and rewarding sexual relationship. **R**

### About The Author

Dr Danie Breedt is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of psychology. He divides his time between training, research and clinical practice. Danie works from an integrative interactional approach in psychotherapy, dealing with a wide range of emotional difficulties and sexual rehabilitation for patients with disabilities. He is the co-owner of Charis Psychological Services, a psychology practice that specialises in physical rehabilitation across South Africa.


## Montjane bags Wimbledon win ahead of Paralympics



**ABOVE:** Wheelchair tennis star, Kgothatso Montjane brings home the Wimbledon women’s doubles win. (Photo sourced from [Tennis South Africa](#))

South Africa’s wheelchair champion Kgothatso Montjane won the Wimbledon women’s doubles with partner Yui Kamiji from Japan.

This is Kgothatso’s third Grand Slam win after winning Roland Garros and US Open doubles titles. She is yet to win a singles title, but for now, the focus is on bringing home a Paralympic medal.

Congratulations to Kgothatso on the win and best of luck at the Paralympic Games. For more news on wheelchair tennis in South Africa, visit the [Tennis South Africa website](#). 

## Africa Health Conference comes to Cape Town

The 2024 Africa Health Conference will be held in Cape Town from 22 to 24 October. The event combines an expansive exhibition with CPD accredited conferences and non-CPD workshops. Specialists will discuss a range of topical subjects such as the introduction of the National Health Insurance. Exhibition visitors register for free while the conference delegates pay for access to all the conferences and workshop. For more information, visit the [Africa Health Conference website](#). 

## 2024 Events Calendar

### PARIS 2024 PARALYMPIC GAMES

**28 August - 8 September 2024**

The 2024 Paralympic Games will be held in Paris from 28 August to 8 September 2024. Visit the [official website](#) for the 2024 Games for all your news and information.

### INTERNATIONAL SPINAL CORD INJURY DAY 5 September

International Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Day creates awareness and highlights the most topical issues concerning people with spinal cord injuries. This year, the slogan is “[End Violence – Protect Spinal Cord](#)”, which highlights the role violence plays in causing spinal cord injuries.

### CASUAL DAY

**6 September**

The annual Casual Day returns on Friday, 6 September, with the theme “I See You”. For tickets, merch and information, visit the [Casual Day website](#). Stickers are also available for purchase through QASA. For more information, send an e-mail to [info@qasa.co.za](mailto:info@qasa.co.za).

### QASA AGM

**21 September**

Save the date for the QASA Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Saturday, 21 September. Venue and times will be confirmed closer to the date.

### AFRICA HEALTH CONGRESS

**22 – 24 October**

The Africa Health Congress will take place from 22 to 24 October in Cape Town. There are tiered registrations available. For more information, visit the [official website](#).

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# Inclusive Employment and BBBEE Essentials



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[Click here to download  
full Deep Dive Booklet](#)



# Disability and BBBEE: An Overview

**B**BBEE is very topical at present with new amendments being introduced in December 2019. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (Act 53 of 2003) essentially works on the understanding that years of systemic racism contributed to contemporary economic woes, and that government intervention can stem the results of past racist regimes.

Companies determine their BBBEE Scorecard points through their BBBEE level. There are eight levels with the desired level from Level 1 to Level 4. Government procurement is targeted at Level 4 and above.



**Government procurement is targeted at Level 4 and above.**



These points are scored across five elements: Ownership, Management, Skills Development, Enterprise and Supplier Development, and Socio-economic Development.

The BBBEE process is onerous on the company as it needs to provide the appropriate evidence when the BBBEE status is verified by an accredited verification agency. Points are mainly earned through element-specific spend, however, there are categories measured through nominal numbers such as how many black employees with disabilities are employed.

Disability has been a misnomer and at times misunderstood. The BBBEE Scorecard specifically talks about disability in the management element indicating two points

available if the at least two percent of the workforce is black individuals with disabilities.

If a company spends at least 0,3 percent of its payroll on black individuals with disabilities under the Skills Development element, the company earns four points, whether the individuals are employed by the company or not. However, the two instances described above are not the only areas where the disability community can benefit.

In the Ownership element, it speaks of Black Designated Groups and has disability as one of the five areas listed there. The points benefit for a company is three points if two percent of the company is owned by a black person with a disability.

Under the Enterprise and Supplier Development element, companies can score two points for procuring from Black Designated Groups, including the disability community.



**Companies [can] score points when they provide funding to non-profit organisations.**



The Socio-economic Development element allows companies to score points when they provide funding to non-profit organisations, which would include organisations for people with disabilities for a total of five points.

In summary, there are six points available where disability is specifically mentioned and



another 10 points available where disability is inferred. This is a total of 16 BBEE Scorecard points, which is a significant amount.


“

**This is a total of 16 BBEE Scorecard points, which is a significant amount.**

Furthermore, in many instances the value of disability intervention, such as a learnership project, would earn additional points on the BBEE Scorecard and could have additional benefits to the company such as tax benefits.

This series of articles on BBEE and disability will be looking at each of the elements and demonstrate how persons with disability may benefit from BBEE as an employee or entrepreneur, and how an organisation for people with disabilities can benefit through engagement with companies.

It is imperative that the disability community understand what is required from them to meet the criteria for which companies are looking. For disability organisations, BBEE can become a valuable income stream that contributes to their sustainability greatly.

BBEE is a great enabler that needs to be studied and understood by the disability organisations and the community at large so that people with disabilities may be part of society and contribute to the GDP of South Africa. 

**About The Author**

Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert extraordinaire who assists businesses to “let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility” through BBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.





# Disability in the Workforce

Employers can earn two BBBEE Scorecard Points if they meet the target of two percent black employees with a disability in the workforce. The points earned together with the Employment Equity Act, which puts the legal compliance target at 7,5 percent, provide a compelling reason for employers to employ people with disabilities.

Learnerships is very often the medium used by employers to engage people with disabilities. Since only a percent of the formal workforce in South Africa are persons with disabilities, there are more and more opportunities coming the way to persons with disabilities.



**Disability organisations are in a pivotal position to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities.**

Disability organisations are in a pivotal position to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities, which very often is their mandate anyway. They are able to generate funding in the process.

So, how does a person with a disability prepare themselves for being a candidate for employment? Having a matric or post-matric qualification helps; however, a lower level of education does not exclude persons with a disability.

There are programmes that accommodate lower levels of literacy and numeracy while still providing the learner with a disability with an opportunity that could lead to employment.

Another popular focus area for employers are persons with disabilities under the

age of 30 as they benefit from the Tax Allowances and Employee Tax Incentives. A black female with a disability, a matric or higher qualification under the age of 30 is a sought-after candidate.

Where possible, it is good for the candidate to improve their level of skill either through accredited courses or self-study. If a person can demonstrate that they have the skill being sought by the employer, then this would stand them in good stead for employment.

To become a candidate for employment, a person with a disability needs to have a CV. It is important to disclose their disability in the CV.

Indicate whether it is a physical or mental disability, provide the category of disability together with the diagnosis of the disability. Indicate any reasonable accommodation requirements.

For example, “I have a physical disability and my category of disability is Cerebral Palsy. My diagnosis is spastic diplegic and I use a wheelchair. In an office environment I need a working table that my wheelchair can comfortably go under, a lift in the building if I need to work on an upper level and an accessible toilet”.

Your CV should be accompanied by a medical practitioner’s certificate that clearly states that you have a disability that conforms with the definition of disability in the Employment Equity Act. **R**

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# Skills development and BBBEE

Companies are required to spend 3,5 percent of their payroll on their skills spend to gain score six points on their BBBEE Scorecard. If they spend 0,3 percent of their payroll on a disability skills spend, they are able to earn four points out of a possible 25 BBBEE Scorecard Points in the Skills Development category. These disability points are probably the most sought after of all BBBEE points relating to disability.

If companies offer learnerships, apprenticeships and/or internships, they can earn an additional six points. Some companies focus on disability projects for persons with disabilities, mainly through learnerships, where they can earn the 16 points referred to in our overview; plus a potential five points for absorption when the learner is permanently employed after the learnership. This represents 21 of the total 25 points with the other four points being for bursaries.

Learnerships are typically a 12-month qualification made up of a 30 percent theoretical and 70 percent practical experience in the workplace. At the end of the qualification, the learner would have acquired the certificate for that particular qualification and valuable 12 months' work experience. The learner can then be employed or seek out other learnership opportunities to enhance their skills level and add to their work experience.

Besides the BBBEE Scorecard points listed above, companies can benefit from the Employee Tax Incentive when hiring individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 as well as the Learnership Tax Incentives. Employers can claim up to R120 000 per individual who successfully completes their learnership qualification.

When it comes to learnerships for persons with disabilities, the advantages extend beyond skills development. By participating in learnerships, employers gain access to a

pool of trained, experienced employees with critical skills, which give the company a clear competitive edge. Additionally, employers can shape learnerships to address their unique requirements. Whether it's technical skills, soft skills, or industry-specific knowledge, customisation ensures relevance.

So, what is required of people with disabilities for a learnership? Companies advertise quite widely on social media and some of them communicate directly with organisations in the disability field. Primarily, companies look for a Grade 9, but very often Grade 12, which is dependent on the learnership that they are offering. The candidate learner would need to provide a copy of their ID, a certificate from a medical practitioner to prove their disability, and their latest certificate of their education or schooling.

When starting a learnership, it is imperative that the learner disclose their disability fully so that they can be appropriately and reasonably accommodated. Transport is often a challenge and finding the right transport solution is imperative before signing up on to a learnership. Absenteeism can lead to dismissal, and a valuable opportunity lost as another person with a disability could have benefit.

For employers, embracing learnerships isn't just about compliance. It's about investing in the organisation's future. By participating in learnerships, employers contribute to skills development, job creation, and economic growth. It's a strategic move that benefits both the company and society at large. 

## About The Author

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# Enterprise development and BBBEE

**E**nterprise and Supplier Development Element of the BBBEE Scorecard carries the most BBBEE Scorecard Points. There is a maximum of 44 points with an additional two bonus points. These include 20 points for Preferential Procurement, 10 points for Supplier Development, and five points for Enterprise Development with two bonus points when a supplier graduated from Enterprise Development to Supplier Development with at least one job created in either of the developmental processes.

Majority black, female-owned suppliers with a turnover of less than R10 million that falls within the designated group of suppliers, such as having a disability, is the combination that adds the most points value to the company.

Therefore, a business or NPO that is run or owned by people with disabilities present a unique value proposition to companies who wish to earn BBBEE points. These organisations can secure up to 26 points for Preferential Procurement and 10 points for Supplier Development, totalling 36 points. Critically, it is the two points available for Designated Group Suppliers that suppliers owned by people with disabilities present to a company.

The point tally can increase even further through the bonus points available should the NPO start out under Enterprise Development and progress through to becoming a supplier and benefiting from Supplier Development spend. If jobs are created through this process, then there is even more value to the company. Each of these scenarios presents a bonus point, each taking the potential point tally up from 36 points to 38 points.

This is particular significant for the Protective Workshop Industry where there is quite a bit of economic activity and continually evolving to remain viable and relevant. In many instances the primary income of a Protective Workshop

is obtained through the sale of products or the provision of services. However, Protective Workshops find themselves in a competitive market with enterprises that are not part of the disability community, competing for the available slice of the pie.

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) dictates that disability organisations cannot obtain funding from state departments such as the Departments of Trade and Industry and Economic Development, citing that funds are made available to organisations through the Department of Social Development. However, the Protective Workshops run by disability organisations are economic enterprises in the true sense of the word and could greatly enhance their service and efficiency if they just had the additional investment of funds.

BBBEE spend from companies do not have this PFMA restriction. They are able to build capacity in a Protective Workshop through Enterprise Development and, in the next year of assessment, invest even further when they engage the services of the organisation through Supplier Development. All spend from the company on the protective workshop counts towards the company's Preferential Procurement. If the organisation is a Level One Contributor, the company will obtain the highest value in BBBEE Scorecard Points.

Enterprise and Supplier Development is a significant lever that can significantly impact growth and development for disabled owned enterprises and protective workshops. **R**

### About The Author

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# Ownership, disability and BBBEE

The intrinsic benefits of the Ownership element of the BBBEE Scorecard may be the most misunderstood element from a disability perspective. Disability can be a direct benefit to a company as a Black Designated Group who are defined as black people who are persons with disabilities as defined in the Code of Good Practice on employment of people with disabilities issued under the Employment Equity Act

If a company does not meet the sub minimum threshold of 40 percent of the eight realisation points under the Ownership element, the company will be discounted by one BBBEE level. This is a huge negative for a company. Points are available as follows:

- **Voting Rights:** Up to four points
- **Economic Interest:** Up to 13 points
- **Realisation:** Up to eight points

To avoid this, a company can, for example, have a black female with a disability own at least 10 percent (debt free) of the company to avoid being discounted. Additionally, the company would earn over 20 of the 25 ownership points. Furthermore, if this black female with a disability is part of the management structure, points would be scored there as well. If the black female with a disability holds a position on the company board, and is employed as an executive manager, another four points out of 15 for the Management element would be scored.

Furthermore, if other companies are procuring from the company in question then they would earn additional points on their BBBEE Scorecard. This is a significant benefit for the company. Of course, this benefit would relate to any black person with a disability, but the points may vary due to gender and thus be less lucrative for the company.

In order to work towards the above scenario, companies need to identify candidates that

they would like to provide with shares in their company either as a “gift” or through some sort of sale agreement. It is unlikely that a company would simply give away 10 percent of its equity; however, should the candidate be in a position to add value to the company then an amicable arrangement can be made.

So how does a candidate demonstrate themselves to a company as a BBBEE investment? The areas in which you could add value to the company is in the following areas:

- **Marketing:** Are you able to use your profile as a black person with a disability to generate leads?
- **Sales:** Are you able to close sales for the company?
- **Operations:** Are you able to add value to the company’s value chain?
- **Human Resources:** Are you able to add to the body of knowledge of disability towards ensuring the company’s compliance with Employment Equity Act legislation?

Needless to say, having skills in entrepreneurship, commerce or management including marketing, sales, finance, operations or human resources could be advantageous. Should a person with a disability wish to prospect towards the ownership of a company then acquiring these skills would be paramount.

In the endeavour to acquire the skills, the individual could seek Skills Development funding from the company towards their upskilling. The opportunities are endless. **R**

### About The Author

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# Socio-economic development, disability and BBBEE

The Socio-economic Development (SED) element of the BBBEE Scorecard is mainly for the benefit of Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) that ideally service more than 75 percent of black beneficiaries with disabilities. Companies can obtain five BBBEE Scorecard Points if they spend one percent of Net Profit, after tax, as SED spend with NPOs. The NPO must have a sworn affidavit that shows their BBBEE level if they are classified as an Emerging Micro Enterprise or Qualifying Small Enterprises if they have more than 51 percent black beneficiaries. These two categories cover NPOs that fall under the R50 million threshold. The BBBEE Commission provides a list as a guideline on how an NPO can benefit from SED:

- Sustainable livelihood initiatives, limited to economic activities.
- Building of vocational, literacy and work related (including self-employment) skills.
- Providing opportunities for adult education.
- Income generating skills and knowledge.
- Improvement of capacity to work, including self-employment.
- Generation of income from productive activities.
- Increased employability and earning power.
- Providing training or mentoring to beneficiary communities.
- Maintaining a SED unit by the Measured Entity.

Training and mentoring are measurable by quantifying the cost of time (excluding travel or commuting time) spent by staff or management of the Measured Entity in carrying out the initiatives. A clear justification must support any claim for time costs incurred, commensurate with the seniority and expertise of the trainer or mentor.

Contributions to the SED unit of a NPO includes only the portion of salaries and wages attributable to time spent by the staff in, and the other expenses related to, promoting and implementing the unit. Furthermore, the Commission states:

“Any support of initiatives outlined, through SED contributions cannot be charitable in nature such as mere donations that are not linked to income generation. Further, SED is not necessarily tantamount to Corporate Social Investment (CSI). CSI is mostly used to promote good will in communities where the measured entity operates, but does not necessarily meet the income generation test. This is usually in form of handouts, for example, donation of school uniform, building repairs, donation of food parcels, etc.

“In justifying the conversion of CSI programmes into SED contributions, it is usually argued that the manner in which the Codes have been drafted makes it easy for entities to blur the lines between SED and SCI. Nonetheless, it must always be remembered that SED places less reliance on donations and rather enable income generation for beneficiaries in order to create and maintain sustainable access to the economy.”

Fundraising has become a challenging space for NPOs. BBBEE SED provides the NPO with alternative funding options to the traditional CSI that is governed by the Tax Act. Furthermore, the benefit that the NPO can present to the business is in the other elements of the BBBEE Scorecard. For example, a Protective Workshop that manufactures a product and supplies it to a company, would contribute to the procurement spend. A disability organisation that has a Placement Programme can recruit people with disabilities for permanent or learnership placements. **R**

### About The Author

Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert extraordinaire who assists businesses to “let the Ability of disAbility enAble their profitAbility” through BBBEE, skills development, employment equity and socio-economic development. His purpose is the economic empowerment of persons with disability in Africa. As a person with a disability himself, he has extensive experience in the development and empowerment of persons with disability.



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