

ROLLING INSPIRATION

ISSUE 2 2025

The leading magazine for people with mobility impairments

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Bringing Hope

Bags of Hope inspires

Closer to a Cure

Progress in SCI
research

Mastering Transfers

Stronger core, arms and
shoulders

Ballroom Beauty

The world of
Para Dance

Women in Rugby

A sport for everyone



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Wheelchair friendly



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No lift shaft required



Elegant & sleek European design



Built in ramp for easy wheelchair access

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Lifta SA's Trio Home Lift is a stylish residential lift that can be installed almost anywhere in your home. Built specifically for users with mobility challenges, the lift has a weight capacity of 230 kilograms, can accommodate most wheelchair models and has a built in ramp for easy wheelchair access. There is no need for a lift shaft or three phase power, resulting in substantial savings on construction or build costs. Due to their versatility, the Home Lift can either be installed within an already built home retrospectively or be included within building plans for new builds in the future.

Take your home to the next level today.

Contact Lifta SA now for a no obligation, no cost on site assessment on **080 73 73 737**.





CONTENTS

2 QASA is building strong relationships to benefit members.

4 The Bags of Hope project empowers new spinal cord injured patients.

7 Lifta SA is at the forefront of innovation with accessible home lifts

8 Obesity can severely impact your life. Fortunately, it can be reversed.

16 Here are tips for planning a birthday party for a child with a disability.

18 Putting off tasks is the silent thief of peace and confidence.

20 Spinal cord injury research is making slow progress towards a cure.

24 New innovations in prosthetics help children play more.

26 Wheelchair dancing can be empowering and liberating.

30 Training the core, arms and shoulder can help you transfer safely.

34 Radio-controlled car racing offers a level playing field for all racers.

36 Get ready to meet the inspiring women of wheelchair rugby in South Africa.



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The power of collaboration

When strategising for impact, collaboration plays a crucial role. QASA is building strong collaborative relationships to benefit its members

In our ongoing efforts to be more effective for our members and to further our cause, it has become clear that collaboration – across our sector, within our environment, and with service providers – is absolutely essential.

This month, QASA is proud to send a delegation to the Southern African Spinal Cord Association (SASCA) biannual conference. Not only will we be represented with an exhibition stand, but we'll also contribute through several plenary presentations.

Building and maintaining strong relationships with health professionals in the rehabilitation sector is critical, and we're proud of the progress we've made.

One of our key initiatives is the Clinical Advisory Panel (CAP), which we established and now operates under the SASCA banner. This panel of volunteer experts dedicate their time to developing best practice guidelines

in bladder and bowel management – an area crucial to the health and wellbeing of individuals with spinal cord injuries. We are deeply grateful for their expertise and commitment.

Our collaboration with Coloplast continues through the Access to Health project, a research initiative focused on promoting best practices and disseminating vital information about intermittent catheterisation in bladder management to our members.

The Bags of Hope project, another partnership with Coloplast and CE Mobility, enables us to support newly rehabilitated individuals with spinal cord injuries by providing essential resources and information to guide them on their journey ahead.

We are also finalising a working relationship with the Road Accident Fund (RAF), which will grant us direct access to the relevant decision-makers.

This is a critical step toward ensuring effective service delivery for RAF beneficiaries with spinal cord injuries – many of whom are currently underserved. We are hopeful this partnership will bring about much-needed improvements.

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We are hopeful this partnership will bring about much-needed improvements.

Additionally, we're in the final stages of negotiating a memorandum of understanding with a service provider responsible for assisted passenger services at airports.

This will ensure proper training for personnel who support travellers with disabilities from curb to curb by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, compassion, and safety awareness.

QASA is a proud member of the South African Disability Alliance (SADA), an affiliation that keeps us at the forefront of lobbying and advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Moving forward, we aim to broaden our collaborative efforts to reach more service providers and join forces with advocacy organisations that specialise in human rights.

Collaboration is king, and we are making meaningful strides. We welcome your ideas and guidance as we continue on this path. 



Ari Seirlis is the former CEO of the QuadPara Association of South Africa and now serves as the Treasurer of QASA. He is also, 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.

Get in touch: aris@iafrica.com

More independence with QASA

We have many projects aimed at empowering our members to live a more independent life. The first step to empowering our members is ensuring that they are mobile. We can assist our members with acquiring, repairing or replacing their assistive devices.


Recently, QASA member Wilnauman Kandongo received a joystick and footrest elevators for his wheelchair through our assistive devices programme. He shares: “I don't know how to express my gratitude ... Your support has been invaluable.”



Wilnauman Kandongo.

Once mobile, we have to ensure our members have easy access to the world. We assist members with small adaptations in their homes. Ashveer Sing received an aluminium threshold ramp to make his shower accessible.

“The ramp has made a world of difference. It has brought ease, safety, and independence to a part of my daily routine that was once a real challenge,” he shares.

Registering to become a member is free and very simple. Complete our [online form](#), or visit our website for the pdf to download, complete and e-mail to us at info@qasa.co.za. 



The **QuadPara Association of South Africa** (QASA) is a non-profit organisation established and managed by quadriplegics and paraplegics that aim to empower quadriplegics and paraplegics to live their lives to their full potential.

Get in touch: info@qasa.co.za

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Bagging hope for the newly injured



For more than two decades the QASA Bags of Hope project, in partnership with Coloplast, has empowered new spinal cord injured patients

Transitioning from hospital to home can be daunting for new wheelchair users. No longer are you surrounded by accessible spaces, knowledgeable hospital staff, or peers who understand the challenges you face. They may be left with more questions than answers.

Recognising this critical gap, the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) introduced its Bags of Hope project. The goal was to help prepare individuals who were new to spinal cord injury for the road ahead; equipping them with the resources to help ease their transition.

The initial idea was pitched to the organisation nearly two decades ago by a member.

“QASA was approached by a paraplegic, Ernie Brenner who came up with this idea,” Ari Seirlis, the current QASA treasurer and former CEO, recalls. “It hit the sweet spot and made absolute sense. Coloplast saw the opportunity and invested in this project on behalf of QASA. So, Bags of Hope was born.”

Coloplast manufactures medical devices related to ostomy and continence care such as catheters. Working with rehabilitation

centres, the Coloplast team distributes the Bags of Hope to patients with spinal cord injuries while educating them on continence care.

Since its inception, the project has distributed roughly 3 000 bags to individuals with spinal cord injuries.

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The project has distributed roughly 3 000 bags to individuals with spinal cord injuries.

Each bag contained essential reading material along with practical items to help navigate life with a mobility impairment. Wheelchair manufacturer, CE Mobility, also recently backed the project.

“This unique bag has got a small toolkit that covers all of the essentials you will need for wheelchair maintenance, sponsored by CE Mobility, and essential reading for a person with a spinal cord injury,” Ari shares.

QASA, in partnership with CE Mobility and Coloplast, is working to distribute the next 500 bags to new quadriplegics and paraplegics.

Beyond the tangible resources found inside the bags, the initiative offers something equally vital – hope. The message is clear. The journey might be challenging, but you are not alone.

Through the distribution of the bags, QASA aims to reach new quadriplegics and paraplegics who may be in need of the organisation’s support.

“QASA provides all the necessary projects and services as well as advocacy and lobby for persons with spinal cord injuries. QASA has developed knowledge and advocacy experience to be able to provide suitable support for people with



MAIN PHOTO: (From the left) Lincoln Cloete, Elias Kgasapane and Shakeer Williams with their Bag of Hope.

ABOVE: Lincoln Cloete joined QASA for the assistances with pursuing his interests like sport.

spinal cord injury along their journey,” Ari comments.

Membership to the organisation is free and provides access to all programmes and services. QASA can assist members with minor home adaptations; acquiring, replacing or repairing assistive devices; financial support to further education or participate in sports; learning to drive an adapted vehicle and so much more.

The QASA members also play a vital role in informing the organisation of the lived experience of people with spinal cord injuries.

As Ari notes: “It is important and in fact almost essential to be a member of QASA so that we can understand the life and lifestyles of people with spinal cord injuries and provide bespoke and necessary projects and services to support this constituency.”

“QASA members can keep us informed about challenges on the ground and provide the

critical mass we need when we do advocacy and lobby for the rights of persons with disabilities, especially those with mobility impairments,” he adds.

By staying engaged, offering insights, and amplifying the voices of people with spinal cord injuries, QASA members strengthen the organisation’s ability to champion inclusion and accessibility.

In a recent visit to the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre, the QuadPara Association of the Western Cape (QAWC), a regional association of QASA, spoke with patients about the organisation, demonstrated the workings of an adapted vehicle, and handed out these essential bags.

“QASA offers benefits for some of the things I want to do, like sport,” says one of the recipients and new QASA member Lincoln Cloete about his decision to join the organisation. “You never know what assistance you might need.”

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**You never know what assistance
you might need.**

Lincoln was injured in late 2024 and admitted for rehabilitation at the Western Cape. In his 30s, Lincoln was hopeful of what his future might be regardless of his impairment.

Shakeer Williams echoed Lincoln’s sentiment about joining the organisation while his youth made him particularly excited for what life might hold for him.

Elias Kgasapane, a third recipient, has been a wheelchair user for a while before being readmitted to the centre. While he too believed the organisation could offer support, he was more inspired by what he might be able to give back to his community.




LEFT: Elias Kgasapane.

ABOVE: Shakeer Williams.

“I would like to help someone with an injury like me. I’d like to tell them: ‘Don’t give up!’,” Elias shares.

While the journey ahead for the men as they re-enter society is sure to be challenging, they have the support of QASA thanks to the Bags of Hope project made possible by Coloplast.

It remains a powerful tool to sharing information, empowering people with spinal cord injuries and growing a supportive community for new wheelchair users.

Each bag is a simple gesture of which the impact spreads far beyond its physical content. It is a message of hope. And for those entering the unfamiliar, hope can make all the difference. 

Become a QASA member

Accessing all the QASA programmes and services requires a quick and free registration! You can complete the QASA membership form [digitally](#), or download the form from the [QASA website](#), complete and return it to QASA at info@qasa.co.za.



Stylish home lifts for better accessibility

Lifta SA is at the forefront of innovation and style with accessible home lifts

Established in 2007, **Lifta SA** is the South African subsidiary of the world-renowned German company Liftstar GmbH, and prides itself on being at the forefront of innovation and style. We offer European quality and design with a proudly South African personalised and focused service. Lifta SA offers two varieties of home lift: the Duo and Trio Home Lift. The Duo, capable of carrying two passengers, has the smallest footprint on the residential market at only 0,8 square metres (m²) and a weight capacity of 170 kilograms (kgs).

The wheelchair-friendly Trio's footprint is only 1,3 m² and a weight capacity of 250 kgs. The Trio Home Lift was built specifically for users with mobility challenges or concerns, and can easily transport most wheelchair models. It has a built-in ramp to allow for easy wheelchair access. Our aim is independent mobility; thus, the control panel and grab bar, which allows users to pull themselves into the lift, can be mounted at varying heights.

Home lifts are powered by a 220V plug and uses no more power than a kettle, toaster or microwave! The low power requirements means a small inverter or solar panel can

supply the required power to operate the lift during loadshedding. Due to their versatility, the home lift can either be installed retrospectively, or be included in the building plans for new builds. One of the most unique aspects of the home lift is that it does not require a shaft, a motor or pit room; thus the construction costs are substantially cheaper than conventional lifts.

Our highly skilled technicians install the lift within two days with minimal disruption to your daily life. Our sales process is as simple and stress free as possible. A no-obligation, free on-site assessment will be booked at your home when it suits your schedule. Our product specialist will introduce the product and take the time to understand your needs, before finding the perfect location for your home lift with you. With offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and representation nationwide, our teams are available to assist anywhere in South Africa. We pride ourselves on our quick and efficient turnaround time and customer service.

Join the hundreds of families who have entrusted **Lifta SA** with their residential lift and mobility needs. Call us now on 080 737 3737 for a free on-site assessment. **R**



Combating Obesity

From loss of mobility and independence to co-morbidities, obesity can severely impact your life. Fortunately, it can be reversed

In a previous lifetime, in the early 1970s, I was in medical school at Wits University. One of my teachers was the renowned Professor Harry Seftel. He famously equated obesity and its complications with “sloth and gluttony”, emphasising sloth and gluttony with forceful glee. I had the impression that behind those words was an implication of “serves you right, you are the cause of your obesity, diabetes, hypertension and whatever other complication of obesity”.

For persons with a SCI, obesity is a common problem that cannot glibly be passed off as the consequences of sloth and gluttony. It is far more complex than that. Yet the consequences of obesity are as dangerous to persons with a SCI as for the able-bodied, if not more so.

To combat obesity, we must first understand the types of obesity that afflict us, the dangers and complications.

TYPES OF OBESITY

The most commonly used indicator of dangerous obesity is the measurement of your waist circumference. The pop group Freshlyground believe that “pot-bellied” men make great lovers, and Queen praised the virtues of “fat-bottomed girls” who make the rocking world go ‘round.

The truth of the matter is that pot bellies and fat bottoms impact on waist circumference. The complications of an excessive waist circumference are life threatening. So, what should you look out for?

Subcutaneous fat is fat that’s found under your skin. Too much subcutaneous fat can be a sign that you have too much visceral fat, which lies deep within your abdominal cavity and surrounds your organs.

The loss of muscle mass in the afflicted part of the body (related to the level of the spinal

cord lesion) is common in persons with a SCI. This is known as sarcopenia.

When sarcopenia is associated with excessive body fat, it is known as sarcopenic obesity. This condition is increasingly recognised for complicating the management of obesity-related conditions both clinically and functionally.

DANGERS OF OBESITY

Complications of obesity, and particularly of an excessive waist circumference, includes diabetes, hypertension, heart attacks, strokes, and an increased predisposition to pressure sores and sleep apnoea, to name but a few.

Obesity also impacts on the routines of daily living where excessive weight make, for example, transfers, dressing and turning in bed difficult for carers (and yourself if you are still able to function independently).

ADDRESSING OBESITY

Weight management is the best way to address and prevent obesity. This is done through diet, exercise and behaviour modification. These are supplemented by medications and surgical interventions, but both are fraught with complexities and should be kept as last resorts in instances of morbid (gross) obesity.

ADJUSTING YOUR MEALS

Persons with a SCI are at a high risk of gaining weight because of reduced physical activity and loss of muscle mass. As a rule of thumb, the higher the spinal cord lesion, the greater the chance of becoming obese.

Dietary management is very individualised. There are a few basic pointers, but in order to ensure that you get the appropriate nutrients and minerals as well as the appropriate balance of fat, protein and starch in your diet, it is advisable to manage your diet under the guidance of a dietician.

Crash-diets may result in rapid weight loss but are almost invariably associated with complications relating to loss of essential nutrients. It has been shown that, at best,

the one-year outcome of a crash diet is equivalent to that of a controlled diet over a longer term.

However, in many instances, once the crash diet has achieved the desired weight loss, people return to their normal eating habits and regain the weight lost during the diet. This is because the hunger centres in the brain did not have time to adjust to a lower calorie intake, following on the diet.

So, unless there is good discipline following the crash diet, our brain's hunger centres entice us to eat as we did before the diet.

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People return to their normal eating habits and regain the weight lost during the diet.

In conclusion, make use of a dietician to structure a diet for you. Follow the diet and any adjustments to the diet made by the Dietician. Be patient with the speed of weight loss and persevere.

If you are unable to reach a dietician, there are some general steps that can help. It is important to remember that as a person with a SCI, you require less calories per day than when you were able-bodied. You can reduce your overall food portion by about 10 percent.

Cut back significantly on fat, butter and cooking oils. Reduce your meat and starch (pasta, bread and mielie meal) portions. Increase your vegetable and fruit intake. Drink at least two litres of water per day. Steer clear of fizzy cooldrinks, sweets, chocolate and concentrated fruit juices.

If you feel healthy and full of energy as you slowly lose weight, all is well. However, if not, write down your diet and take it to a doctor or dietician for further guidance.

HEALTHY MEALS

Addressing your diet is the most effective way to address and prevent obesity.

Speak to a dietician or GP

Consult a dietician about the ideal diet for your needs. If you can't speak to a dietician, speak to your doctor (GP) about their recommendations.



Avoid crash diets

Crash diets might result in rapid weight loss, but can result in the loss of essential nutrients with the weight often regained a few months later as you return to normal eating habits.

Consume fewer calories

People with spinal cord injuries require fewer calories. You can reduce your previous diet and calorie intake by 10 percent.

Cut back on fats, meat and starch

Avoid fatty foods and swap your butter and cooking oils for healthy alternatives (like olive oil). Reduce your meat and starch (pasta and bread) intake, and replace your fat

Eat more fruits and vegetables

You can substitute the meat and starch in your diet with vegetables and fruits that include the same essential minerals. This includes beans!



Avoid sugar

Try to cut sugar from your diet, including concentrated juices, fizzy drinks, chocolate and sweets.

Drink more water

Aim for at least two litres of water a day.



GET MOVING

Exercise is not just about becoming stronger. It is good for the heart, lungs and your state of mind. It is a great way to burn excess fat.

Additionally, exercise helps to stabilise your core, trunk and shoulders, which is vital for independent transfers, for example. Without a stable trunk and shoulders, our arms become fairly useless no matter how strong they are.

Even passive exercise offers great benefits by stretching spastic muscles and preventing tendons from shortening, which causes contractures. Finally, exercise can help you socialise or just enjoy the sport of your choice whether it is athletics, rugby, basketball or tennis.

For persons with a SCI, exercise must be managed by a person with the required proficiency, for example a biokineticist or physiotherapist, as far as possible. A medical professional should evaluate your physical needs and your ability to work toward those needs.

The exercise programme must be designed to allow you to carry on by yourself. Where assistance is needed, the options include training your carer to assist or scheduling regular sessions with a biokineticist or gym trainer.

The beauty of exercise is that no matter what types you do, you become tired as you use energy, which burns fat helping you to lose weight and reduce your abdominal circumference, which means a healthier you!

BUILDING BETTER HABITS

Behaviour modifications is all about identifying cravings and then addressing the triggers that result in over-eating, which contributes to weight gain. A few ways to change your behaviour includes:

- **Goal setting and self-monitoring:** Set yourself realistic weight-losing goals and a timeline with the help of your doctor or dietitian. Monitor your progress by recording your weekly progress.


Weighing yourself may be a challenge for a person with a SCI. Instead, check your abdominal circumference to monitor your progress.

- **Stimulus control:** Recognise the temptations of your hunger centre and counter it with (for example) a glass of water rather than a slab of chocolate, which is also a much cheaper option.
- **Slow eating:** Take your time when eating. Chewing your food thoroughly helps to manage your hunger centre.
- **Increasing physical activity:** Formal exercise programmes, as discussed above, are important. In addition, try to do as many of your daily activities independently as your abilities allow. Don't ask your carer to do things that you can do for yourself.
- **Social support:** Include friends and family in your weight-loss goals and ask them to encourage you in your efforts. Also invite them to celebrate your achievements with you.

LAST RESORTS

There are many adverts for wonder products. Steer clear! Also avoid the so-called weight-loss clinics that charge an arm and a leg for rapid weight loss. Rather work with a dietitian or your doctor.

Bariatric surgery has been shown to be successful, but only if performed by a select few multi-disciplinary units with proven track records. It is also not just a case of having the surgery and all is solved. The aftercare is intense and very expensive. It should only be considered in the morbidly obese.

In conclusion, diet, exercise and behaviour modification, all under expert supervision, is the ideal combination for successful weight loss. So, here's wishing you all the very best in your endeavours to shrink your abdomens and becoming healthier, more dynamic and sexier versions of yourself. 

HEALTHY HABITS

Top tips for building and maintaining health habits.

Set a goal

Set yourself a realistic weight goal where you lose the weight slowly. It's recommended to lose between two and four kilograms a month.



Monitor your progress

Hold yourself accountable with weekly or monthly "weigh-ins" during which you can measure your waist to track your progress.



Control the cravings

Recognise when and what your body craves. Drink some water, eat a meal or substitute your normal snacks with healthy alternatives.

Eat slowly

Take your time with meals. Chewing slowly and thoroughly helps to manage your hunger centre.



Do more on your own

Aside from exercising, try and do as much independently as possible. Try to avoid outsourcing tasks to your caregiver that you could do yourself.

Get support from your community

Include your friends and family in your weight-loss journey for support and accountability.



George Louw 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.

Get in touch: yorslo@icloud.com



A peaceful wheel through the Mushroom Meander

The Mushroom Meander at the George Botanical Gardens offers wheelchair users the opportunity to peacefully explore and enjoy nature

Inspired by his nephew, Ken Gie created an accessible trail for wheelchair users within the serene George Botanical Gardens. He shares: “My nephew had visited us in George on occasions and I became very aware of the challenges he was facing.”

“I wanted to take him to the Garden Route Botanical Garden in George, but realised how wheelchair unfriendly the garden was. This inspired me to build the 800-metre-long mini trail in the indigenous forest part of the garden,” he continues.

It includes a smooth gravel surface and wooden bridge crossings at gentle gradients to align with the SANS 10400 accessibility standards.

The trail earned its name from the variety of mushrooms and fungus that grows on the stumps alongside the path at certain times of

the year. Yet, there is much more than just mushrooms to enjoy.

“The trail offers interesting pathways, winding past beautiful indigenous trees that are marked with name boards at easy-to-read wheelchair heights,” Ken shares.

“These boards give the names and different uses of the trees such as medicinal remedies, furniture making and as in the olden days wagon making.”


“The peaceful ambience in natural, green surroundings is food for the soul and the experience can be enhanced by having a picnic at especially adapted tables and benches for wheelchairs. These adaptations are to be made soon,” he continues.

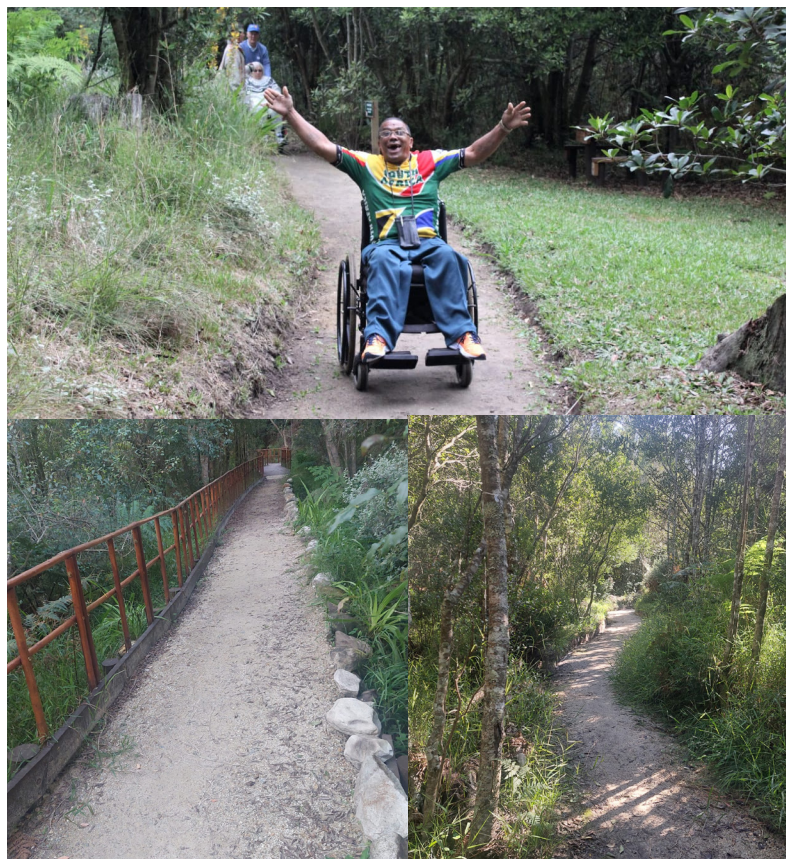
Wheelchairs enjoy free entry and can either park at the trailhead or the main parking lot, which is roughly 700 metres away. The

picturesque walk is sure to make anyone feel more connected to nature.

If you are in the George area and looking for more accessible trails, consider visiting the Garden of Eden Big Tree, as Ken notes: "This trail is one of two wheelchair-friendly trails in the region. The other one is a 1 000 metres long, fully boarded and located at the Garden of Eden Big Tree between Knysna and Plettenberg Bay."

There are even more trails being built, which Ken hopes will soon see the area become the hub of outdoor activities for people with mobility impairments.

"A third exciting trail (1 600-metres long) is in the process of being built in Storms River, which will make our region the mecca of outdoor activities for people with mobility impairments," he concludes. For more information on the Mushroom Meander, visit the [George Botanical Garden](#) website. 



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Feel like a VIP at The Vineyard Hotel

The Vineyard Hotel is well on its way to providing a seamless experience for all its guests

Nestled between Newlands and Claremont, The Vineyard Hotel is a luxurious haven that offers superb accommodations, exquisite dining, and unforgettable experiences. However, what truly sets it apart is its exceptional staff who make every guest feel like a VIP.

Having used a wheelchair for over 40 years, I have yet to find the perfect accommodation that goes beyond the basic building regulations of Part S 10400. While full accessibility remains a work in progress, I am hopeful that one day, hotels will exceed the minimum standards and provide a truly seamless experience for all guests. The Vineyard Hotel is on its way to achieving this.

From the moment you arrive, you are welcomed by smiling attendants who assist with unloading luggage, handling your wheelchair, and even helping at your vehicle. Your car is then whisked away to a designated wheelchair parking facility within sight of your room.

The reception area feels like a warm homecoming with a welcoming low counter that makes check-in effortless. My destination was Room 106, a spacious suite featuring a roll-in shower; though, without a built-in shower seat. As always, I travel with a portable shower chair, a necessity for many wheelchair users.

The bed height is ideal for a standard wheelchair transfer, and a conveniently



placed light switch is within easy reach when lying down.


I could go on about the thoughtful luxuries and delightful touches in the room, but I encourage you to discover them for yourself. You won't be disappointed.

Located on the ground floor, the room is a short distance from the breakfast area, the outdoor dining space, and other essential amenities.

Just around the corner, you'll find an enchanting herb garden, stunning views of Table Mountain, and playful squirrels adding to the charm. And then there's the service – attentive, thoughtful, and simply unparalleled.

The Vineyard is just a couple of hundred metres away from the Cavendish Square shopping centre and some good restaurants. Uber vehicles circulate the area and you'll never wait more than a minute.

Additionally, there is a concierge with extensive knowledge on the area to assist whatever you might need.

While The Vineyard Hotel isn't yet a model of universal accessibility, it offers a level of comfort and service that makes up for some of its shortcomings. Treat yourself to the VIP experience! It's a stay that will leave you smiling long after you've checked out. 

Policies and programmes to enhance employment

There are several government policies and support programmes aimed at enhancing skills development and employment for people with disabilities

The South African government has implemented various policies and support programmes to enhance skills development and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. These are crucial in promoting inclusivity and ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate fully in the workforce.

THE POLICIES

The Employment Equity Act strives for equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment by removing unfair discrimination. It requires employers to implement affirmative action measures that offer equal employment opportunities for qualified people from diverse groups, including people with disabilities, while ensuring equitably representation.

The Skills Development Act seeks to improve the skills of the workforce by promoting education and training. It establishes the framework for the National Skills Development Strategy, which includes specific targets for the training and development of persons with disabilities.

The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment policy makes provisions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the economic mainstream by offering companies incentives to employ and train people.

THE SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

There are many government-supported learnerships and internships designed to provide practical work experience and skills training for persons with disabilities. These are often linked to specific industries and aim to improve employability.

The Section 12H Tax Allowance for Learnerships allows employers to claim R120 000 for a learnership. This allowance encourages investment in the skills development of persons with disabilities.

THE REALITY

These policies and programmes have created more inclusive workplaces and opportunities for people with disabilities. Yet, challenges persist. Unemployment among persons with disabilities remains higher than the national average with many employers reluctant to hire due to misconceptions and perceived accommodation costs.

Additionally, learnerships and internships often lack follow-up support and job placement services. By better enforcing policies, increasing awareness, providing better support services, and promoting inclusive business practices, these policies and programmes can be more effective. **R**



Rustim Ariefdien is a disability expert 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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Planning the perfect birthday party

With these tips for planning a successful birthday party for a child with a disability, the day can be enjoyable for both the parent and the child

Birthdays should be celebrated! For parents of children with disabilities, milestones like these are especially important particularly if there have been struggles such as surgeries and health scares. While most children love birthday parties, they can lead to anxiety for many parents. This issue we provide some practical tips on what to do so that both you and your child have a great day.

PLANNING

It is essential that we carefully plan our child's birthday party. The more prepared we are, the better the day will be. As parents of children with disabilities, we are so used to making plans and having multiple 'plan B's' in our back pockets.

While some parent's greatest concern is the weather, for many of us our concerns involve accessibility, feeding, sleeping, medication, and bladder and bowel routines! The more things you can do before the party the better.

This might mean baking cupcakes and blowing up balloons the day before. Many people would love to help to set up or bake things. Just give them clear instructions, especially if there are food allergies or sensitivities.

Be thoughtful about who you invite and think about your child's needs. Would having children who your child has met once be a good idea? Or would having too many guests cause anxiety and overwhelm your child? You need to invite people who understand your family and child; those who won't question why the birthday girl is missing for an hour if they need to have a feed or are getting overstimulated and need a break.

PREPARATION

For some of our children who need structure, routine and predictability it is important that we prepare them for what will happen. Getting them involved in choosing colours, giving them options of games and activities they

want to do, helping to mix or add ingredients for a cake, are all ways that can help prepare them for the party.

Tell them what will happen, what they will see, hear and do helps to make things more predictable. You might want to co-create a sign or word for when things are getting too noisy or overwhelming, and decide what they need if such a situation arises (for example, to lie down in a dark room; put on noise cancelling headphones, etc).

There are life-skills and coping strategies that can help to empower them and help them to self-regulate. For our children who might be non-verbal, it is important that we understand their signs, which could include, rubbing their eyes, spasm or specific sounds (You know your child best!), and catch these early before your child gets overwhelmed or stressed.

Sometimes when we are too busy, we lose track of time. It is crucial that our children's needs come first. As for some of us, a late medication administration can have significant health complications, and a change in sleeping routines may lead to meltdowns.

FLEXIBILITY

We need to be kind to ourselves and realise that we might need to change things at the last minute if needed and that it is fine (and important). Your child will probably not remember if you had green cupcakes instead of blue ones, but may remember if you fall apart because of the colour. If our children are young, low expectations are great.

We don't need the stress and financial strain of hiring a petting zoo or magician for a four-year-old's party! I went to a recycling depo and got five large cardboard boxes. We cut of doors and windows and the children had great fun. This cost me nothing, and I recycled them once we were done! Sometimes we put

so much pressure on ourselves to have "the perfect party that everyone will remember" that we don't enjoy our children's special day.


ACTIVITIES

It is important that your child is the centre of the day so ensure that they can participate in activities. This might mean adapting games or including some sign language together with singing happy birthday. If your child is a wheelchair user or using as assistive device such as a walker, make sure that you adapt games so that they can join in and succeed. Some adapted games include:

Adapted pass the parcel: If you play 'pass the parcel' and your child finds fine motor skills such as gripping a present or ripping the paper difficult, then you can include less sticky tape, or get someone to hold the parcel for them (making sure that they are still involved by holding and guiding their hands, but taking the weight or steadying it).

Think carefully about what 'gifts' are included in each layer of the pass the parcel. Are these going to be a choking hazard or can they be unwrapped with ease? Is the music you are going to use too loud or too soft? How will the children all sit so that everyone can participate? If your child is in a wheelchair, get the other children to sit on chairs so they are all at the same eye level.

Adapted ball games: Rather than throwing and catching ball games, you can roll a ball or object between you on their wheelchair lap tray or at a table. You can use a bigger and softer ball, and allow children to stop the ball with both hands, their foot, chin or elbow. You could adapt games such as tennis or volleyball by having all the children sit on the ground and play. Playing 'ball games' with a balloon can be loads of fun too!

Be creative and make sure that you child can fully participate. Remember, it is their big day and should have as much fun as possible! 



Dr **Emma McKinney** owner of Disability Included Consultancy, a company providing disability employment and educational research, training, support, and resources.

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Procrastination a silent thief

Putting off tasks is the silent thief of peace and confidence. Fortunately, it is a habit that can be changed

Ever told yourself, “I’ll do it later”, only to realise that later never comes? Procrastination sneaks into our lives tomorrow then next week and before we know it, a simple task becomes a mountain of stress and regret.

Mark Twain said: “The secret to getting ahead is getting started”. Yet, many of us struggle to take that first step. So, why do we procrastinate, and more importantly, how do we stop?

WHY WE PROCRASTINATE

Procrastination isn’t just laziness or poor time management. It often has deeper roots. It could stem from:

- **Fear of failure:** If we never start, we can’t fail. But avoiding something doesn’t just prevent failure, it prevents success.
- **Perfectionism:** If something has to be perfect, the pressure makes starting feel impossible.

- **Lack of motivation:** Some tasks just aren’t exciting, so we push them aside.
- **Feeling overwhelmed:** When a task feels too big, we avoid it rather than breaking it down.
- **Instant gratification:** Social media, TV or snacks are much easier than tackling a tough task.
- **Our mood:** Some days we wake up feeling flat, see a difficult task and decide, “I’ll do it later”. Yeah, right!

REAL COST OF PROCRASTINATION

It’s not just about missed deadlines or last-minute scrambles. Procrastination increases stress, lowers confidence, and holds us back. The more we put things off, the heavier they become in our minds.

Over time, chronic procrastination can lead to stagnation – personally, professionally, and financially. This leaves us feeling like we’re not living up to our full potential. Sound

familiar? The good news is that procrastination is a habit, and habits can be changed.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Procrastination isn't a personality trait. It's a behavioural pattern. Like any habit, it can be unlearned. Try these practical strategies:

- **Five-minute rule:** Tell yourself that you'll work on a task for just five minutes. Getting started is often the hardest part. Once you begin, you're more likely to keep going.
- **Break it down:** A massive task feels overwhelming, but smaller steps feel manageable. Focus on one small action at a time.
- **Set a deadline:** Open-ended tasks get pushed aside. Give yourself a clear timeframe to complete each step.
- **Two-minute rule:** If something takes less than two minutes, do it immediately. Small tasks pile up quickly if left unattended.
- **Eliminate distractions:** Identify what pulls your attention away and create an environment that helps you focus.
- **Reward yourself:** Finish a tough task? Celebrate with a break, a treat or something enjoyable to reinforce positive behaviour.
- **Change your mindset:** Instead of saying, "I have to do this", shift your thinking to, "I get to do this". That small change makes a big difference. Your **subconscious mind** is taking notes.
- **Get an accountability partner:** Checking in with a friend, life coach or colleague makes it harder to keep putting things off.

Other helpful exercises include future regret visualisation and mindful reflections:

- **Future regret visualisation:** Imagine your future-self dealing with the weight of prolonged procrastination. How does it feel? Now, picture the relief of getting things done on time.

Which version of yourself would you rather be?

- **Mindful reflection:** Take a moment to answer these: What's one thing I've been procrastinating on, and why? Which strategy can I start using today? How does procrastination make me feel emotionally and physically?

FINAL THOUGHTS

Commit to breaking the cycle of procrastination in just one area of your life over the next week. Start small, take action, and build momentum.

Procrastination happens to all of us, but it's a choice. And so is action. Taking action, no matter how small, creates momentum, and momentum leads to results.

“

Procrastination isn't a personality trait. It's a behavioural pattern. Like any habit, it can be unlearned.

So, the next time you catch yourself about to put something off, remember: The hardest part is getting started. Once you take that first step, everything else gets easier.

Why wait? The best time to start is now. As Benjamin Franklin said: "You may delay, but time will not". Or consider the words of Karen Lamb: "A year from now, you may wish you had started today".

"Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday," in the words of Don Marquis. Do it now or risk "later" becoming "never". Are you finally ready to take that first step today? **R**



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

Get in touch: len@theworldwithin.co.za



Slow progress towards a cure

While research into a cure for a spinal cord injury has made leaps, there is still some ways to go. We take a closer look at where the research is now

The Wings for Life World Run took place on Sunday, 4 May. Racers from across the globe gathered to outrace the Catcher Car in support of spinal cord injury (SCI) research.

This year, 310 719 racers from across the globe, including 1 838 wheelchair users and 8 000 people in South Africa, participated. A total of 8,6 million euros (R177 million) was raised for SCI research. All the funds will go to the Wings for Life Foundation.

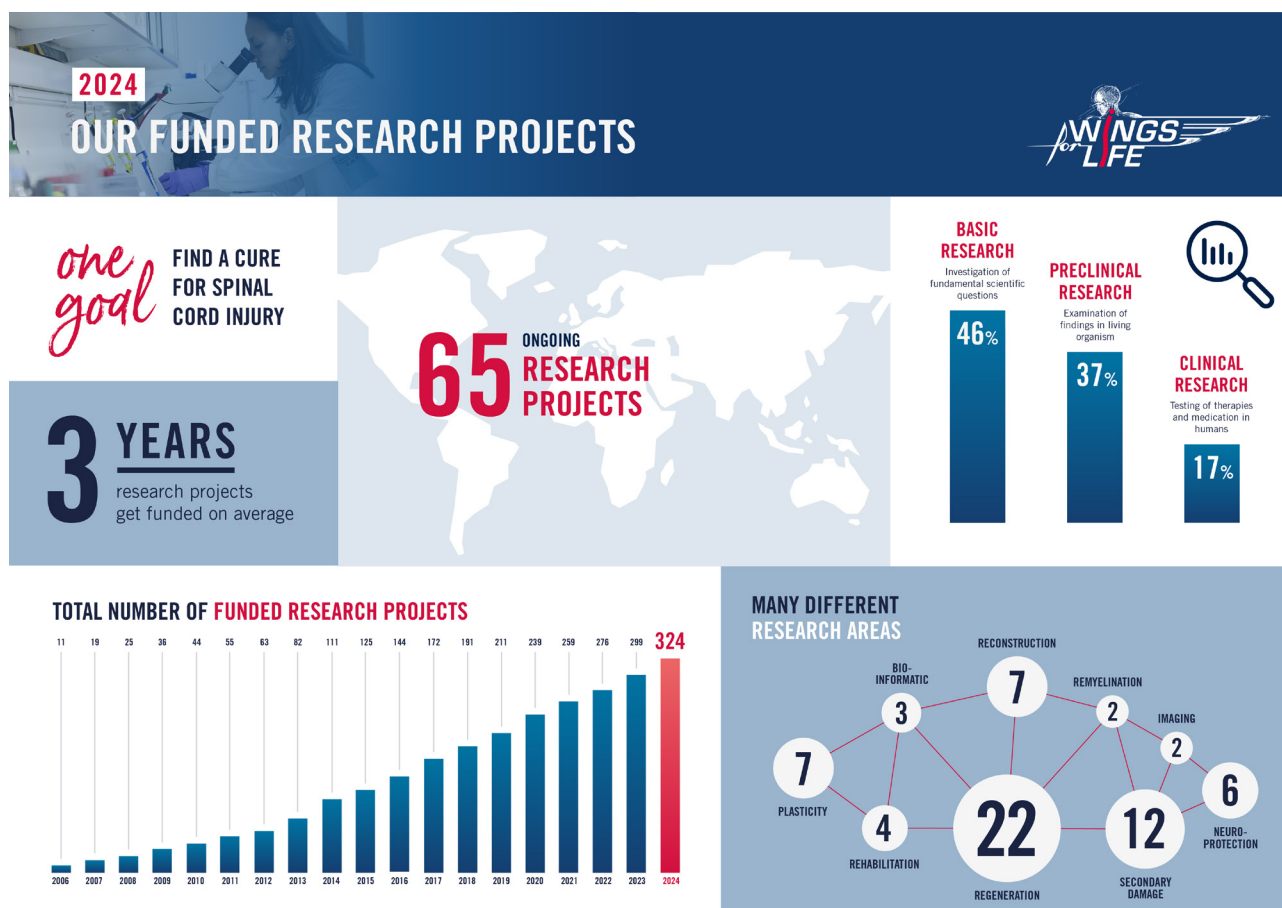
Currently, the Foundation is supporting around 68 projects in various fields, such as neuroprotection, regeneration, neural construction and rehabilitation. Each area

“

A total of 8,6 million euros (R177 million) was raised for SCI research.

focusses on different part of the puzzle. The spinal cord is a highly complex system. Therefore, the cure won't be a simple fix.

When injured, there is bleeding and inflammation in the spine. The cells in the spine die rapidly. As the death rate of the cells



increase, the tissue around the injury also die. The body makes the injury worse! It seals or scars over the injury to leave behind a cyst. All of this creates tremendous damage that is hard to remove or fix.

While some research projects focus on rebuilding the cells, or preventing the swelling in the spine, others look to how the impact of the SCI can be minimised.

Several of the projects are showing great promise in advancing the level of care and improving recovering for people with SCIs. Some even seem close to finding a cure. We break down some of the projects:

EARLY AND INTENSIVE TRAINING

Lisa Harvey and her team in Australia are investigating the impact of intensive training on people with a high-level SCI. Their **early research** found that repetition is very important for task-specific training following a neurological condition “particularly if trying to prompt an injured spinal cord to repair itself”.

ABOVE: The 2024 breakdown of project funding spend by the Wings for Life Foundation.

Despite the need to practice, practice, practice if you want to regain mobility, they found that therapy is often not given in high dosages. Only half an hour to three hours, three times a week, were dedicated to therapy in the cases that they reviewed.

Another study that they reviewed found that patients with upper-level injuries only attempted to move their upper limbs, like arms and hands, 42 times a day during both physio- and occupational therapy. Once they left the rehabilitation centre, patients would only move their arms around 15 times.

“This same study indicated that people received a total of 1,5 hours of physiotherapy and occupational therapy a day but less than an hour of this time was devoted to moving the upper or lower limbs in any way,” the research says.



Through her research, Lisa aims to significantly increase the number of times a patient practices their movements. Specifically, she wants to aim for 12 hours of movement per week for 10 weeks with a focus on task-specific training.

Her **study** is currently in clinical phases. If she is successful in motivating more task-specific training, it could set a new gold standard for rehabilitation and offer new high-level injured patients much better recovery.

“

If she is successful ... it could set a new gold standard for rehabilitation.

SPINAL STIMULATION FOR MOVEMENT

In more than half of SCIs, the individuals are left with some sensation or movement below the level of injury. Chet Moritz and his team in the United States (US) are looking at restoring movement through skin-surface stimulation of the neck above the cervical spinal cord.

Their research has already seen prolonged improvements in hand function, autonomic control (bladder and bowel function) and improved strength, function and sensation in the legs of their participants.

Now, they will **test** if stimulation at the neck and lower back can further improve walking and autonomic functions. They will combine a non-invasive spinal stimulation with intensive rehabilitation.

SCAR PREVENTION, CELL TRANSPLANT

Austrian neuroscientists Frank Edenhofer and Sébastien Couillard-Després are **researching** ways to restore nerve connections in the spine while reducing the scar formation.

First, they will repeatedly apply extracellular vesicles (EVs) to the lesion site. These special EV cells help fight inflammation and act as a communication system for other cells.

The EVs will be placed in the spine where the injury occurred as well as into the blood stream for seven days after the injury. The goal is to reduce the scar formation.

Thereafter, they will graft (transplant) induced neural stem cells (iNSCs) into the area of the injury. These cells are considered a safer stem cell for the spine and will hopefully help



to restore communication between the brain and the body. Their research is still in its early stage and no human trials are possible.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

Replanting stem cells is still a good option for repairing the spine. However, this is challenging as the area around the SCI isn't very hospitable. The replanted cells die very quickly, which makes them less effective in helping to repair the area.

US-based Martin Oudega and his team are **researching** how much of an impact the hostile environment has on the transplanted cells. With more information on how the environment is impacting the cell repair, researchers can look for solutions to keep the cells alive longer.

BACK ON THEIR FEET

One of the projects funded by the Foundation saw incredible results in 2018. Neuroscientists Grégoire Courtine and Jocelyne Bloch managed to get the brain to talk to the limbs using stimulation movement overground (**STIMO**).

A small electrode chip is implanted at the spine. With epidural electrical stimulation, electric currents are sent to the chip. This is all voice-controlled. There were three



TOP: A former project funded by the Wings for Life Foundation resulted in three participants regaining movement in their lower limbs.

ABOVE: Events like the Wings for Life World Run help fund these research projects aimed at curing SCIs.

participants who were part of the study and were able to **walk again**.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Will there ever be a cure? Yes. But not for some time yet. While there have been tremendous strides, the spinal cord remains a highly complex system, and researchers still don't know enough. Fortunately, events like the Wings for Life World Run are raising funds to continue the research so that we can find a cure. **R**



More adventure with new foot

New innovations in prosthetics have resulted in a product to help children run and walk more seamlessly

Fatima Zahra has a new foot! Children want to run! It comes to them naturally. It is beneficial for mental and physical development, sleep, general health and group participation to name but a few.


Prosthetic feet are usually either for running or walking. When you run, the prosthetic foot must give you much more energy back than when walking normally. For this reason, sprinters and runners use carbon fibre blades.

But running blades are not very good for everyday walking. Walking and standing normally is very important as children's bodies are still developing. If the prosthesis doesn't mimic normal walking and standing it could lead to deformities like scoliosis, hip dislocations, joint misalignment and anatomical malformation.

The challenge is that children will run with walking feet! They might not run very well, but you can't stop them.

Fortunately, there is a new product in town that walks just as well as it runs. The only compromise is that it does not come with a foot cover. You cannot wear a shoe with it because it only comes with its own hard-wearing sole like a Tekkie.

Fatima loves her new mini blade. She runs and jumps and climbs and swims (because its waterproof) all day long. She does not care about not having a shoe on that side either. She cannot be bothered. Her friends at school think the little pink blade is cool! She had this new little foot for the December holiday and brought back some pictures!

You go little girl! Walk and run as much as you like! 



Heinrich Grimsehl is a prosthetist in private practice and a member of the South African Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (SAOPA).

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Blooming beautifully with ballroom

Wheelchair dancing can be an empowering and liberating experience as Jessica Holtzhousen discovers

Dancing duo Jessica Holtzhousen and Kallie Adams participated in an International Para Dance Sport competition in the Netherlands during April. The pair made it to the semi-finals in both ballroom and Latin dancing.

"I started wheelchair dancing at Hope School and danced for seven years," explains

Jessica. "Some years after leaving school, I met up with Kallie. He needed a new dance partner as his previous partner retired."

"We have been dancing for three years now. I love the freedom to express myself through dance. When I'm dancing, I don't feel disabled. I feel beautiful and normal when



spinning on the floor in a beautiful glittery dress all made up for a show.”

The talented wheelchair dancer is skilled in both ballroom and Latin American dancing. She shares: “I am most comfortable with standard ballroom, but love being able to express myself through Latin dancing.”

Their participation in the International Para Dance Sport event was the duo’s first competition against high-level competitors, which makes their achievement even more awe-inspiring. In the semi-finals, they danced against five other couples.

“I’m exceedingly proud and honoured to wear the Protea colours for Dance Sport. It was a wonderful experience carrying the South African flag in the opening ceremony,” Jessica recalls.

She encourages others to also consider dancing: “It’s both a sport and a social activity. It gives us a chance to really enhance our wheelchair skills.”

“We are working on promoting DanceSport at LSEN schools, University Advocacy units. We want to see the sport grow. I’m planning on getting my coaching and judging qualifications. There is a total lack of

MAIN AND ABOVE: Jessica Holtzhousen and Kallie Adams are dance partners and skilled in Ballroom and Latin Dancing.

wheelchair users in the judging and coaching circles,” she concludes.

The April event was but one of several events hosted by [World Abilitysport](#) for [World Para Dance Sport](#). The big showcase will be the 2025 Para Dance Sport World Championships, which will take place from 21 to 23 November in Slovakia.

“

I’m exceedingly proud and honoured to wear the Protea colours for Dance Sport.

“The World Championships are always very special and we expect Kosice 2025 to be no different,” shares Charmaine Hooper, Chief Executive Officer of World Abilitysport. “It is the highlight of the calendar and



ABOVE: Jessica Holtzhousen and Kallie Adams at the International Para Dance Sport competition in the Netherlands in April 2025.

there is a huge amount of excitement in the build-up.”

“Anyone watching can expect to be completely dazzled by the more than 150 athletes from 25 countries. From what we have seen so far this season, they are working on some very special routines. Anyone can tune it to watch the competition,” she continues.

They will be sharing updates on their various social media channels, which can be found at @paradance.

While the international stage offers dancers from across the globe to compete with the best in the world, it also serves as an opportunity to encourage others to try the sport.

“Offering dancers with disabilities a platform to compete is so important because we believe that dance is for everyone. By competing, those dancers can show others that they can dance too and that’s important for many different reasons.”

“Dance is one of the world’s easiest activities to start – you don’t need any specialist equipment to begin, just yourself and some music,” Charmaine notes.

Dance can be fun, improve your fitness and offer you the opportunity to socialise with your friends, family or dance partners. To pursue the sport more seriously, it is recommended to join a formal club.

“Then if you like it, there are many dance clubs where you can do some more serious training that are in turn linked to national dance or Para dance federations,” Charmaine explains.

“These are the people you need contact if you would like to take it to the next level and compete against others,” she continues.


World Abilitysport is involved in setting the rules for Para Dance, liaising with competition organisers and building a strong community among the athletes, teams and officials. The organisation is now looking to make dance even more inclusive.

“

Dance is one of the world’s easiest activities to start – you don’t need any specialist equipment.

“We have been working [to ensure] a really solid base for Para dance to go from strength-to-strength,” Charmaine shares.

“That has included enhancing the inclusive ethos of the sport; opening it up to people with vision and intellectual impairments via pilot events; and introducing new opportunities for dancers in powerchairs and ambulant dancers.”

“There is also now the chance for same-sex couples to compete with each other in freestyle. Through all of these developments, we aim to encourage and reflect the creativity that exists within Para Dance and attract more people to the sport,” she concludes. 

EVENTS CALENDAR 2025



ADAPTIVE SPORTS FUND

NO LIMITS. JUST LIFE!

ADAPTIVE GO-KARTING - 8th March



ADAPTIVE MOUNTAIN BIKING - 5th April



ADAPTIVE GOLF - 10th May



ADAPTIVE SNOW-SKIING - 24-27th July



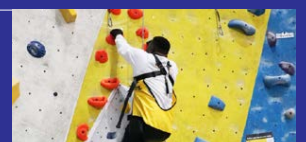
ADAPTIVE PADDLE - 9th August



ADAPTIVE SAILING - 6th September



ADAPTIVE ROCK CLIMBING - 4th October



ADAPTIVE ARCHERY - 1st November



Sponsors





Mastering a successful wheelchair transfer

Strength training on the core, arms and shoulder can help you transfer safely. Here are some easy exercises that will help

If you use a wheelchair, being able to transfer independently can be a game-changer. It gives you the freedom to move, boosts your confidence, and helps you stay active in daily life.

Safe and smooth transfers require strength, coordination, and the right techniques. The good news? You can train your body to make transfers easier by focusing on key muscle groups.

Regular training improves transfer efficiency and reduces the risk of overuse injuries, especially in the shoulders and wrists. To keep things balanced, add flexibility exercises and mobility drills to your routine.

Let's break it down by the key movements and muscles that you need.

FORWARD LEAN AND READY TO MOVE

The forward lean engages your core (abs and lower back), and shoulders. Your core helps keep you stable as you lean forward, and your shoulders control your movement helping you shift your centre of gravity.

To strengthen your core, try seated forward reaches. Sit upright, lean forward slightly, and return to the start. This strengthens your core while improving flexibility. Make sure to be safe and ask someone for assistance before doing this exercise.

THE PUSH TO LIFT YOURSELF

Pushing yourself up off your seat requires your triceps, chest and shoulders. They do the heavy lifting when you push yourself up.

To strengthen your arms, try triceps dips. Using your wheelchair armrests, lower yourself down slightly, then push back up. Great for building arm strength!

TWIST AND ROTATE TO MOVE

Twisting and rotate after lifting yourself engages your core, back and arms. You need stability and control as you rotate and shift your weight. To build strength, try seated trunk twists. Sit up straight, rotate your upper body side to side, engaging your abs.


“

Regular training improves transfer efficiency and reduces the risk of overuse injuries.

STABILISING TO LAND SAFELY

This movement requires your shoulders, back and core. These muscles help you control your landing and avoid injury. To build strength, try seated shoulder presses. Hold light weights and press overhead to strengthen shoulders.

If you need more visual cues or want to do more exercises, visit The Enable Centre [YouTube page](#) for more ideas on how to strengthen your arms to perform a smooth transfer.

By strengthening the right muscles and practicing effective techniques, you can make transfers smoother and safer. Work with a biokineticist, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist to create a programme that fits your needs. And remember, every small improvement helps you maintain your independence and move with confidence! 



TOP: Twisting and rotating will strengthen your core, back and arms.

MIDDLE: Pushing yourself up off your seat will strengthen your triceps, chest and shoulders.

BOTTOM: Forward leans strengthens your shoulders and core.



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.

Get in touch: admin@enablecentre.org

A never-ending passion for rugby



The positivity and unwavering determination sewn into the fabric of Mawethu Mtutu's being enabled him to defy the odds to live a full life

Rugby has been the one constant in Mawethu Mtutu's life. It's long been his greatest passion and changed his life for the better, the worse and the better again.

A multi-talented player, he was comfortable playing scrumhalf, centre and wing but preferred operating at number nine; a position he played for East London-based Home Boys Rugby Football Club in their First Division. An away-game against Moonlight Rugby Football Club at Mooiplaas in 1989 changed his life forever.

"I remember kicking the ball and their number 15 catching it, and kicking it back to me," Mawethu recalls. "That's when I was tackled by their flank and seriously injured

my neck. I was taken to the nearest clinic and transferred to Frere Hospital where I stayed a few days before being transferred to Conradie Hospital where I was in ICU for five weeks."

At 21, he was told he would never walk again. He didn't let that break his spirit. Instead, he threw everything into training. He was in a wheelchair for nine months before he went onto crutches thanks to extensive rehabilitation. Today, he walks with just one crutch.

"Training helped me to be powerful, both physically and mentally," says Mawethu, who returned to rugby in a different guise in 1992. He was appointed as the coach of the under-15s and under-19s teams at his former club.

The following year he guided both teams to silverware.

Mawethu had great success in his coaching career, winning several trophies, not just for Home Boys, but as head coach of the CHARU union as well. He's now back to his true passion; coaching the Home Boys under-15s and under-19s teams.

A chance encounter at a rugby game shaped the next chapter of his life.

"In 2005, my brother in Boksburg called me and suggested that I go to study sewing and make couches. One weekend, I went to watch a game between the Valke and Border. Another spectator asked me about the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund top I was wearing and we started chatting," Mawethu recalls.

"He asked me what I was doing in the area, and I explained that I was studying sewing and that I'm originally from East London. He said that I should phone him when I'm back in East London as there's a local sewing factory there and I did after completing my course in 2006."

"I was accepted by Supported Employment Enterprise factory on a learnership in 2007 and was hired on a permanent basis the following year," he adds.

A natural, he sews all the clothes that are needed for staff in hospitals, linen and woodwork, which is exported to Cape Town.

"I really enjoy my work and my colleagues and I'm grateful that I can earn an income," he comments.

Mawethu is a family man as well. He's married and has three sons, Lukho, Likhona and Luthando aged 18, 21 and 29 respectively. He shares: "I love them dearly. They mean the world to me."

An inspirational figure, Mawethu walks the walk and talks the talk, saying: "For anyone going through a difficult time, keep working hard and never give up."


Aside from his family, Mawethu says the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund has been an invaluable part of his support system.

Known as Rugby's Caring Hands, the Players' Fund has aided over 500 fallen heroes over the years and currently assists 85 recipients who sustained catastrophic head, neck and spinal injuries playing the game they loved.

"The Players' Fund has played a big role in my life. They showed me that being injured doesn't mean it's the end of your life. They've helped me in so many ways and have even made it possible for me to attend rugby games," Mawethu says.

"My sincerest gratitude to the Players' Fund for all they've done for me and for all they continue to do for me and the other recipients. Thank you to [former Players' Fund Injured Player Welfare Officer] Gail Baerecke for caring for us recipients and for treating us so well and to Shoneé Cornelissen who's been great since replacing Gail," he continues.

Prior to an injured player's discharge from hospital and in consultation with the rehabilitation team, the Players' Fund assesses the needs of the recipient and provides support that ranges from the provision of equipment, modification to homes, medical consumable allocations, secondary rehabilitation, financial assistance, transport facilitation, personal care and more.

For more information about the Players' Fund and to support their cause, visit their [website](http://www.playersfund.org.za) or follow them on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#). 



Quintin van Jaarsveld writes on behalf of the Players' Fund. If you would like to support the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund, visit their website at www.playersfund.org.za and select any number of the giving options available, which include EFT, payfast, Snapscan and Zapper.

Get in touch: contact@playersfund.org.za



Accessible track for all racers

The world of radio-controlled car racing offers a level playing field for racers of all abilities

There's something timeless about racing – the thrill of competition, the speed, and the satisfaction of precision control. While traditional motorsports may not be accessible to everyone, radio-controlled (RC) car racing has opened up a fast-paced, inclusive world where ability takes the front seat. With innovation and community support, adaptive RC racing is proving to be more than just a hobby; it's a growing sport.

A brilliant example of this progress is RPM Raceway, a local RC track leading the charge for accessibility. The venue has installed a custom ramp to the drivers' stand, allowing wheelchair users an elevated and unobstructed aerial view of the track. This simple but impactful change levels the playing field, giving all racers the same view and control opportunities.

RC racing blends hand-eye coordination, reflexes, and technical skill all from a safe, trackside position. For those with mobility

impairments, it provides the adrenaline rush of motorsport without the physical strain of full-scale racing. And thanks to innovation in adaptive controls, just about anyone can get behind the wheel.

Using 3D-printed brackets, modified levers, and custom-built hand grips, transmitters can be tailored to suit individual needs to ensure maximum comfort, precision, and accessibility.

"From the moment I picked up the controller, the excitement was real," said one participant. "It's fast, competitive, and incredibly empowering."


More than just races, events at RPM are community gatherings. They bring together enthusiasts of all levels to compete, learn, and connect. For Adaptive Sports Fund (ASF), supporting adaptive RC racing has become an exciting way to get more people involved in sport, no matter the size of the wheels.



There's also a hands-on, technical side that draws people in. RC racing offers the chance to learn about tyre swaps, suspension tuning, and gear adjustments – all while boosting fine motor skills, focus, and confidence. Many participants enjoy working on their cars as much as racing them.

RPM's commitment to accessibility doesn't stop with the ramp. An electric winch system is currently in development, which will soon make accessing the raised platform even easier, especially for those who need additional support getting to the stand.

ASF is proud to partner with inclusive venues like RPM that embrace the future of adaptive sport. By making thoughtful changes, they're showing that accessibility doesn't require compromise, it just requires intention.

For those looking to feel the thrill of competition in an accessible, fun, and welcoming environment, adaptive RC racing is ready and waiting at the starting line. 

DONATE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Adaptive Sports Fund is a Section 18A tax-exempt organisation, and a certificate can be issued for donations.



Jeffrey Yates writes for the [Adaptive Sports Fund](https://www.adaptivesportsfund.org) (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.

Get in touch: info@adaptivesportsfund.org



The Women of South Africa Wheelchair Rugby

Get ready to meet the inspiring women who are redefining the face of Wheelchair Rugby in South Africa

Wheelchair Rugby is often misunderstood as a male sport. In truth, it's a co-ed sport that offers opportunities for athletes of all genders to participate and excel. In South Africa, a growing number of women are taking to the court, showcasing their skills, determination, and passion for the sport.

Despite the challenges they face, these women are breaking down barriers and paving the way for others to follow in their footsteps.

To shine a spotlight on some of the women of South African wheelchair rugby, highlighting their experiences, achievements, and perspectives on the sport, we spoke with three talented female athletes, a dedicated female referee, and a passionate female

wheelchair rugby coach. Get ready to meet the inspiring women who are redefining the face of Wheelchair Rugby in South Africa!

SANDRA KHUMALO

Sandra Khumalo is a Wheelchair Rugby Fives athlete based in Johannesburg. She is a T12 paraplegic and plays for Mandeville Wheelchair Rugby.

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I fell in love with the sport from my very first go!



South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SAWCR): What drew you to Wheelchair Rugby, and how did you get started in the sport?

Sandra Khumalo (SK): I have a background in sports as a Paralympic Solo Rower. I was invited by one of the Mandeville athletes and fell in love with the sport from my very first go! This is my first time competing in a team sport, and I love it!

SAWCR: How do you think women in Wheelchair Rugby can inspire others to get involved in sports?

SK: To see women playing wheelchair rugby is to show that we are all destined for more, and to not let your situation or gender limit you. It shows that women are an important part of the game and have a lot to contribute!

SAWCR: Looking to the future, what are your goals with Wheelchair Rugby?

SK: The future looks bright! I hope to make it to the national team and show the world that as women we can stand up to anything that comes our way and conquer it.

SUSAN JORDAAN

Susan Jordaan is a Wheelchair Rugby



MAIN PHOTO: Yolande Oosthuisen showcasing her skills on the court.

ABOVE LEFT: Sandra Khumalo is new to the sport, but fell in love instantly.

ABOVE RIGHT: Susan Jordaan is a seasoned Wheelchair Rugby Fives athlete.

Fives athlete based in Pretoria. She is a T12 paraplegic and plays for TUKS Wheelchair Rugby.

SAWCR: How did you get involved in Wheelchair Rugby?

Susan Jordaan (SJ): I was introduced to the sport while in rehab after my accident in 2013. I took to the sport immediately; it's fast, safe and a lot of fun! I eventually moved to Bloemfontein in 2017 and began playing with the Mustangs Wheelchair Rugby Club.

SAWCR: How do you prepare for competitions, and what strategies do you use to stay focused and motivated?

SJ: I have a structured training regime that is focused on strength, endurance and agility. I make sure all my equipment is in check (e.g. chair, wheels, axles, gloves, etc).

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It's about playing for something bigger than yourself.

I remind myself of my short and long-term goals; winning the match up, making the national side. Most importantly, it's about remembering that it's about playing for something bigger than yourself – your team and teammates.

SAWCR: Do you have any international female Wheelchair Rugby role models?

SJ: Yes! Kylie Grimes (Great Britain). Kylie made history at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics by becoming the first ever female to win a gold medal. She is a vocal advocate for inclusivity in sport and has shown that women can compete – and dominate – at the highest level.

YOLANDE OOSTHUISEN

Yolande Oosthuisen is a Wheelchair Rugby Fours athlete based in Pretoria. She is a C7 quadriplegic, has competed internationally for South Africa, and plays for TUKS Wheelchair Rugby.

SAWCR: How did your journey in Wheelchair Rugby start?

Yolande Oosthuisen (YO): About a year after my accident, I was encouraged to start training with TUKS Wheelchair Rugby Club to build my strength and improve my mobility, rather than buying an electric wheelchair.

At first that's all it was, a way to get stronger. But I soon discovered that Wheelchair Rugby is so much more than just a sport. It was what I needed to find myself again.

I have accomplished more than I ever thought possible and have met people that feel like family to me now.

SAWCR: What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced in a sport like



ABOVE: Yolande Oosthuisen on the court.

Wheelchair Rugby?

YO: As much as we strive to be equal to men, from a physical perspective we are often simply smaller and lighter. Sometimes I get pushed around on court because of my size and struggle to hold my own against stronger male opponents.

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Wheelchair Rugby isn't only about strength. It's also about speed ... and being smart.

But, Wheelchair Rugby isn't only about strength. It's also about speed and being in the right place at the right time ... and being smart – something women are naturally good at *wink*.

SAWCR: Have you experienced any stereotypes or biases in the sport, and if so,



ABOVE: Maryka Jordaan, experienced referee and SAWCR Head Official.

how have you overcome them?

YO: I can't speak for the personal experiences of other female athletes, but I've never experienced any stereotyping or bias.

My male teammates have always treated me with respect, but they play just as hard against me as they would against any other male athlete, and that is exactly how I like it!

MARYKA JORDAAN

Maryka Jordaan is a female Wheelchair Rugby referee based in Pretoria. She is also Head of Officials for South Africa Wheelchair Rugby and has officiated at international events in the UK.

SAWCR: What inspired you to become a Wheelchair Rugby referee, and what do you enjoy most about officiating the sport?

Maryka Jordaan (MJ): My mother has a disability and competes in the sport. It looked like a lot of fun. Not having a disability meant that I wasn't able to play the sport, so being a referee allowed me to be a part of the sport in my own way.

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I enjoy making sure everyone plays with good sportmanship.

I enjoy making sure everyone plays with good sportmanship and ensuring that the rules are followed for a fair game. I love being able to play my part in allowing people to do a sport that they love.

SAWCR: How do you balance the physical and mental demands of refereeing Wheelchair Rugby?

MJ: I exercise frequently to keep my fitness levels where they need to be so I can keep up with all the running around on court during the games. Mentally, I have a pre-match routine to help focus and calm my mind, and remind myself: "It's just a game"!

SAWCR: Have you experienced any stereotypes or biases in the sport, and if so, how have you overcome them?

MJ: Yes, there are times when players, coaches or spectators can negatively stereotype female referees; questioning our ability to meet the physical demands and doubting our decisions, especially the tough calls. However, through confidence, hard work and a good support network, I've been able to overcome those challenges. Over time, respect is earned and you just need to push through!

SAWCR: What advice would you give to other females that may want to become Wheelchair Rugby referees?

MJ: Familiarise yourself with the rules and observe experienced referees. Watch a lot of Wheelchair Rugby. There's plenty of games on Youtube. It's also good to join a local club and attend their training sessions.

You can also reach out to South Africa Wheelchair Rugby and get involved in their referee training programmes and internships.



ABOVE: Petronella Khanya is the coach for the Vikings Wheelchair Club.

PETRONELLA KHANYA

Petronella Khanya is coach of the Vikings Wheelchair Rugby Club based in Soshanguve. She has been involved in the sport for six years.

SAWCR: What motivated you to become a Wheelchair Rugby Coach?

Petronella Khanya (PK): A passion for sports and a desire to empower individuals with disabilities to participate and achieve in their chosen sport. I love having the opportunity to help people grow, develop and change their circumstances through sport.

SAWCR: How do you approach coaching and supporting female Wheelchair Rugby athletes?

PK: I focus on creating an inclusive environment, providing tailored support by offering good training and fostering

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I help female athletes build confidence to play among male athletes.

awareness. I aim to address the barriers to entry, and create a safe space to get involved. I help female athletes build confidence to play among male athletes and encourage teamwork.


SAWCR: What are some of the most important qualities for a female Wheelchair Rugby Coach?

PK: Interpersonal skills like empathy, active listening and relationship building, are very important qualities. As a coach you need to prioritise the personal development of your athletes and understand their specific needs.

GETTING INVOLVED

The future of wheelchair rugby in South Africa is bright and women are playing a vital role in shaping the sport's growth and development. The stories of these remarkable women showcase the power of wheelchair rugby to transform lives and challenge perceptions.

If you're inspired to join the growing community of women in wheelchair rugby, we encourage you to reach out to SAWCR. Whether you're an athlete, coach, or referee, there's a place for you in this dynamic and inclusive sport.

You can contact SAWCR at admin@sawcr.co.za, reach out to SAWCR Victor Buitendag at 084 308 5856, or visit the official website at www.sawcr.co.za. Get in touch today to learn more about the opportunities available and take the first step towards an exciting new chapter in your sporting journey. 



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 or visit the official Facebook page at [@SAWWheelchairRugby](https://www.facebook.com/SAWWheelchairRugby).

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Psychology of desire

Sexuality after a SCI is not lost, but rather evolving with a need to put focus on pleasure rather than performance

After a spinal cord injury (SCI), physical changes often take centre stage in discussions about sexuality, but the psychological aspects of desire are just as important. Many people with an SCI experience shifts in libido – including decreased libido due to emotional distress, body image concerns or changes in sensation.

However, desire is not purely biological, it is deeply influenced by thoughts, emotions, and mindset. With the right approach, libido can be reignited, leading to a fulfilling and satisfying sex life.

Sexual desire is often mistaken for something automatic, but it is shaped by a complex interaction of mental, emotional, and relational factors.

After an SCI, several challenges can contribute to a decline in libido, including

psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD related to the injury.

Body image concerns also play a role, as adjusting to a new body can impact confidence and self-esteem. Relationship dynamics may shift, especially if caregiving becomes a central aspect.

This could result in intimacy feeling different or awkward. Additionally, medications used for pain, spasticity or depression can have side effects that reduce sexual desire. Recognising these factors helps to create a path toward reigniting libido.

A common challenge post-SCI is shifting from a performance-based approach to sexuality to a pleasure-based one. Many people worry about whether they can “perform” as they did before, creating anxiety that suppresses desire.

Instead to prioritise pleasure, connection, and emotional intimacy. Sexuality is not limited to penetrative sex. It includes touch, anticipation, fantasy and emotional closeness.

One way to encourage this shift is through sensation such as focussed exercises where partners explore each other's bodies without the goal of orgasm or penetration.

By removing the pressure to perform, these exercises allow individuals to reconnect with sensuality and enjoyment, creating a more relaxed and fulfilling sexual experience.

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By removing the pressure to perform, these exercises allow individuals to reconnect with sensuality and enjoyment.

One of the most powerful tools for reigniting libido is mental arousal. The brain is the most important sex organ, and it plays a key role in building desire.

Engaging the imagination through erotic stories, media, or fantasy can stimulate arousal even if physical sensation has changed.

Practicing mindfulness and visualisation during intimacy helps individuals stay present in the moment and enhances pleasure.


Open sexual communication with a partner, including discussing desires, preferences and fantasies, can also help reignite excitement and create a sense of closeness.

Feeling attractive and desirable after an SCI starts from within, but it is common to experience self-doubt about sexuality. Confidence can be rebuilt through positive self-talk and focusing on personal strengths beyond physical ability.

Experimentation is key. Trying new ways to experience pleasure can boost self-esteem and result in sex feel exciting again.

Engaging with support networks, including others with SCI who have navigated similar challenges, can provide reassurance and practical advice.

Reigniting libido doesn't happen overnight though, it requires patience, exploration, and self-compassion. The goal is not to “go back” to how things were but to create a new, fulfilling version of sexuality.

By shifting focus from performance to pleasure, engaging the mind, and building confidence, desire can be reignited, proving that sexuality after SCI is not lost. It's simply evolving. 

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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.

Get in touch: danie@charispsychology.co.za


Beyond the label

The theme for the 2025 **Casual Day** has been announced, “Beyond the Label: Embracing Unity Through Inclusion and Diversity”.

The event organisers share the inspiration behind the theme: “We are calling on the public to truly see, appreciate, acknowledge, and respect persons with disabilities as complete human beings – equal to all human beings and entitled to the same human rights and freedoms.”

“This is a call to move beyond labels and perceptions that reduce a person to their disability,” the website reads.

Casual Day is a project of the National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and aims to raise funds for the organisation and its work.


To support the project, the public is encouraged to purchase their R20 sticker or any of the merchandise available from the Casual Day website. Casual Day will take place on Friday, 5 September 2025. 



Digital accessibility

The annual **Inclusive Africa Conference** is dedicated to better understanding the challenges of digital accessibility and inclusion, as well as celebrating innovations.

The 2025 Conference will include topics on Global Implementation of Accessibility; Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Digital Skills Development and Employment in the Digital Economy; Mental Wellness Through Technology; Digital Language Inclusion; and AI and Accessibility.

The event will take place from June 3 to 5 and can be joined digitally at no cost. The **full programme** and **registration** are available through the conference website. 

2025 Events Calendar

INCLUSIVE AFRICA CONFERENCE 3 TO 5 JUNE 2025

The annual Inclusive Africa Conference returns in June to discuss better inclusion in the digital space. The conference can be joined virtually from anywhere in the world. Visit the **official website** to register.

ADAPTIVE SNOW-SKIING 24 TO 27 JULY 2025

Join the Adaptive Sports Fund as they try adaptive snow-skiing at Afriski in Lesotho. Visit their **Facebook page** for more information or contact them at info@adaptivesportsfund.org.

ADAPTIVE PADDLE 9 AUGUST 2025

The Adaptive Sports Fund will be testing out the popular sport of paddle in August. Visit their **Facebook page** for more information or contact them at info@adaptivesportsfund.org.

SPINAL CORD INJURY (SCI) DAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2025

SCI Day serves as reminder of the challenges faced by people with spinal cord injuries. The **2025 theme** is fall prevention and spinal cord protection.

CASUAL DAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2025

The annual fundraiser for people with disabilities returns in September with the theme “Beyond the Label”. Visit the Casual Day **website** for more information.

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