

ROLLING INSPIRATION

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The Greatest Version Nelisiwe Sibiya building her future

**Neurogenic bladder
a PMB
Funders must pay in full**

**Accessibility for
green thumbs
Raised planters makes
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**Scaling disability-
owned businesses
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**Exopulse Mollii Suit
Relaxing spastic muscles**

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



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Put pen to paper

Writing an autobiography can offer some healing, provide a sense of accomplishment, and change another's life

In my many years as a quadriplegic (41 years ago), I made a concerted effort to get my hands on as many books written by persons with disabilities as possible. Reading is a passion of mine, and reading the right stuff written by people who have overcome challenges in their lives, has particularly shaped the way I think about my day-to-day journey and decision-making.

Reading autobiographies written by quadriplegics and paraplegics have been the most interesting and influencing. So much so that I penned my own story, *Wheels of Fire*, in 2022, which tells the story of my life before and after the diving accident in August 1985 that resulted in my spinal cord injury. It was the most cathartic experience – one that I am so grateful to have completed.

Here is my call to action. I have no doubt that every quadriplegic and paraplegic has been on a very challenging and tough journey. Everyone has a story to tell. Your story will no

doubt be very valuable to any and all readers. Take a leap of faith and put pen to paper. The journey is so self-rewarding. From influencing and informing through the written word, editing and refining the story, to finding the right publishing avenue. Who knows? There might be a bestseller in you.

Rolling Inspiration, a publication owned by QASA, shares the incredible achievements and stories of people with physical disabilities in every issue. We will happily promote your book or even publish your story. You can get in touch with the editorial team at rollinginspiration@qasa.co.za.

There are too few books, too few stories out there telling the tale of triumph over adversity; from tragedy to triumph; or from accident to accolades. If there is such a story in you, pen it down. It might just be the book that changes someone's life to the victory or achievement of which they dream. R



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.

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QASA empowers members to live boldly

QASA member, Mamaswa Ralefeta, is currently employed with Vodacom – a milestone achieved with the support and guidance of QASA. We caught up with her to learn more.

QASA: What has your experience at Vodacom been like so far?

Mamaswa Ralefeta (MR): I had imposter syndrome as I didn't believe I am here in this big reputable company, but the culture in my department is just beautiful. The people are warm, welcoming and very inclusive. I get to experience firsthand how intentional communication can create a culture of dignity and collaboration. I'm learning, growing, and continually bettering myself and my skills.

QASA: How did the QASA programmes assist to prepare you?

MR: Graduating from the QASA Work Readiness Programme was more than a milestone, it was a mindset shift. Through its holistic approach, I gained vital skills in communication, workplace etiquette, team work, stress management and digital literacy that have proven invaluable during my internship at Vodacom.

Most importantly, QASA helped me believe that accessibility and innovation aren't just buzzwords. They're guiding principles. At Vodacom, I now get to help amplify voices, connect colleagues and ensure that no message gets lost in the crowd. It all started with a community who saw potential and dared me to embrace it.

QASA: What message would you share with other persons with disabilities?

MR: To my fellow trailblazers with disabilities, your journey into the workplace is not just about finding a job, it's about stepping into your divine purpose with boldness. The world may not always be ready, but you are. With

every skill, every act of resilience, and every moment of self-belief, you are rewriting narratives and creating space where dignity and innovation thrive.

Preparation matters, whether through programmes like QASA or personal growth, equip yourself with tools that speak for you when others won't. The workplace needs your voice, your insight and your vision. So, step in not as someone asking for permission but as someone offering possibility. R



Assisting with accessibility

The QASA Accessible Homes programme is designed to ensure that members have basic accessibility in their homes. Christiaan Labuschagne applied to get rid of the steps leading to his bathroom. QASA assisted to install a ramp.

"I'm now able to move around so much more easily and with greater independence. It's made my daily routine so much more comfortable, and it's given me a real sense of confidence in my own home," he shares.

QASA encourages members to apply to the programme if they need small adaptations done to better access the rooms in their home or the front door. For more information, contact QASA at info@qasa.co.za. R

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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



Building the greatest version

With some support from QASA, Nelisiwe is building the greatest version of herself and working towards her dreams

Diagnosed at age five with Congenital Kyphoscoliosis, Nelisiwe Sibiya has been a wheelchair user all her life. It is the only life she has ever known. She shares: "Adapting came naturally, especially since I was surrounded by a supportive family who never made me feel different."

The comfort she feels in her own skin is most evident in the confidence she radiates. She is bright, bubbly and full of life – savouring all the beauty that life has to hold.

"I just believe life is too short to constantly worry about things we can't change. Any chance you get to be happy, grab it with both

hands and wheel with it. Everyone deserves a ray of sunshine, because when the storms come, that light will help you make it through," she shares.

With such an optimistic nature and outlook on life, it is hard to imagine that Nelisiwe struggles with her own anxieties and short comings, which held her back ... at least until recently.

In 2024, Nelisiwe graduated from the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) Work Readiness Programme. Life hasn't been the same for her since.

"At the time, I was stuck in a cycle of learnerships without finding stable employment. The programme equipped me with valuable skills for the workplace and, as a result, I am now permanently employed at QASA," she shares.

The programme included a work experience element, which Nelisiwe completed with QASA. The organisation was so happy with her performance that she was offered a permanent position as office administrator.

The programme also included life coaching with Len Davey from [The World Within](#). Her work with Len helped Nelisiwe overcome some of her anxieties and short comings so that she can step into her potential.

"The life coaching sessions played a big role in helping me navigate the workplace, especially when it comes to managing emotions and overcoming fears," she says.

"Before life coaching, I really struggled with procrastination. As much as I had the drive and passion to act on things, I'd constantly delay tasks until the very last minute. I also had poor time management and often found myself overwhelmed because I wasn't planning properly."

"Another big challenge was being too hard on myself, setting high standards and then beating myself up when I didn't meet them exactly," she adds.

"But, my biggest struggle was making phone calls, even personal ones. The idea of talking to someone without seeing their face or expressions made me extremely anxious. It felt like a conversation without connection, and that really unsettled me," she shares.

The life coaching assisted her to address these challenges. She reflects: "I won't say I'm 100 percent over the anxiety, but I no longer panic when the phone rings. I've learned how to stay calm throughout calls, even the difficult ones." Beyond helping her overcome her anxieties, life coaching brought more structure to her life.

"It taught me how to manage my time better, stop procrastinating, and break down tasks into realistic steps. I've also learned to be kinder to myself and to see challenges as growth opportunities rather than failures," Nelisiwe says.

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"Life coaching didn't just help me fix what I was struggling with, it empowered me to take control of my life and stay focused on the purpose that drives me," she shares.

These skills have helped her take a step closer to her goal by pursuing a degree in criminology, which she obtained this year.

"I've always believed that real change starts with understanding the root of our societal issues and criminology allows exactly that. Growing up with a disability has given me a unique lens on justice, inequality, and how systems can either support or fail people," she explains.

"I wanted to study criminology because I've seen how vulnerable communities, including

persons with disabilities, are often overlooked in conversations about crime and justice," Nelisiwe says.

"Studying criminology empowers me to challenge those gaps and be part of creating safer, fairer communities. For me, criminology isn't just a field of study, it's a tool to help make the world more just, compassionate and accessible for everyone," she adds.

Her ultimate goal is to work in the criminal justice system or the forensic field and advocate for fair treatment of marginalised groups like people with disabilities, women and children.

"I hope to use my career to be a voice for the voiceless and a bridge between justice and humanity," Nelisiwe says. "I see myself using my knowledge and experience to influence policy, raise awareness, and contribute to more inclusive justice systems."

"Whether it's through research, advocacy, or community-based programmes, I want to be part of solutions that prevent crime, support rehabilitation, and promote dignity for all," she adds.

She is planning to continue her studies with an honours degree in Forensic Science and Technology with hopes of securing a bursary.

"That support would mean everything to me, not just financially, but as a step closer to achieving my dream of using forensic science to create safer, more inclusive communities. I'm committed to growing, learning and using my education to drive real change," she notes.

As Nelisiwe grows more into her confidence and pursues the life of her dreams, she encourages others to do the same.

"Honestly, you don't realise how much you need life coaching until you start doing it. It's been a powerful shift in my personal and professional life. It helps you unlock a version of yourself you didn't even know existed," she says

"It's not about someone telling you what to do. It's about being guided to find your own clarity, confidence and purpose," she continues.

"It gave me the tools to take consistent action toward my goals. Sometimes, we get stuck not because we're lazy or unmotivated, but because we don't know how to move forward, and that's where life coaching comes in," Nelisiwe explains.

"It's a safe space to grow, reflect, and shift your mindset. If you're serious about becoming your best self and living with intention, I honestly believe life coaching is one of the best investments you can make in yourself," she adds.

Nelisiwe encourages others to be brave, step out and make themselves heard. She shares: "Your disability does not define who you are. Don't be afraid to step out and make your voice heard. Use your experience to build a greater version of yourself."

"If you don't, you may miss the chance to meet the person you've been searching for in all the wrong places, only to realise that version has been within you all along, just waiting for permission to shine," she adds.

Since Nelisiwe and her cohort graduated, QASA has altered its Work Readiness Programme to focus specifically on life coaching to build confidence, positive self-perceptions and healthy coping mechanisms so that members can thrive in their professional careers. QASA members can enquire about the programme at info@qasa.co.za or you can reach out directly to Len for more information at len@theworldwithin.co.za. R

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.

Elevated lifestyle, uncompromised freedom



The Lifta home lifts elevate your lifestyle and allows you to enjoy uncompromised freedom

A home is more than a place to live. It's where life's moments unfold, memories are made, and generations come together. Ensuring that your home remains as practical as it is beautiful is an investment in comfort, independence, and peace of mind. At **Lifta SA**, we understand the value of feeling at ease in your space. For over a decade, we've helped South Africans enhance their homes with premium, European-designed lifts – adding effortless mobility, quiet confidence and enduring value.

DESIGNED FOR EFFORTLESS LIVING

More than a convenience, a Lifta home lift is a discreet solution that makes every level of your home welcoming. Whether you wish to future-proof your residence, make daily tasks more manageable, or accommodate guests and family with limited mobility, Lifta ensures that freedom of movement is never compromised. Our lifts are thoughtfully engineered to accommodate wheelchairs with ease by offering smooth, level entry and generous cabin space. Crafted with elegant lines and finishes, each lift complements sophisticated interiors. Installation is swift and unobtrusive, requiring minimal building work. In just a few days, you can enjoy the full accessibility your home has to offer with no disruption to its unique character.

SAFETY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Every Lifta lift includes an advanced suite of

safety features. Battery-powered emergency lowering ensures you reach your destination safely even during a power outage. Automatic door locking, interior emergency stop controls and a refined safety gear brake work together to ensure a smooth, worry-free ride.

PERSONALISED AND HASSLE-FREE

With Lifta, you'll discover a level of service that reflects our commitment to quality. Our team will guide you through the entire process, helping you select the right model, finishes and layout for your needs and style. After installation, our professional support continues for years to come with reliable maintenance and responsive assistance to keep your lift performing beautifully.

TRUSTED BY SA'S FINEST HOMES

With more than 500 installations nationwide, Lifta SA has earned a reputation for engineering excellence and trusted service. Homeowners choose Lifta not just for what our lifts add to their homes, but for how they enhance daily life with dignity and grace.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP WITH CONFIDENCE

Enjoy the true comfort of moving freely in your home by choosing Lifta – the discreet, refined choice for safe, elegant home accessibility. Contact Lifta SA today on 080 73 73 73 7 or visit www.lifta.co.za to arrange for a consultation and discover how easily your home can transform into a sanctuary of comfort and freedom. **R**

Celebrating power caregivers



There are certain skills that turn spouses, parents, family members and friends into power carers who go beyond the routines of daily living to support and advocate

Power caregivers are not those who use their power to control. Rather, they use their position to empower those they care for. They possess personal power, which manifests as quiet competence, assertiveness, gentle kindness, grace and going the extra mile. Personal power understands its limits and how to care for your own needs and wellbeing. It understands that sustainable caring requires a balance between giving and self-replenishing.

Mary McGrath [wrote on the subject](#) stating that it starts with a discovery of your own personal power when you make the decision to step up in support of someone in need. You recognise existing skills and talents gained through your life experience, and redeploy them in the role of caring.

By identifying these skills and focussing on them, you can move into the role of a power

caregiver by supporting and advocating for the needs of the person you decided to care for. Mary lists the skills that power caregivers might have developed that can translate to caregiving. These have been adapted in this article to specifically speak to the needs of persons with spinal cord injuries (SCIs).

BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

A power caregiver should be an active contributing member of the team. This might include engaging with medical staff. If possible, join meetings that evaluate progress and plan the rehabilitation.

Get to understand the rehabilitation process and contribute by sharing your knowledge of your loved one's personal preferences and concerns. When attending meetings with rehab professionals (in-hospital as well as post-discharge sessions), prepare your questions beforehand. Think through your

caregiver activities and the issues that arise from them, or consult your loved one if they have another carer. Discuss the list with your loved one and agree on the content of your combined list.

If a caregiver has been employed for assistance at home, get to know them and understand the scope of their work. You can assist your loved one with drafting an activities list as a reference to ensure everything is covered. If need be, act as mediator or facilitator between your loved one and the employed caregiver. Good communication is half the battle won.

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Good communication is half the battle won.

Be sure to always explain what you propose to do and get permission from your loved one before you support them in the role to ensure they are comfortable with your involvement. Thus, you get to act on their behalf rather than speak for them.

PLAN AHEAD FOR INDEPENDENCE

When someone experiences a major traumatic event such as an SCI, it frazzles the mind. A clear mind is needed to plan for optimal future living. This is where you, the power caregiver, can add incomparable value.

Quiz the occupational therapist about making the home accessible. Think big and small to cover all the bases. Thinking big largely involves accessibility, transfers and dressing. Consider:

- Where to place grab rails in the bathroom;
- Refurbishing the shower into a role-in cubicle with a shower chair or acquiring a special shower wheelchair;
- Whether the bed is an appropriate height for easy transfers;
- A dressing and undressing routine; and
- Transfer routines for cars, bed, chair, toilet and so forth.

Thinking small can include:

- Acquiring special eating utensils and/or tools to assist with doing shirt buttons;
- Arranging cutlery and crockery to facilitate independent coffee, drinks and snack making;
- Ensuring clothes, toiletries and other daily essentials are within reach.
- Creating a wheelchair space at the dining table; and
- Lowering cupboard clothes racks and selected mirrors.

These lists are by no means complete. As new needs become apparent, find solutions. The aim is to promote independence and self-confidence.

STAY FLEXIBLE

Once your loved one gets home, it might be necessary to make further adjustments. Keep an attentive eye on their movement about the house and make changes as necessary. Rearrange whatever can be changed to facilitate independence in daily living. Make the home a safe place.

Also consider your own activities schedule and reorder your caregiving activities to better fit in with your work, home and social life. Don't neglect yourself!

BEING PREPARED WITH MORE PLANNING

Social and away-from-home events can become very threatening for a person with an SCI. Their home environment becomes a comfort zone. Leaving it becomes scary. Forward planning is a necessity.

When visiting a friend, consider the accessibility of their home, garden pathways, doorways and toilets. If needed, bring special equipment (such as adapted cutlery) and prepare the friend for these assistive devices to be used. If the home environment is not suitable, rather meet at a suitable restaurant.

When planning a holiday, finding suitable accessible accommodation can be a challenge. Wheelchair-accessible is often miss-equated with mobility-impaired equipped. Draw up a list of pertinent questions

to ask and, if possible, ask for photos of the room and bathroom.

Remember to assist, but not control. Plan the outing with your loved one. If they want to take the lead in enquiring, stand back. If they feel uncomfortable to do so, know what to ask for.

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Remember to assist, but not control. If they want to take the lead with enquiring, stand back.

ADVOCATE ON THEIR BEHALF

It is unbelievable how many people think that because you are in a wheelchair, you must also be mentally affected. If I go shopping alone, all is well and people often comment that I inspire them.

If I go shopping with my wife, I often get ignored and my wife is questioned, "What size shirt does he wear?", "What is his shoe size?".

Then I want to put my head on my shoulder and let the spittle drool from the side of my mouth. Fortunately, after 55 years together, my wife knows me by now, so she quickly responds, "Ask him. He is not stupid!". And so, spoiling my fun.

Know your loved one's strong points and brag about their abilities. Shift the focus from feeling sorry to understanding that persons with SCI are also normal people in our own right. Don't gush, it becomes embarrassing.

KEEP LEARNING

Get to know as much as you can about the consequences of SCI, and particularly about

the level and extent of the injury of the person you are caring for.

You can visit the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA)'s [website](#) for resources. You can also quiz the rehabilitation professionals. The more you know about SCI, the better-equipped you will be to provide support.

STRIKE A BALANCE

Although you are a power caregiver, you have your own life to live as well. Avoid the trap of over-committing in your role as caregiver. Integrate your caregiving functions with your routine to-do schedule; your work, your domestic and social life activities.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Be attentive and considerate, but do not take over. Don't do things that your loved one can do for themselves, even if it is more difficult for them than for you.

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Don't do things that your loved one can do for themselves.

My clean laundry is placed on my bed and I pack it away because my cupboard space allows me to do so. My wife and I take turns to wash the dishes even if it is challenging to reach into the sink from a seated position.

I water the garden despite the fact that pulling a hosepipe after a wheelchair over a lawn is exceptionally challenging. If I don't want to go to the gym or work on my woodwork projects, I often get my seated butt kicked!

Being a power caregiver is empowering those you care for. R



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.

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Should RAF reimburse medical aids?

A decision by the Western Cape High Court reignites a debate around the liability for medical expenses of road crash victims

When you sustain an injury on the road, the Road Accident Fund (RAF) is responsible for covering your medical expenses. But what happens when you have medical aid? Who is then responsible? In the legal system, there is some debate. We spoke with Raynold Tlhavani, Partner, and Micaela Pather, Senior Associate, at [Webber Wentzel](#) to get a better understanding.

RAF directed its staff to reject any claims for past medical expenses if these were already paid by medical aid schemes. In 2022, Discovery challenged this directive in the Pretoria High Court claiming that it was unlawful and inconsistent with the RAF Act 56 of 1996. The courts ruled in favour of Discovery. RAF appealed, but was dismissed.

By 2024, RAF was still applying the directive despite the ruling. Discovery launched a second application with the Pretoria High Court. However, the court looked at the broader policy context and changed its ruling.

"The Court held that medical schemes do not have an automatic right of subrogation against the RAF and emphasised that the RAF is a public compensation fund, not a private insurer, and that its finite resources must be protected for the benefit of all road accident victims," Raynold and Micaela share.

The court found that allowing the medical aid schemes to recover expenses "would deplete RAF resources and potentially disadvantage claimants who do not belong to a medical aid". In two separate cases (*Moss v RAF* and *Rahldeyah Esack v RAF*), the Western Cape High Court held the RAF liable for a claimant's past hospital and medical expenses, even if these were covered by a medical scheme. So, how

did the two courts come to different decisions? The team at Webber Wentzel explain:

"On our reading, the Pretoria High Court approached the issue from a policy-oriented perspective. By contrast, the Western Cape High Court upheld the legal principle of *res inter alios acta* and held that the RAF is liable for the losses suffered by the claimant, including where a third party (like a medical aid) has stepped in to cover expenses," Raynold and Micaela comment.

"The purpose of the RAF is to compensate all road users in South Africa who suffer loss or damage wrongfully caused by the driving of a motor vehicle. The RAF has a legal obligation to pay in terms of the RAF Act. A contract between the victim and [their] medical aid is a separate matter – a private agreement that has nothing to do with the RAF," they continue.

"The RAF cannot use third party payments to reduce its own liability. The ongoing legal disputes reflect a tension between the RAF's financial pressures and its legal obligations," they add.

It is important to note that a judgement in one High Court does not have to be followed in others. The Gauteng High Court doesn't need to agree or follow the rulings made in the Western Cape. Rulings are only binding when it is made by the Supreme Court of Appeals or Constitutional Court.

If you are in need of legal assistance, consider [Webber Wentzel](#). The firm has deep expertise in insurance litigation, public interest law, and constitutional matters. They are well positioned to assist any organisation or medical aid scheme affected by RAF's policies. **R**

Bladder care fully funded as a PMB



Neurogenic bladder dysfunction and the subsequent care should be funded in full by your medical aid

The Council of Medical Schemes (CMS) officially listed neurogenic bladder dysfunction and the subsequent care as a prescribed minimum benefit (PMB) for medical aids. All PMBs need to be funded in full by medical aids regardless of the member's benefit level.

In their official announcement, the CMS writes: "PMB regulations prescribe that the diagnosis, treatment, and care costs of PMB conditions must be funded irrespective of the member's benefit option when a designated service provider (DSP) is used. Medical schemes must pay for in and out-of-hospital costs in full if the services were obtained from a DSP. In cases of involuntary use of a non-DSP, healthcare services must still be paid in full."

In other words, your single-use intermittent catheter should be paid in full! The decision is greatly due to the work of the Clinical Advisory Panel (CAP) that worked with CMS to get the best standard of care for neurogenic bladder covered as a PMB. CAP has done significant work to advocate for the gold standard of bladder management including publishing a [paper with recommendations](#).

In addition, they have also hosted websites educating people on how to better care for their bladder. Core to their advocacy is the message, "Refuse to Reuse", which calls on users not to reuse their catheter as this dangerous practice can increase the frequency of urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Here are a few things that you can do to better care for your bladder:

- **Refuse to reuse:** Intermittent catheter users should use their catheter only once. Washing it is not enough to prevent bacteria from entering your urethra.
- **Clean hands:** You or your caregiver should wash your/their hands thoroughly before catheterisation. Hand sanitiser is not a substitute for soap and water.
- **Fully empty often:** Empty your bladder regularly and empty it completely. An overfull bladder can damage your kidneys.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink at least two litres of water a day to help your body flush out toxins. When exercising or on warm days, you should be drinking even more water.

Download the [Hidden Consequences of Spinal Cord Injuries](#) booklet on the QASA website for more advise on how to best care for your bladder. 

Overt Consequences of Spinal Cord Injuries

We take a deep dive into the overt consequences of spinal cord injuries and consider what can be done to manage them

When a person sustains a spinal cord injury or affliction, many other consequences follow. These need to be managed to maintain a quality of life and ensure longevity. The consequences and how they are managed will vary from person to person depending on the nature of their injury or affliction and the extent of the fallout.

Many of these consequences are hidden, such as bladder and bowel functions, which have been discussed in a [previous booklet](#), that can be found on the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) website.

Other consequences are overt, obvious, even if it takes some time for them to become visible (like the challenges of ageing with a spinal cord injury). These are the consequences that we strive to uncover in the *Overt Consequences of Spinal Cord Injuries* booklet.

As these consequences and their management are deeply personal, the advice given should be considered a high-level overview to help guide you in the right direction.

The series of articles covers essential topics like spasticity, sausage feet, obesity and ageing – to name a few. We aim to explain each in simple terms while focussing on the management of the consequence, either by the person with the spinal cord injury or affliction, or their caregiver.

Whether you're newly injured or a veteran, we trust that this booklet will equip you to take better care of yourself (or your loved one) and live a long and fulfilling life! R

Download the
booklet here

New target, old reality

There is a practical path to achieving the new employment equity targets for people with disabilities

The South African government has finally answered a long-standing call from disability advocates. As of 2025, the national employment equity target for persons with disabilities has been increased to three percent. On paper, this is a landmark victory, but for those who navigate the realities of the workplace, it raises a critical question: Is this an achievable goal or just a new benchmark for failure? To find the answer, we need only look at the data.

The [Commission for Employment Equity \(CEE\) Annual Report](#) shows a sobering reality, especially when alongside the [Stats SA Census 2022 data](#). While six percent or 3,7 million South Africans have a disability, they represent only 1,2 percent of employees. Thus, in a workforce of 16,8 million people, only 201 600 jobs are held by persons with disabilities. The new three percent target sets a goal of 504 000 jobs, which means a gap of over 302 000 jobs need to be filled. This is not just a statistical difference. It is a chasm representing a colossal loss of human potential, reinforcing dependency and preventing thousands from contributing. It reveals a systemic “career ceiling” where those who get in the door are often denied the chance to advance.

So, how can businesses bridge this gap? The answer lies in moving from a mindset of

obligation to one of opportunity. This is where learnerships become essential as it combines formal training with practical experience. For people with a disability, it provides a formal qualification, crucial work experience, and a stipend, breaking the vicious cycle of “no experience, no job”. It also dismantles stereotypes by allowing individuals to demonstrate their capabilities directly within a business.

For employers, it is a low-risk way to build a pipeline of skilled individuals. There are also significant incentives through the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) framework. Companies can earn two points by ensuring two percent of their workforce is black employees with disabilities. Four points can be earned for spending just 0,3 percent of the payroll on training for black people with disabilities with bonus points earned when the training participants are permanently employed.

Through these incentives, companies can address skills shortages, build a diverse and resilient workforce, and improve their B-BBEE scorecard. It is a strategic approach that turns a compliance target into a competitive advantage. The new target need not be an intimidating burden. It can be the catalyst for building a more inclusive and profitable economy for all. R



Rustum 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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Amazing Exopulse Mollii Suit

New innovative technology helps to relax spastic muscles and active weak muscles to treat the symptoms of neurological disorders

Have you heard of the latest innovation called the **Exopulse Mollii** suit? Well, let me inform you! It is a near full-body neuromodulation suit that relaxes spastic and tense muscles, and activates weak muscles. The Mollii Suit fundamentally changes the treatment field of neurological disorders and related symptoms.

It makes use of a physiological reflex mechanism called reciprocal inhibition. By sending an electrical signal to an antagonistic muscle, the spastic muscle relaxes. The assistive near full-body electrical stimulation reduces the typical symptoms associated with neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke and other similar conditions.

The Suit is designed to deliver rapid relief with 58 embedded electrodes. It uses gentle, barely perceptible pulses to loosen tense muscles, reactivate weak muscles and restore the body's natural mobility – all within one hour.

The combined effect of relaxing tense muscles and enabling the activation of weak



muscles allows its users to enjoy a more active life. The stimulation pattern can be customised to your body's unique needs.

Wearing the jacket for an hour every three days, depending on the need, to obtain the most effective results – patient dependant.

The Suit is made up of two pieces of clothing, a jacket and a pair of pants. It's made from sturdy, breathable synthetic fabric. It can be donned and doffed by the user at home without need for a practitioner after training and fitting has occurred. It comes in 37 sizes, ranging from children aged two to three up to 5XL for men and women. Both garments (without the control unit) can be cleaned in a home washer, or regularly in a steam cabinet.



So, ask yourself ... Are you ready to Suit up and explore an new, innovative approach? **R**



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

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Among the reeds at Rietvlei



Only a short drive from Joburg, nestled in Tshwane, the Rietvlei Nature Reserve boasts bird life, plain game and some accessibility

Despite having visited the Pretoria Sailing club at Rietvlei Dam, I've never seen the reserve. Recently, I decided to make a visit to the "other side".

The Rietvlei Nature Reserve includes the dam, surrounding areas and facilities such as fishing and boating area, accommodation and the reserve. A separate gate nestled in the suburban streets gives you access to nature reserve. It is strange to have the bush so close to the urban area.

The reception has various buildings. You have to park and pay for your entry before going into the reserve. The landscape is undulating with mainly open areas and various water features with hides.

Most of the area is a wetland, which means there are plenty of birds. The reserve has plains game such as cheetahs, buffalo and

rhinos. We were very lucky to see Eland – the largest antelope in Africa.

The roads are a mixture of tar and sand, however, some of the sand roads are quite rough and not passable with a standard car. We saw the rhinos, but couldn't get to them as there was a large, heavily rutted mud puddle that we didn't feel comfortable going through.

There is a main picnic area with two hides – one at each end. However, access is rather challenging as the ramps are quite steep. The hide at the Hippo pool side does not have a dropped opening, so it doesn't afford a view for children or persons in wheelchairs. The hide at the other end does.

There are no accessible toilet blocks at this area. There is an accessible eco toilet at one of the other hides. There is only a fixed grab bar for the elderly on one side, which doesn't offer the proper layout for an accessible toilet





as per building regulations. Access to this hide, which has accessible parking, is along a long wooden walkway, which sounds like a wooden marimba xylophone when you wheel along it in a wheelchair!

The coffee shop is situated in an old farmhouse and is quite a distance from the car park over the grass. There is a steep concrete ramp to get to the main door, however, the staff are knowledgeable and happy to assist. You can eat inside or at tables on the grass in front of the house, but there is no accessible route to this area. Their menu has a variety of options and there is also a small shop with snacks, drinks and a few curios for the tourists.

There is a designated accessible toilet cubicle within the house, however, it is not

configured to the correct standards. It's just basically the old bathroom of the house. Other toilet blocks are at the parking area. There are ablutions with showers, but these are not accessible. These are used for the hiking trail options.

Overall, it was a lovely day out in the bush without having to drive too far from Johannesburg. The accessibility is geared towards the elderly (who frequent this park in numbers as there is a retirement village close by) rather than universal access.

I will definitely be returning in the spring to see the other bird life. Also, I'll be approaching them to see if they will be interested in adjusting their access to include everyone ... so, watch this space! Happy Travels! R



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Tips for flying with children with disabilities

With the right planning and prep, flights can be exciting rather than stressful

For many people, catching an aeroplane is exciting. Unfortunately, for many families with children with disabilities, this can be a very stressful time.

My husband is a high-level quadriplegic who uses an power chin-controlled wheelchair, so I understand some of the challenges, especially as we often travel with our young children.

This month we provide some practical tips on what we can do to ensure that both you and your child have a positive flying experience.

INFORM THE AIRLINE WHEN BOOKING

If your child is a wheelchair user or requires additional assistance with getting on and off the plane, airlines require that you complete

a form. Most airlines finally have online forms that you can complete and submit. Some airlines call it a "Special Medical Needs Request Form".

This needs to be done when you book or as soon as possible afterwards as some airlines have a quota on the number of passengers with disabilities that they allow per flight.

If you are travelling with a power wheelchair, be sure to include information about the batteries (i.e. dry cell) and that you will do the disconnecting (you don't want staff damaging the battery), chair weight and measurements.

TEMPORARY WHEELCHAIR

You are often required to navigate long distances from check-in, through security, passport control (if travelling internationally),

through to your boarding gates with long queues.

If your child is not a wheelchair user, but is easily fatigued or has mobility impairments, consider requesting a wheelchair as this often makes getting through security easier and faster.

You will need to request a wheelchair as least 48 hours prior to flying and the airline will ensure that you are provided with a wheelchair from the check-in counter to the boarding gate, and from the aircraft to the arrivals hall at your destination.

BEFORE YOU FLY

Don't forget to prepare your child for what they will see, hear and what will happen. Airports can be extremely busy and stressful and the more prepared they are, the better.

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Some children benefit from noise cancelling headphones or sunglasses.

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Some children benefit from noise cancelling headphones, or sunglasses to shield some of the bright lights and bustling (and stares from other passengers).

Ensure you pack a range of clothes while travelling. Some areas of airports can be very cold (especially the passenger aid unit), and sometimes planes can be very warm. Be prepared!

Sometimes packing a familiar comfort item such as a soft toy or blanket can help reduce anxiety. Just remember to make sure you don't lose it! Consider tying it to your child's wheelchair in case it gets dropped.

Ensure that your child remains hydrated, especially on long flights. Taking along snacks is also a good distraction, especially if there are delays.

BE EARLY AND CHECKING IN

I recommend always getting to the airport at least two and a half hours early in case there are any parking challenges or overlooked things that take time. You don't want to be rushed.

If you have completed the documentation requiring special assistance, you will not be able to collect your tickets from the online kiosks even if you do not have any check in luggage.

When you get to the airline counter, they will issue you with your boarding pass and tag your wheelchair.

If you have a mobility devices, such as a walker or other mobility aids, to be stored in the hold once you board, they will tag those too.

PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

After you have checked in, the airline will normally arrange for a staff member to either push or accompany you and your child through security and to the boarding gate.

Depending on where your plane is parked, you will either use the skybridge (the tunnel from the airport straight to the door of the plane), or use the passenger assistance unit (PAU) – a small truck will drive you to the door of the plane. There will be a lift with fall protection and guardrails.

If your child is able to walk with support, they can leave their wheelchair or mobility device in the PAU and move to their seats (normally through the rear plane door).

If they are unable to walk, they should be provided with a “slipper chair” – a narrow foldable wheelchair that can move down the narrow aisle and then will be assisted onto their seat.

My husband is not able to use a slipper chair as he doesn't have the ability to hold his torso and will tip over.

Our carer has to carry him from the PAU to his seat, which is why we always like to board first for dignity, but also practical purposes.

There is less chance of a passenger getting an accidentally spasm kick to the head!

I suggest folding your child's wheelchair for the crew or showing them how to fold it as so many chairs fold differently. You can't risk the chair getting damaged.

With a power wheelchair, disconnect the battery and tuck away the wires to minimise the risk of damage. I always take as many items off the wheelchair as possible, such as the removable head rests or chin controls, and push in any moving parts such as footrests.

Remember if your child needs to sit on their pressure cushion, it is much easier to put this on their seat before moving them. Also remember to pull the safety waistbelt out of the way and to extend it as your child may be seated higher due to the cushion.

“

The kinder you are, the better they will listen and do what is best for your child.

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I really encourage you to befriend the crew, both those working on the plane and the support staff. The kinder you are, the better they will listen and do what is best for your child. Every passenger is different, and you really need have them on your side.

It is essential that you communicate the importance of returning the wheelchair to the door of the plane with both the PAU staff and cabin crew otherwise you will not be able to disembark.

The amount of times communication challenges have resulted in my husband's chair being sent to the terminal and him being stranded on the plane are staggering!

Be firm and kind, and take control. Normally, reminding them that this could delay the next flight helps.

MORE TO KEEP IN MIND

It is also important to note that your child is entitled to one mobility aid, such as a wheelchair, crane or crutches, free of charge in addition to their standard baggage allowance.

Your child may not be seated near an Emergency Exit (the entire row). So, be aware of this when booking seats, especially when travelling with family or friends.

If you are flying internationally, take copies of the prescriptions for all medication, especially scheduled medication, as you'll most likely be searched.

Make sure to keep medication in your hand luggage as the last thing you need is for your bags to go missing and you not having your child's medication.

Ensure that any liquid you may need (for example, hand sanitiser) is stored in 100-millilitre clear bottles. We often buy cheap plastic bottles and decant what we need.

We had a big fight with security on a flight to the United Kingdom as my husband's moisturiser, which is needed to massage and prevent pressure sores, was in a 200-millilitre tub.

The more prepared you and your child are, the better things will be. Be assertive and ensure that you have multiple plans if plan A and B doesn't work out. Happy flying! 



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

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LETS PLAY!!!    
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Accessibility for green thumbs

Gardening is good for your health and made more accessible with raised planter boxes

Since putting in my patio deck at my apartment, I've been growing vegetables. I find it so satisfying to successfully harvest veggies and herbs for my own use. However, I've been using low rectangular pots, which means that I need to bend over to plant and tend my garden. I've advised many people about raised bed gardening, but have not got around to sorting myself out.

That was until my fabulous neighbour, who lives above me, approached me to discuss options. Jodi Bieber, **The Veg Auntie**, has an

amazing veggie patch in our main garden and runs an urban edible company that offers advice and guidance for vegetable and herb gardens. She consults, designs, creates and maintains vegetable gardens for people who have busy lives or want to do it themselves.

"Vegetable gardening has given me a sense of calm and connection to nature," Jodi shares. "It's not only about the health benefits. It's about the deeper, feel-good impact it has on everyday life. And that's something I'm excited to share with others through The Veg Auntie."



Her husband Francois Venter makes the containers, and he offered to design and make some planters specifically for my space using some pallet wood and old wooden floorboards that were here at our building as I prefer recycling and reusing wood.

Because of the size and shape of my raised patio, I chose two square boxes with locking castors as the main planters, and a custom-made small table that I can use to place pots on so that they are the correct height for me to be able to plant without bending or work above my shoulder height. They can also be moved to various areas of the patio for sun or shade.

Francois made them up in his workshop and then brought them to my garden so that he could ensure that the centre shelf that holds the soil was shallow enough, and that the castors were fitted so that I am able to lock them. Once completed, he ensured that they would be waterproof by sealing them with linseed oil.

I'm so happy with them as I can turn the boxes around to tend to plants from all sides. As it is winter, I've placed my orchids into the boxes, but I will be planting them with tomatoes, lettuce and onions in the spring.

You can have fresh veggies and herbs wherever you live, even if it is growing herbs



MAIN AND ABOVE: The raised planters built by Francois Venter. Photos by Jodi Bieber.

in small pots or potatoes in a bucket. This gives you organic fresh food and saves money. For more information about The Veg Auntie's services or the handcrafted wooden boxes, please feel free to get in touch at jodi@jodibieber.com.

So, why don't you give it a try... you will be amazed at how much produce you can grow in a small space; how satisfying it is to be able to harvest the results. We will be hosting a webinar with Jodi to get ready for the spring planting. Look out for more information. **R**



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Scaling small, disability-owned businesses

The QPCTSA supports small businesses owned by quadriplegics and paraplegics

The Quadriplegic and Paraplegic Charitable Trust of South Africa (QPCTSA) is on a mission to empower quadriplegic and paraplegic entrepreneurs. One of their most recent beneficiaries, Busiswa Mbizafa will be able to scale up her small business, Artizan Naturals, thanks to their support.

BIRTH OF ARTIZAN NATURALS

Busiswa sustained her disability later in life. She quickly realised there are many challenges with finding employment as a person with a disability.

"This life-changing experience inspired me to start my own business not only as

a way to earn a living, but also to create meaningful opportunities for others in similar circumstances," she shares. So Artizan Naturals were born.

"I've always been passionate about natural remedies and the rich knowledge of indigenous plants in our communities. That passion, combined with my personal journey, led to the birth of Artizan Naturals a company focused on producing quality natural skincare products while uplifting people with disabilities through inclusive economic opportunities," she shares.

"Our flagship product, the Artizan Multi-purpose Wax, is a versatile, plant-based



formula that not only moisturises and protects skin, but also polishes and protects wooden furniture from mould and damage.”

Aside from empowering Busiswa, the company also supports 18 growers with disabilities who supply her with the material needed to make the product range.

“All of our contract growers, both men and women, have disabilities, as does our manufacturing assistant. Together, we’ve created a proudly inclusive and sustainable business,” she adds.

EXPANDING WITH QPCTSA

Managing a small business, especially in a rural area with limited infrastructure, is very challenging. Among the challenges is the limited funding that prevents Busiswa from purchasing the equipment needed to grow her business. So, she reached out to the QPCTSA.

“Thanks to the funding from the QPCTSA, we’ve been able to invest in vital equipment and marketing materials. These tools are essential for scaling the production of our flagship Artizan Multi-purpose Wax,” she notes.

“Additionally, support with marketing materials will help us improve our packaging, product labelling, and promotional materials

MAIN AND ABOVE: Busiswa Mbizafa with her Artizan product range, and her team.

to build trust and visibility in the market,” Busiswa shares.

The QPCTSA shares: “The trustees of the Charitable Trust have full confidence in her ability to be able to grow the business and supply the retail industry with the products when a new machinery is in place to increase her output.”

JUST BEGIN

Busiswa advises other entrepreneurs with disabilities: “Don’t wait for the perfect time. Just begin with what you have. Use your challenges as motivation. Our resilience, creativity, and lived experiences are strengths that can shape powerful businesses.”

“Find mentors, seek support from the right organisations, and never underestimate your own ideas. Small steps build momentum, and every challenge you overcome will shape your story of success.”

If you are a quadriplegic or paraplegic small business owner in need of support to expand your business, reach out to the QPCTSA by visiting their [website](#) or sending an e-mail to aris@africa.com. R

Create, innovate, liberate



With some innovative creations, Andy Smith is making his world more accessible and convenient

With 48 years spent in a power wheelchair, Andy Smith is well versed in the limits that societal barriers create. Yet, rather than accept these limits, he has innovated several creative solutions to overcome barriers, but also make his life more comfortable. We chatted to him to learn more about what he has created.

ROVING WHEELS

A power wheelchair made it impossible for Andy to get onto the beach. He shares: "I had to be pulled backwards in a manual chair and, once on the beach, I would just have to sit in one place as it was not possible to move."

He finally decided to take action! He spent four years designing different attachments that would fit on his wheelchair. He wanted it to be fitted within minutes without getting out of his chair. It had to be light enough so that someone with little upper body strength could also lift and attach it. Finally, it had to be affordable.

"After trying various forms of tracks and wheel extensions with a mechanical engineer, Drikus Joubert, we eventually got this right. I call the attachment 'Roving Wheels' and

have made one for myself and for two other quadriplegics. They are both extremely ecstatic with the attachments and enjoy the freedom of being able to go on the beach and move on their own," he shares.

The attachment forms part of a "beach kit" with a jack and balloon wheels – or golf cart/lawn mower wheels for heavy chairs. You replace the rear wheels of your chair with balloon wheels that have been modified for your chair with a third, swivel balloon wheel attached to the front of the chair.

The third wheel requires a custom bracket, which unfortunately pushes up the price. Making a new, custom attachment will cost around R26 000.

"I have also made up a prototype frame with three balloon wheels. You can attach any manual wheelchair onto the frame to be pushed around on the beach. This will cost around R20 000," Andy shares.

"An unexpected bonus of the front balloon wheel is that when fitted on its own without the rear balloon wheels, it transforms your wheelchair into an amazing off-road chair. I have been over trails with rocks and roots and small wash aways with ease," he adds.



WASUP

Another innovation that has made Andy's life more convenient is his phone charger that plugs into his wheelchair!

"I use my phone a lot and it would often go flat on me, and then I would have to put it on charge somewhere. I thought: 'I have a huge amount of power in my wheelchair batteries. How can I use it to charge my phone?'" he shares.

With his 3D printer, help from his wife and some innovation, he built a USB charger that connects to the charging point of a power wheelchair.

"So the Wheelchair and Scooter USB Port (**WASUP**) was born. The WASUP has other uses than just charging a cell phone. In summer, I plug in a fan to cool me off," he shares. He is selling these chargers for R450.

SNUGGAZZA

To stay warm in the winter, Andy designed a blanket with heating pads that covers his entire chair. He shares: "I have a double layered polar fleece blanket with hood. It covers me and the wheelchair. It has been made with five USB powered heating

pads and this plugs into the WASUP and keeps me warm even on the coldest of days."

RAMPING TO ACCESS

Andy has even designed his own light-weight ramp made from carbon fibre. He notes: "At 600g each side, a wheelchair of 250 kilograms can use it easily to go up a step. I always have at least two sets of ramps in my car."

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This opens up so many places for me as most inaccessible places have just one step.

"This opens up so many places for me as most inaccessible places have just one step and my ramp makes it easily accessible. The world is never going to be 100 percent wheelchair friendly, so my ramps help me to get closer to that," he concludes.

For more information or to purchase any of his innovations, contact Andy at 082 494 9745. **R**

Balancing our needs



With six human needs driving our actions, finding a balance is key to a happy and fulfilled life

Have you ever wondered why people do what they do? What pushes, pulls, or sometimes even breaks us? Whether you have a disability or not, whether you are young or old, rich or broke, we all share the same invisible drivers that shape how we feel and behave.

Anthony Robbins, a well-known personal development coach, explains that every person is driven by six core needs. Not wants, not goals, but needs. These sit behind our habits, decisions, and even our moods.

What I love about this framework is how it applies to all of us, regardless of our circumstances, background, or physical ability.

As a paraplegic and a life coach, I have seen these needs at play in my own life and in the lives of the people I coach. They have helped me to understand what is going wrong and what someone really needs at a deeper level.

Let me unpack these six needs and how they might be showing up in your own life.

FOUR BASICS

The first four are what I call the survival and ego needs. We find ways to meet them no matter what, even if it is not healthy. They are all about having, doing and feeling.

Certainty

This is our need for comfort, safety and stability. We want to feel secure, in our homes, our income, our relationships.

For someone with a disability, certainty might mean knowing your routine, getting reliable care, or simply managing the basics without surprises. However, too much certainty can lead to boredom or a life that feels stuck.

Variety

As strange as it sounds, we also need change, surprise and excitement. Without variety, life becomes dull and lifeless. Some find it in travel, others in challenges or learning something new.

If we do not meet this need in positive ways, we may turn to drama, conflict or risky behaviours to feel alive.

Significance

We all want to feel important, needed, worthy. We want to matter. For those who have lost a job, developed a disability or feel invisible in society, this need can burn deeply.

It might be met by helping others, standing out, or sadly, by acting out or pulling others down, just to feel some sense of identity.

Love and Connection

The need to feel loved, or at least connected, runs deep in every heart. We need to feel like we belong, like someone sees us and cares.

Some will settle for shallow connections out of fear of rejection or simply not knowing how to build deeper bonds.

I know for me this need was tested when I first sustained my disability. It was the love and support of my family, and later my wife Colleen (my PA or Personal Angel), that helps me through the darkest days.

HIGHER NEEDS

The last two needs only begin to emerge when the first four are more or less in balance. They are not about survival. They are about the soul. They are what bring lasting joy and fulfilment.

Sadly, many people never get to these, because they are stuck just trying to cope.

Growth

We need to feel we are growing, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. When we grow, we feel alive. Growth can mean learning something new, gaining insight, becoming stronger through experience or simply becoming a better version of ourselves.

In my own journey, becoming a life coach after my accident was part of my growth. It gave me a sense of purpose and forward motion again.

Contribution

At the deepest level, we want to give. We want to feel that our lives matter beyond ourselves. It could be a kind word, a skill shared, a cause supported.

Contribution does not mean being a hero. It is about reaching beyond your own pain and lifting someone else, even in a small way.

BALANCE IS KEY

All six needs are part of being human. They are not good or bad. They just are. What matters is how we meet them, and whether that leaves us feeling fulfilled or drained.

Life is all about balance. When one or two needs dominate at the cost of the others, we can feel off-centre, frustrated or lost.

Here is something that really hit me. If a behaviour meets three or more of these needs, it becomes addictive. That could be something uplifting, like coaching or volunteering, or something destructive, like substance abuse or toxic relationships.

So, ask yourself: How are you meeting these needs right now? Which ones are being met in a healthy way, and which ones might need attention?

If you feel stuck or empty, chances are one or more of these needs are either unmet or being met in a way that does not truly serve you. The good news is that once you see the pattern, you can choose a better way. It starts with awareness, then comes intention, then action.

Remember, whether you are facing challenges with your health, your identity or your purpose, you are not alone. These needs connect us all, and once you understand them, you begin to understand yourself, and others, in a whole new way. 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



Walking Fashion Week

With the right support, Marlene le Roux walked the runway at the Khayelitsha Fashion Week

My personal story as an empowered woman with a disability reached a significant milestone when I walked the runway at the 8th Khayelitsha Fashion Week held at Artscape, one of the leading fashion events in Cape Town for aspiring local designers and models.

Persons with disabilities often have unique experiences not only shaped by their social environment but also by the nature of their impairment which may present one with significant challenges when it all may seem too much to bear.

Yet, one may find ways to thrive despite one's impairment, through individual coping mechanisms and available support systems.

THE STRUGGLE

For over 57 years, my post-polio dance entailed trauma, constant excruciating pain,

exhaustion, depression, rejection, humiliation, despair, discrimination, and struggle.

A year ago, I underwent a marathon operation (my 12th) to manage my post-polio syndrome. My "healthy" right hip, which I called my "trophy" leg, gradually deteriorated over 50 years of being overworked and over-used as I dragged along a two kilogram calliper on the polio leg (left leg). A gruelling full hip replacement awaited, gripping me with fear of possibly losing my ability to walk independently.

THE SUPPORT

Preparing for this operation I took the decision to consult a psychologist to help me process the unknown and possible outcomes. Looking back, I can safely say it was the best decision I could have taken. I would not have been able to go through with the hip replacement operation without thorough psychological therapy before the operation.



MAIN AND RIGHT: Artscape CEO Marlene le Roux walked the Khayelitsha Fashion Week as a model.

ABOVE: Marlene with Bongani Matenjwa, founder of Khayelitsha Fashion Week.

The Khayelitsha Fashion week gave me the courage to walk the runway without my crutches, draped in the beautiful designs of the highly-talented local creatives. What makes the Khayelitsha Fashion Week stand out for me are the models and aspiring designers who come mostly from the Cape Flats to showcase their skills and talent. There were designers from Delft, Philippi, Langa, Nyanga, Khayelitsha, Parklands and Manenberg.

Participating in this empowering event proves once again that persons with disabilities can reach the sky with the necessary support and opportunities.

However, for many persons with disabilities, these milestones are still far out of reach. The daily struggle continues for them. My personal mission is to use my story of resilience, hope, and access to resources and opportunities to continue championing for the rights of those who are still struggling to reach their full potential and those on the margins of society feeling hopeless and unsupported.

With the necessary resources at my disposal (crucial pre-operative psychological therapy, a good job with supportive staff, a decent salary, a caring husband, support of family and friends together with post-operative therapies and rehabilitation), I am once again able to function at the highest level as a dignified professional with a disability, promoting humanity, dignity, inclusivity, empowerment, creativity, accessibility, freedom of choice and speech and arts for all. **R**

The recovery entailed months of excruciating physiotherapy and rehabilitation for an hour, three times a week, for almost a year to get my muscles working again. At times, rehabilitation took place in the mornings before work!

At one point just lifting my leg or walking seemed daunting until I gained confidence to walk with crutches – a personal milestone I don't take for granted – thanks to the amazing work of physiotherapist Lizaan Tucker who made me believe in my abilities again.

THE WALKWAY

Then, another milestone landed on my desk that I just could not turn down. It was an invitation from the founder of Khayelitsha Fashion Week, Bongani Matenjwa, to walk the runway as a model.

Reflecting on my personal journey, I decided to walk for all women with disabilities who confront pain every day yet boldly face the world and smile, as well as for all people who struggle to get access to opportunities and resources. If these individuals should have access and the necessary support, the sky would be the limit for them!



Outsmarting fatigue with energy-saving strategies

Chronic fatigue can be debilitating, but fortunately, there are ways to reduce the impact of fatigue

For many people, fatigue is more than just “feeling tired”. It’s a chronic, often invisible barrier that affects every part of daily life. Unlike the exhaustion you can sleep off after a long day, fatigue builds up quickly, lingers, and can feel unpredictable.

The good news is that there are practical ways to reduce the impact of fatigue. With the right strategies, you can stretch your energy further, get more done, and most importantly, feel more in control.

Whether your fatigue stems from a medical condition, medications or just the effort of navigating a world that’s not always accessible, these strategies can help.

CONSERVE ENERGY

Use the four P’s of energy conservation:

Prioritise – Ask yourself what needs to be done today; what can wait; and what can be done by someone else. This isn’t about doing less. It’s about doing what matters most to

you (physically and emotionally). That could mean skipping non-essential chores to have energy to meet a friend. Consider making a “must-do” and a “nice-to-do” list at the start of your day.

Plan – Combine tasks where possible. If you’re heading to the kitchen to make tea, bring dishes with you or wipe down the counter while you wait for the kettle to boil. Group errands or activities in the same location. Planning ahead reduces unnecessary movement and saves your energy resources.

Pace – Slow and steady wins the race. Break up larger tasks into small and manageable steps. Ensure to take regular breaks even when you feel “fine”. The trick is to rest before you crash. Overexertion often causes a longer recovery time, and may cost you more tomorrow. A timer or an alarm could be a great tool. Try 25 minutes of activity followed by five to 10 minutes of rest. Adjust this according to your body’s signals.

Position – Modify your environment so that your body doesn't have to work so hard. Keep frequently used items within arm's reach, and use both hands when lifting or carrying items. Consider sitting while cooking or grooming to reduce effort if you can move independent from a wheelchair.

USE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

There is no shame in using assistive devices or adaptations if they help protect your body and extend your energy. Here are some useful aids and adaptations for daily tasks:

- Dressing – A reacher, dressing stick, sock aid or button hook can be useful.
- Showering – Consider a shower chair, grab rails or handheld shower.
- Bedroom – Place essentials within easy reach of your bed and use a bed rail.
- Kitchen – Jar openers, lightweight cookware, electric can openers can assist to conserve energy along with a rolling cart to transport items across the kitchen in one trip or storing daily-use items where they are easily accessible.
- Cleaning – Using lightweight and long-handled tools and wheeled laundry basket as well as spreading chores out across the week instead of cramming them into one day can be helpful.

Remember that these tools do not make you dependent. They make you efficient.

RESPECT YOUR ENERGY RHYTHMS

Everyone has up and down times in their day. Pay attention to when you feel most alert or most drained. Some people are sharpest in the morning and crash by the afternoon. Others may feel sluggish after lunch, but gain energy in the early evening. Use this rhythm to your advantage. Schedule high-effort activities for when you feel most energised, and quieter tasks for your lower-energy periods.

REST IS ESSENTIAL

Rest doesn't equate laziness. It means

recharging your battery so you can keep going. The kind of rest that helps with fatigue is not always sleep. Sometimes it's quiet time, meditation, gentle stretching or a sensory break. Even 10 minutes with your eyes closed, soft music playing or deep breathing can make a difference. Plan for rest like you plan for meals. Put it in your routine, not just as a fallback.

FUEL WISELY

Nutrition and hydration affect your energy just as much as rest and movement. Dehydration, skipped meals or sugary crashes can intensify fatigue. Keep a water bottle nearby. Snack on protein-rich foods like nuts, biltong, yoghurt or boiled eggs. Avoid long gaps between meals. You can also prep energy-friendly snacks at the start of the week so you don't need to scramble on low-energy days.

COMMUNICATE YOUR LIMITS

It can be hard to say "no" or ask for help, especially when your fatigue isn't visible. However, communicating your needs clearly helps others to support you and protects your energy reserves. Try phrases like: "I'd love to join, but I'll need to rest partway through"; "I'm managing my energy today, so I can only stay an hour"; or "Can we do a seated activity instead?".

SMARTER WAY TO LIVE

Fatigue may always be part of your life, but it doesn't have to control it. Living with chronic fatigue doesn't mean giving up on independence or enjoyment. It means being strategic; learning when to push, when to pause and how to shape your environment and habits so they support you rather than drain you.

The goal isn't to "keep up" with others. It's to keep going on your own terms. Try just one new strategy this week and notice how your body responds. Small changes can lead to big breakthroughs over time. 



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 shining light from the darkest depths

Amos Mzimeli overcame the heartbreak and harrowing aftermath of a catastrophic rugby injury to become a beacon of hope

As a lively, talented 18-year-old, Amos Mzimeli's life was forever changed during a rugby game in Mooiplaas in the Eastern Cape on 20 May 1990. He recalls: "I was still in school at the time, playing for the school and my local club. I was playing flank and captained Moonlight Rugby Club's first team that day."

"I was carrying the ball and as I was about to take contact, I lost my balance because of the bad ground we were playing on. My opponent and I ended up having a head-to-head collision and I broke my neck."

Amos said the support of the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund was particularly crucial in the early, most difficult days.

"I went into a deep depression after the injury. It hit me that I would never walk or be able to

use my hands again and I felt like my life was over. The Fund has helped me in many ways. They helped me out of that dark period, and helped put some food on the table during that time."

"If they weren't part of my life, I would probably have passed away years ago. It's so comforting to know you have their support and that support goes a long way to help you make something of your life," he shares.

Having made an all-important mental shift, Amos completed his schooling and earned a diploma in computer literacy. In 2000, he tied the knot and has three children, including a set of twins.

Fully embracing life, he became a shining light in Soto village, situated near Haga Haga in the Eastern Cape, by project-managing

the concept and building of the Great Kei Disability Multipurpose Centre with the help of Lottery funding.

"Because of what I went through, I decided to do something for others with disabilities," he explained. "In doing research, I went from village to village and it was shocking to find out that most people with disabilities were either physically, emotionally or sexually abused, as well as neglected."

"In many cases, the government grants that the person with a disabilities receives are being spent by other family members, while many parents didn't bother trying to educate their children. They believe people with disabilities are useless."

"Instead of wheelchairs, some were being pushed in wheelbarrows and others were being carried on a mattress. It was terrible to discover these things. With the support of partners and sponsors, we were able to purchase 15 wheelchairs, including four electric ones," Amos explains.

The Centre opened in 2014 and continues to go from strength to strength with Amos as the key figure. He shares: "We started with 24 beneficiaries and we now have 147. The local municipality built us a beautiful facility with an office, classes, a hall, and a kitchen."

"We offer learnership programmes and we have programmes that employ people with disabilities. Our main activities are entrepreneurship, computer studies, beadwork arts and crafts, sewing, awareness campaigns, advocacy and public education, family support services, home-based care services, psycho-social support, self-help groups and sport," he adds.

"Last year, we successfully recruited 37 beneficiaries into our Cellphone Repair Skills programme. This initiative aimed to equip

them with practical skills for self-employment opportunities. This year, we've expanded our reach and recruited 50 beneficiaries who are currently participating in the Receptionist Skills Programme."

The community pillar was invited by the Japan International Cooperation Agency to attend its world-class workshops in Japan and Thailand in 2019, which he described as an opportunity of a lifetime.

"Representing South Africa as one of nine countries was an honour for me and it was a great experience. I learned a great deal about independent living," says a proud and grateful Amos.

His wonderful work hasn't gone unnoticed. He's earned a number of accolades, including a Local Hero award from the Daily Dispatch in 2019 and a service excellence award in 2020.

"The awards I've received are wonderful. I love the work that I do. It's extremely rewarding," he notes.

The Centre received a Lottery grant last year, which was a Godsend, as it enabled them to purchase 10 wheelchairs, solar panels, sewing machines and security cameras. However, further funding is required to help them continue their mission of empowering individuals with disabilities.

"We have dedicated voluntary caregivers who are working tirelessly to help beneficiaries. We are looking for funding to support the Centre in various areas, including training beneficiaries and operating costs. Funding will mean a lot not only to the Centre but to the communities at large," he pleads.

Businesses and individuals who are interested in supporting the Centre are urged to contact Amos on 078 091 4041. **R**



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



Handcycling on the wild side

The thrill of off-road handcycling is perfect for adventure seekers

For those who crave adventure, fresh air, and a little mud on the tyres, few things match the thrill of off-road handcycling. It's fast. It's rugged. Most importantly, it's inclusive.

Adaptive Sports Fund recently hosted an unforgettable day on the trails, proving that freedom and adrenaline can go hand in hand for riders of all abilities.

The event was made possible thanks to Gabriel, who generously lent us a Lasher Sport All-Terrain Handcycle – a high-performance, off-road machine designed to handle the toughest terrain.

With its low centre of gravity, stable frame, and custom-built steering and braking system, the Lasher is built for adventure. For many participants, it was their first taste of all-terrain handcycling and the excitement was infectious.

"There's nothing like flying down a trail with the wind in your face and your hands on the grips," said one participant. "For a moment,

you forget about what you can't do and focus entirely on what you can."

Hosted at the stunning Taroko Trail Park in Modderfontein, the venue couldn't have been more perfect. Nestled in natural surroundings and packed with winding forest trails, dirt tracks, and sweeping views, Taroko provided a challenging but accessible course that tested both skill and endurance.

The team at Taroko made every effort to support our needs, and we extend our sincere thanks for their warm hospitality and inclusive mindset.

Off-road handcycling offers more than just a physical workout. It's an emotional release. It gives riders a rare sense of freedom and independence, especially for those who have limited access to the outdoors.

The adaptive cycling movement continues to grow. With the right support, equipment, and attitude, the barriers to participation are getting smaller every day.



A huge shout-out goes to our incredible sponsors Verder, Joey Evans, and the STM team whose support helps us continue doing what we love, getting more people with disabilities outdoors and active.

Without their generosity, events like this wouldn't be possible. With their help, we were able to introduce a new wave of participants to adaptive handcycling, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

As always, Adaptive Sports Fund is committed to creating inclusive opportunities that empower, uplift, and inspire. Whether it's on water, snow, or in the mud, we believe sport has the power to change lives – and off-road handcycling is one of the most thrilling ways to prove it.

If you've never experienced the thrill of an all-terrain handcycle, we encourage you to come along to one of our upcoming rides. Adventure is waiting and so is that first exhilarating moment when your hands take control, your wheels spin, and you realise you're chasing freedom at full speed. **R**



Jeffrey Yates writes for the [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.

Get in touch: info@adaptivesportsfund.org



National wheelchair rugby team roars back to life

The national team rebuilds momentum by re-entering the international stage with eyes on Paralympic qualification

After a decade-long hiatus, the South African Wheelchair Rugby (SA WCR) national team is gearing up to make a splash on the international stage once again. The team has recently been rezoned from the Asia-Oceania Conference into Europe Division C, joining forces with top-notch competitors from Norway, Finland, Ireland and Austria. This move marks a new chapter in SA WCR's journey as they aim to make a lasting impact in the division and work their way up to Paralympic qualification.

WWR Europe Division C refers to the third division of the European Wheelchair Rugby Championship. It's a developmental

division, representing the starting point on the pathway for European teams aiming to compete at the World Championships and Paralympic Games.

The last time the SA WCR National Team competed internationally was at the 2015 Wheelchair Rugby World Challenge held in London, England, at the Copper Box Arena, playing against the likes of wheelchair rugby top eight heavyweights: Great Britain, Australia, the United States, Canada, Japan, France, and New Zealand.

The SA WCR national team is determined to leave its mark on Europe Division C. With a

fresh perspective and renewed energy, the athletes are focused on showcasing their skills and pushing the boundaries of what's possible in wheelchair rugby. This high-intensity sport demands speed, strength, and strategy, making it an exhilarating spectacle for fans and a thrilling challenge for competitors.

National Coach, Gary Burnard, a professional bio kineticist and coach of TUKS Wheelchair Rugby, is hard at work with a variety of high-performance training and conditioning measures to help the national side reach its full potential. This includes strength training, agility drills, and game-specific conditioning to ensure the athletes are physically and mentally prepared for the challenges ahead.

EUROPE COMPETITION LOADING

The 2025 WWR European Division C Championship event will be held from October 9 to 12 in Skien, Norway, at the Skien Fritidspark multi-purpose stadium. If successful in their aspirations to win the event, the SA WCR National Team will earn an opportunity to play in Europe Division B in 2026 – one league tier away from competing for Paralympic qualification.

"It's a long and difficult journey to get South Africa to the Paralympics, but we are committed and training hard to get South Africa onto the world's biggest stage for wheelchair rugby. We really do believe we can win Division C this year. We have the talent and the experience," says Bennie Erasmus, Chairperson of SA WCR.

VETERAN ATHLETES RETURN

A group of seasoned South Africa wheelchair rugby athletes are getting back in the saddle for national service, including Jared McIntyre, Okkie Anker, Clyde Holland, Bennie Erasmus, Bonga Khumalo, and Yolande Oosthuisen. These capped athletes bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the



MAIN PHOTO: 2025 SA WCR National Training camp with Great Britain frontman Stuart Robinson.

ABOVE LEFT: 2025 SA WCR National Training camp where athletes gear up for the international stage.

team, and their return will undoubtedly bolster the team's chances of success.

THRIVING NATIONAL LEAGUE

The SA WCR national league has experienced a major resurgence post-Covid, with energy levels skyrocketing as the prospect of international competition draws near. This renewed enthusiasm will undoubtedly translate to the team's performances on the field, as they look to make a lasting impression on the European stage. Visit the SA WCR website to keep up with the national league schedule www.sawcr.co.za.

GRATEFUL FOR SUPPORT

The SA WCR national team extends a special thank you to the Wiele 500 organisation for their invaluable assistance in securing sponsors. This support will undoubtedly play a crucial role in the team's success as they navigate the competitive landscape of international wheelchair rugby.

More help is needed! Help us to help our guys and gals in green and gold. If you want to get involved as a national team sponsor, please contact SA WCR at admin@sawcr.co.za. 



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 [@SAWheelchairRugby](https://www.facebook.com/SAWheelchairRugby).

Get in touch: admin@sawcr.co.za



Desired far beyond the physical

Acknowledging that you can still be desirable to your partner even when your body looks and operates different is key to sexual confidence

Sexual self-esteem and body image are deeply intertwined with our sense of identity, confidence, and connection with others.

After a spinal cord injury (SCI), these aspects can be profoundly affected. Changes in mobility, sensation, and appearance may challenge pre-existing beliefs about attractiveness and desirability.

However, sexual confidence is not solely dependent on physical function. It is built through self-perception, emotional connection and redefining what it means to be a sexual being.

While many discussions around SCI and sexuality focus on mechanics, an equally

important journey is learning to see yourself as sexually desirable again.

REDEFINING ATTRACTIVENESS

One of the first psychological hurdles after an SCI is shifting the way you define attractiveness. Society often equates desirability with physical ability, symmetry, and conventional standards of beauty.

When SCI alters aspects of appearance or bodily function, it can lead to feelings of insecurity or detachment from one's sexual self.

Many people struggle with seeing their body as "broken" or "less than" what it was before. However, sexual attractiveness is far more complex.

Confidence, personality and emotional connection play a massive role in desirability, sometimes more than physical traits alone. The way you feel about yourself directly influences how others perceive you.

AVOIDING COMPARISON

The role of social comparison is also significant in shaping body image. It is natural to compare yourself to others, but unrealistic comparisons – especially to able-bodied ideals can erode self-worth.

Social media and mainstream portrayals of beauty often fail to include diverse bodies, leaving people with disabilities feeling invisible.

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Social media and mainstream portrayals of beauty often fail to include diverse bodies, leaving people with disabilities feeling invisible.

Surrounding yourself with diverse and realistic representations of beauty, including people with SCI embracing their sexuality, can help shift perspective.

Engaging with SCI communities, disability-positive media, and individuals who confidently own their sexuality can be incredibly validating.

REVISITING PARTNER DYNAMICS

Partner dynamics also influence sexual self-esteem. Some people worry about

whether their partner will still find them attractive or whether they can meet their partner's needs. Open communication is essential. Desire is rarely just about physical ability.

Emotional connection, trust, and creativity in intimacy are just as important. Many partners report that intimacy deepens after an SCI because it encourages greater emotional vulnerability and communication.

When dating, confidence plays an important role in attracting potential partners. People are drawn to those who are comfortable with themselves and embracing your sexuality can make a profound difference in how you engage with others.

Ultimately, sexual self-esteem after SCI is about redefining attractiveness on your own terms. It is a process of self-acceptance, exploration and shifting focus from loss to possibility.

Confidence is not about what your body can or cannot do, it is about owning your worth as a sexual, desirable person. [R](#)

Charis is a psychology practice that specialises in the physical rehabilitation field.



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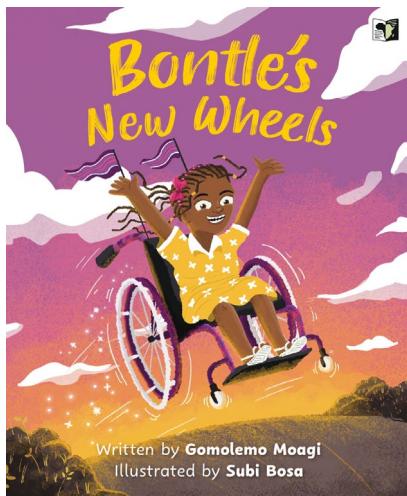
Contact us at www.charispsychology.co.za/contact/



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

Representing children in chairs



Gomolemo Moagi has written a children's book story centred around a young girl in a wheelchair. The story focuses on how her wheelchair is key to her independence.

The book is available to purchase from several independent book stores, including [New Africa Books](#), [Clarke's Bookshop](#) and [The Book Lounge](#), for R165. **R**



Catch the Superman Documentary on Showmax

Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story is currently streaming on [Showmax](#).

It takes a deep dive into the life of actor Christopher Reeve who became famous for his portrayal of Clark Kent/Superman before a horse-riding accident left him paralysed from the neck down.

Following his injury, Christopher became an advocate for disability rights and care.

The documentary has already won several awards with four Emmy nominations. You can view the [trailer here](#). **R**

2025 Events Calendar

ADAPTIVE GAMING WEBINAR 7 AUGUST 2025

Gamers are encouraged to join the Adaptive Gaming webinar on 7 August 2025 at 5 PM to learn more about the adaptive technology available. Register [here](#).

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.

SA WCR 2025 LEAGUE TOURNAMENT 3 29 – 31 AUGUST 2025

South Africa Wheelchair Rugby (SA WCR) will host its third league tournament in Bloemfontein in August. Contact admin@sawcr.co.za to volunteer or visit the [website](#) for more information.

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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