

# ROLLING INSPIRATION

ISSUE 2 2021

The leading magazine for people with mobility impairments

[www.madefor more.org.za](http://www.madefor more.org.za)



## PARA SURFERS MAKE WAVES

The KZN Para Surfing Championships draws record numbers

## ADDRESSING PARTNER TRAUMA

Dealing with the aftermath of an SCI

## WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE

Keeping your wheelchair happy



# WORK READINESS PROGRAMME

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

## ARE YOU A WHEELCHAIR USER SEEKING EMPLOYMENT?

The QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) facilitates a Work Readiness Programme nationwide that provides two months of soft skills training.

The QASA Work Readiness Programme bridges the gap between unemployment and employment which is a great stepping stone to gain independence.

## AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE

The programme is now available online, nationwide. Participants are provided all the hardware and software required to complete the programme.

## MODULES

- Stress management;
- Business Ethics;
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- Operate as a project team member;
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- Managing finances for new venture;
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT QASA  
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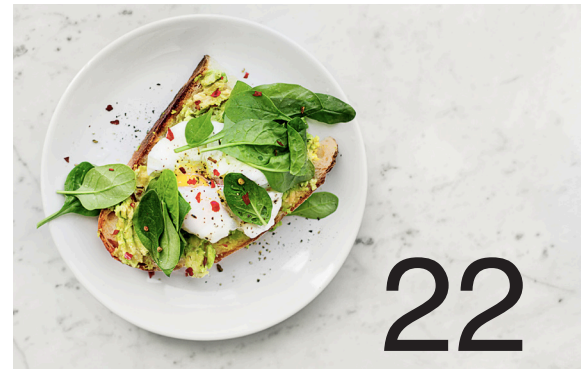
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Cover photo Dave Nisbet.



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# THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY CONTINUES

While the end of the COVID-19 pandemic is in sight with the roll out of the vaccine, the fight for equal rights and access is not yet over. **RAVEN BENNY** looks at the need for priority vaccination among quadriplegics and paraplegics

**L**ast year, around this time, the concern for many people with disabilities was to ensure they receive equal access to healthcare amid the pandemic. Many quadriplegics and paraplegics take immunosuppressors and have co-morbidities or other complications that place them at a higher risk of falling severely ill with the COVID-19 virus.

At the time, ventilators were limited and the concern was that quadriplegics and paraplegics would not be considered a priority for this care. To quote from the interview that George Louw conducted with Dr Virginia Wilson, the chairperson of the Southern African Spinal Cord Association and the South African Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine:

*“The use of these scores helps the decision making in truly difficult situations. The triage considers availability of resources. A quadriplegic may require ventilation for a much longer period, denying a scarce resource, the ventilator, to others. In a disaster one must do the best for the most.”* (Dr Wilson, *Rolling Inspiration*, Issue 3 of 2020)


Although the pandemic was not without its obstacles, we were able to push for justice, inclusion and access.

However, now a new challenge has dawned on us. With limited vaccines in South Africa and a roll out plan that (according to current estimations) can take decades, a new fight begins: The one to ensure people with disabilities receive priority vaccinations.

Fortunately, we have organisations like the QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) that can assist with advocating on behalf of its members. In February, QASA reached out to the Department of Health to state its case in securing priority vaccinations for people with disabilities. To quote from my letter to the department:

*“Now that the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines have begun, we feel that persons with disabilities and their carers should be included as a priority. Many of us have comorbidities and difficulties in accessing services due to the fear of exposure to COVID-19.”*

The department has heeded our call and we are currently in discussions to ensure quadriplegics and paraplegics in South Africa receive priority vaccinations.

While the fight for access and equality never truly ends for people with disabilities, we can take comfort in and celebrate the small wins that help the greater good. If we stand together, we can achieve great things. 




Raven Benny has been a C5, 6 and 7 quadriplegic since 2000. He is married and has five children, is mad about wheelchair rugby and represented South Africa in 2003 and 2005. He relocated from Cape Town to Durban, where he was appointed the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of QASA from August 1, 2019. email: [coo@qasa.co.za](mailto:coo@qasa.co.za).



**ABOVE:** In March, Transnet donated bottlecaps and bread tags to QASA for its Breadtags to Wheelchairs campaign.

## ORIENTATION FOR MARCH WRP CANDIDATES

On Wednesday, March 10, QASA and Shree Institute hosted an orientation for the first intake of Work Readiness Programme candidates on the accredited programme. Classes began on March 11 and will run till June.

QASA is already accepting application for its next programme. To apply, send your CV to [projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za](mailto:projectcoordinator@qasa.co.za) or enquire about the project on 031 767 0352. 


## BEANIE DONATION

QASA NEWS



**ABOVE:** One of the patients at Hillcrest receiving their beanie curtesy of Beetle Inc.

QASA received a generous donation of beanies, scarves and socks from Beetle Inc. The items were knitted or crocheted by a group which is coordinated by Debra Sadler, the financial manager at Beetle Inc.


QASA delivered the items to Hillcrest hospital to be distributed among the elderly to wear and keep warm this winter. A big thank you to Debra and the Beetle Inc team for taking care of their community. 

## BUSINESSES ENCOURAGED TO HIRE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



**ABOVE** (from the left): QASA recruitment officer, Dhaneshree Naidoo, and QASA COO, Raven Benny, addressing businesses during the online employment workshop.

QASA hosted an online employment workshop on February 26. Business owners, HR managers and recruitment agencies were in attendance to learn more about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.

During the event, QASA highlighted how its programme offered tremendous value to businesses by upskilling people with disabilities with no placement or recruitment fee. Speakers pointed to the value proposition or advantages of employing people with disabilities; what reasonable accommodation entails; and the employment equity policies that guides employers on employing a person with a disability. 



# PARA SURFERS MAKE WAVES



With beach wheelchairs, waxed boards and rash vests, some brave individuals with disabilities participated in the KwaZulu-Natal Para Surfing Championships hosted by Made for More

Nothing quite matches the feeling of catching a wave. When your board is picked up and pushed out by the ocean on a wave that sends you gliding over the water. Salt sprayed with the white wash. With the help of Made for More, people with disabilities can enjoy this feeling through para surfing or adaptive surfing.

Made for More is a sport, mental health and disability non-profit organisation that is headlining adaptive surfing in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province.

Similar to traditional surfing, individuals paddle out into the ocean and ride waves back to the shore on a surfboard. However, small adjustments are made to accommodate the disability. The surfer might stand, kneel or lie down on the board. They might require assistance in the water with paddling in or turning around the board, and surfers might make modifications to the board so that it is safer for to use.

Para surfers can participate in a number of categories including: Standing or kneeling for upper limb or below-the-knee amputees; Kneeling for above-the-knee amputees; Visually impaired/blind; Upright or wave-ski (in which the individual is seated on the board); Prone (in which the athlete is lying face-down on the board propped up by their elbows or holding onto a strap); and assist.

**MAIN PHOTO:** The winners of the Women's Prone Assist Division pose with the Made For More staff who made the event possible. Photo by Dave Nisbet.



**ABOVE:** Derick Sigwebela and Amuri Mwanza at the KZN Para Surfing Championships. Photo by Seth Coyne.

On Saturday, March 27, Made for More hosted the KZN Para Surfing Championships at Addington Beach, Durban. The clouds parted just in time for 34 athletes to take to the waters. More adaptive surfers attended this provincial event than the 26 athletes from across South Africa who participated in the 2019 national championship.

According to Made for More: “These numbers show how much the sport is growing in KZN and in our country at large.” The organisation hopes to see even more athletes at the national championship in May of this year.

Among the surfers who participated in the KZN Para Surfing Championships were four national athletes. Tracy McKay is a globally ranked surfer. She currently holds second in the world in the Prone Unassist division. Last year, Tracy competed in the 2020 World Para Surfing

“The organisation hopes to see even more athletes at the national championship in May of this year.”

Championship. It was her first time appearing at the competition.

The 2020 World Para Surfing Championship was held in La Jolla, California, United States, on March 11 to 15 – before the COVID-19 pandemic struck and national lockdowns were enforced. At the event, Tracy claimed a silver medal in the Women’s Prone 1 – a division for surfers who lie on their boards, paddle out and catch waves without assistance).

Sabelo Ngema, who also attended the world championships and provincial competition, is ranked seventh globally in the Visual Impairment 2 division.

At the KZN Para Surfing Championships, Tracy placed first while Sabelo came second in their respective divisions. Also in attendance was Caleb Swanepoel and Erynn Geddie. Both placed first in their respective divisions.

Among the other athletes, there are some deserving notable mentions. Jodie Kroone was a newcomer at the event. She surprised the crowd and herself by absolutely dominating in her division. She won in the hotly contested prone assist women’s division.

David Williams, Amuri Mwanza, Krishiv Katuwaro, Oliver Sinclair, Danito Mondlane, Douglas Hendrikz and Sean Thompson were also newly crowned KZN Para Surfing Champions. Each para surfer out manoeuvred the competition to win gold in their division.

Aside from the skilled and competitive, there were many who took to the waters for the very first time to surf. Guided and supported by an excellent water-assist team, the joy felt by these first-time surfers was tangible and visible on their faces. Future para surfers in the making!






**RIGHT:** The internationally ranked and silver medalist, Tracy McKay, participated in the Prone Unassist Division at the KZN Para Surfing Championships where she placed first. Photo by Seth Coyne.

The athletes were undoubtedly grateful to Julia van Zyl, founder and director of Made for More, the rest of the Made for More team, the organisers, volunteers, sponsors and supporters who made the day possible.

The South African Para Surfing Championships will be hosted at the New Pier beach in Durban, KZN, from May 28 to 30. Registration for the event is open and available up until May 15. There is a R250 registration fee. There is an option to participate in the “beginner expression session”, which is solely for surfers who would like to have fun rather than compete.

For enquiries about the event, contact Made for More on [julia@madeformore.org.za](mailto:julia@madeformore.org.za). For enquiries about the classification, contact [info@helenmillson.com](mailto:info@helenmillson.com).

Made for More hosts various other fun activities for people with disabilities. Visit their website (<https://madeformore.org.za>) or Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/madeformoresa/>) for more information and updates.

Good luck to all the surfers who plan to participate in the South African Para Surfing Championships and congratulations to all the athletes who placed first in their division. 



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# BOOSTING: RISKING LIVES TO STROKE EGOS

The practice of self-induced Autonomic Dysreflexia or Boosting is illegal, but also extremely dangerous. **GEORGE LOUW** investigates

Since the beginning of time there have been those who put their lives on the line. Some do it for a cause; like soldiers. When the cause is good, we call them heroes. When it is perceived to be bad, they are called villains...

Some do it for the sheer exhilarating joy of the rush; mountaineering, extreme sport and rowing across the Atlantic, to name but a few.

But then, there are those who place their lives on the line to stroke their egos. The driving need is to outperform, to win at all costs. It sucks the joy out of the action and they become slaves to their egos. These ego-driven fanatics often become dopers, using forbidden performance-enhancing chemicals to push their bodies beyond its natural limits.

In the spinal cord injury (SCI) community, ego has found another source of “extra energy”; self-induced Autonomic Dysreflexia. This has become popularised under the term “Boosting”.

With the upcoming Paralympics, boosting is possibly on the minds of many athletes; to be selected for the team as well as to excel in their events. Even though it is illegal and, if found out, they face expulsion, there are still those who will push their luck and put their lives on the line; boosting for the glory of winning. The enjoyment of the Games is sacrificed for the sake of their egos...

So, let's first explore the Autonomic Nervous

System (ANS) and Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD).

The Somatic Nervous System links the muscles to the brain, allowing the muscles and the brain to talk to one another. It facilitates power, coordination and voluntary movement. It gets us going.

The ANS on the other hand manages the body's support systems. It regulates the input of energy according to the immediate needs of the body – more energy in times of action and less in times of rest. It regulates the body temperature according to need – it dissipates heat when the body is using a lot of energy and it retains body heat when it is cold outside.

It regulates blood pressure and the flow of blood through the body. It also regulates the digestion of food and the disposal of waste through the kidneys and the bowel.

In an SCI, the vertebral level of the injury and the extent of the injury to the ANS will have varying impacts on the function of the kidneys, the bowels and temperature regulation. But injuries above the sixth thoracic vertebra can also lead to Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) – an abnormal overreaction of the ANS to painful or uncomfortable stimuli below the level of the lesion.

AD “scrambles” blood pressure and heart rate regulation (and also temperature regulation). This can present as excessively high, fluctuating blood pressures, pounding headaches, excessive

sweating and other symptoms that relate to the ANS.

So, in a nutshell, the damaged ANS reacts to uncomfortable or unpleasant stimuli in a haphazard and disorganised manner. A broken response by a broken system. The danger is that, over and above feeling very sick and uncomfortable, it can also lead to strokes and sudden death. Imagine going from an active, sport-loving, highly competitive Paralympic athlete to becoming an SCI with a stroke...

So, now that we have covered the ANS and AD, let's explore the concept and practice of Boosting.

It is the intentional induction of AD to enhance performance. The result is a dramatic increase in blood pressure just before a competitive event.

The background to Boosting is that athletes with SCIs above T6 cannot regulate their blood pressure and heart rates in the same way as other athletes. Consequently, a wheelchair athlete's heart rate and blood pressure does not respond according to the demands that the competition places on the athlete. It stays low.

This compromises the increase in oxygen uptake that is so necessary in sport. Performance is therefore lower and endurance reduced.

Boosting bumps up the blood pressure, improves blood flow to working muscles and, in so doing, improves oxygen supply to the muscles. So, more energy, better performance and greater endurance.

But, as with life, it is not that simple. The ANS is damaged and messing with damaged systems, more often than not, has serious consequences.

Autonomic Dysreflexia is *not* a stable, consistent increase in blood pressure and heart rate. It fluctuates. This is where the danger lies. If the athlete's blood pressure spikes significantly during a moment of intense strain, it can cause an artery in the brain to pop.

As with a balloon that bursts, it only needs a fraction of a second for an artery to pop. That fraction of a second can change your life for ever...

But let's step away from the scary talk and have a look at what these boosters actually do to induce

“Even though it is illegal, there are still those who will push their luck.”


AD. In their minds, it is really quite simple: AD is a response to a painful or uncomfortable situation. So, cause pain or discomfort and Bob's your Uncle! Increased energy! The logic is mind boggling. Here are some examples of what they do:

- They clamp urinary catheters to produce bladder distension. Imagine taking a tumble with your chair and rupturing an overfull bladder.
- Excessive tightening of leg straps. Non-functioning bones have a tendency to become osteoporotic. So, again imagine taking a tumble and breaking a leg.
- Sitting on your own testicles – obviously a male thing.
- Breaking a big toe. This defies comment.

All of the above methods are somewhat crazy, but a thought to hold onto is: “If boosting is not controlled, someone will die.”

Life is there to be enjoyed and to add value and joy to the lives of others. There lies true fulfilment. Life is not about proving a point. That is ego-talk and it saps the joy out of life. Boosting, as with doping, turns us into criminals.

We start lying, we distrust, we become defensive and we become paranoid. The goals that we strive for become our slave masters. Is it worth it? Is the prize worth the deceit? Is it a life worth living?

So, to the Paralympic athletes: Go to the Olympic Games as you are. Compete according to your natural abilities. Make new friends as you go along. If you *do* happen to win gold, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you achieved it honestly and with integrity. 



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

# RENEWING TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

After a year in lockdown, there might be some of your important travel documents that have expired. **MANDY LATIMORE** investigates the renewal process

**W**ith the current lockdown and travel restrictions we may be remiss in checking the expiry date of various travel documents from passports to vehicle licences. It is much cheaper to apply for a renewal of your driver's licence, vehicle licence and passport while they are still valid than to let them expire.

In some instances, you might need to retake your driver's test or put the vehicle through a roadworthy test in order to renew the licences – a very expensive venture.

## DRIVER'S LICENCES

During the 2020 lockdown, the government recognised the large backlog that would occur with regards to renewals and applications for licences. The following was decided:

“All licences and professional driving permits that were due to expire between 26 March 2020 and 31 December 2020 have had their validity periods extended to 31 August 2021” as per Gazette 43958, 3 December 2020.

To renew your driver's licence you should apply at least four weeks before the expiry date. If you apply after the date, you will need to also apply for a temporary licence at an extra cost. With the temporary licence, you can still drive

while you wait for your licence to be processed, which can take up to six weeks.

You won't have to redo the driving test, but you do need to have your eyes tested at an optometrist and submit the report with your documentation at the licence testing centre. You can have your eyes tested at the centre, but this takes much longer. With COVID, it is also advisable to have it done at an optometrist where there is less contact with other people. There are many optometrists who are designated for licence tests that offer the service free of charge.

The renewal form is available online on the government website at <https://onlinenatis.gov.za>. Download the DL1 Application for renewal of driver's licence card form.

Once you've completed the form, you need to take it, your eye test report, your original and a copy of your ID (or a valid South African passport), the old driver's licence, four black and white photos, proof of residence (for example, a utility bill or levy statement), and the prescribed fee in cash.

If you live in an informal settlement, you can take along a letter with an official date stamp from your ward councillor confirming your residential address.

## VEHICLE LICENCES

These licences are renewable every 12 months.

You need to renew it before the expiry date or you will be liable for penalties and arrears. You do get a 21-day grace period after the expiry date stated on your licence disk.

To renew this licence you need the following documentation: An ID document or valid South African passport; proof of address (a utility bill in your name or a letter from your ward councillor for an informal settlement); and a completed MVL2 renewal notice form or the completed AVL form.

It is also advisable to take along the green form that you received the previous year as it contains all the relevant technical information about your vehicle. You might need to complete the form at the post office or licencing department. Remember to also bring the necessary fees. The post office counters only accept cash.

## PASSPORTS

Currently passport holders can't renew their passports. They need to apply for a new one once the current passport reaches its expiry date. If you are planning to travel, it is best to apply for a new passport before the current passport expires so that you have the new one processed and available before you travel.

You are able to apply for a temporary travel document in an emergency, but many countries do not accept these documents as valid travel documentation. You'll therefore have to confirm whether the country accepts temporary documents before travelling.

Tourist passports are issued to persons over the age of 16 years, which is valid for 10 years. Passports for children under the age of 16 are only valid for five years. When applying for your first passport, you need a South African ID number.

When travelling, your passport needs to be valid for at least another 30 days after your return

date. In other words, on the day that you return to South Africa, your passport should still be valid for 30 days. To travel, there needs to be at least two blank pages for entry and exit stamps. If you need a visa, there needs to be two blank pages facing each other: one for the visa and one for the entry stamp.


To apply for a passport, the following documents need to be completed and submitted:

- A completed passport application form: DHA-73;
- An original ID document or birth certificate, if under the age of 16, with copies of the documents;
- The existing passport, if it is expiring, or a loss report if it has been stolen (DHA-335) with a confirmation letter indicating that the loss was reported to the police;
- Two colour photos that comply with the ID and passport specifications; and
- The prescribed fee.

If the person is under the age of 18 years, they also need a parental consent letter for issuing the passport.

Passport return times can vary between two weeks to two months, depending on whether you submit at a smart card office and the current backlog. There are now mini home affairs offices within the various big banks that assists persons with disabilities as the standard home affairs offices are often not accessible.

Of course, there are always private companies who will submit and collect on your behalf, but this process can be expensive and take much longer.

So, if you are planning a much needed break from your home, go dig out all your documents and check their dates before booking. Be sure to renew before they expire to save you time and money. Happy travels! 



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



## MAKING THE MOST OF A GOOD OPPORTUNITY

After a life altering rugby injury, Furlo Theron makes the most of a good opportunity. The Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund shares the story of hope

In November of last year, Tori Gardner, the marketing manager for the Players' Fund, visited the Fund beneficiary, Furlo Theron, at his home in Abbotsdale near Malmesbury in the Western Cape. She was joined by Springbok Rugby World Cup winner and World Rugby's men's 15 Player of the Year 2019, Pieter Steph du Toit.

At the time of Furlo's injury in July 2016, he was a multi-talented sportsman with a passion for most competitive ball games. He excelled on the cricket pitch representing Boland cricket in the under 11 (U11), U13, U16 and U19 age groups.

He was also a very keen golfer. He took any opportunity he could get to play a round with his friends. Being fit and well-conditioned for his sporting activities was always a top priority for Furlo. He was known for always doing so with a

smile and a well-timed joke.

A freak accident on the rugby field in St Helena Bay ended his sporting career. Life as he knew it changed dramatically. During the first half of a match, a tackle resulted in him sustaining a spinal injury that left him completely paralysed and reliant on a wheelchair for mobility. Suddenly, he faced a future for which no one could have prepared him.

The Players' Fund joined Furlo on his journey very shortly after the accident. They paid him a number of visits while he was undergoing rehabilitation at the Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital in Pinelands in Cape Town.

During these difficult days, despite all the scary changes that were occurring in his world, Furlo's sense of humour, determined character and friendly nature shone through. He displayed



**MAIN PHOTO:** (From the left) Furlo Theron receiving his new laptop from the Players' Fund shortly before starting his digital marketing course. He is accompanied by Tori Gardner, the marketing manager for the Players' Fund, and Pieter Steph du Toit, Springbok Rugby World Cup winner.

**ABOVE:** Furlo was an avid cricketer (photo from Facebook).

**LEFT:** Furlo enjoyed rugby. However, an injury on the field changed his life forever (photo from Facebook).

incredible bravery when invited to attend the Cell C Sharks Captain's run at DHL Newlands only two months after the accident.

It was his first trip out of hospital in a new wheelchair and in his "new body". All those around him could see the reality of the situation sinking in, however he attended the practice flanked by his supportive and loving family. He was revered as a "hero" and an "inspiration" for his determined positivity by all the Cell C Sharks players who met him.

After returning to his home in Abbotsdale, Furlo started working with Jo Dolphin – a local NPO and school for children with disabilities. He remains an active member of the organisation till this day.

Another opportunity arose when, together with his friend and occupational therapist, Hilletje Wiehahn, Furlo created Grace Adaptive Clothing and Equipment. This online store offers a range of products catering for people with disabilities and individuals with limited mobility post-surgery.

In order to kick-start this exciting joint venture, the Players' Fund gifted Furlo with a laptop while

the Players 4 Players – a loyal fundraising friend of the Fund – arranged for a 10 week GetSmarter UCT Digital Marketing Course.

Murray Turner, Players 4 Players member and digital engagement manager at 2U (GetSmarter), arranged the generous donation. He says: "As a former rugby player and avid member of many teams, I know the true value of knowing when someone 'has your back'.

"Over the last 10 years, I've seen first-hand how the Players' Fund has become the team behind all rugby players who are seriously injured on the field. It is an honour to be able to help facilitate this course for Furlo where he will gain relevant knowledge applicable to his new business."

Furlo received his new laptop ahead of starting the Digital Marketing Course in November 2020.

In February 2021, Furlo completed the Digital Marketing course with a 72 percent average mark – an astounding effort. He notes: "The content opened up a new world to me and also helped me understand how targeted marketing happens online.

"I now understand why I often see things 'popping up' while I am on the internet. It's no accident. The GetSmarter Digital Marketing course is packed full of valuable information and gives step by step guidelines on how to apply that knowledge in business."

He reflects on the opportunity as a person with a disability: "Fighting this fight called disability is made so much easier with people like Murray who has invested in my future. I am really so grateful".

Furlo is just one of many positive stories that the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund is able to share thanks to the rugby community at large. In order to continue this supporting role, the Fund appeals to the rugby loving public to choose this organisation for charitable giving, whether large or small. Visit the website for more information or to donate at [www.playersfund.org.za](http://www.playersfund.org.za). 

# ADDRESSING PARTNER TRAUMA AFTER AN SCI

A spinal cord injury and its aftermath can be very traumatic for the romantic or life partner of the injured person. **DANIE BREEDT** takes a look at the three phases partners face

**W**hen sustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI), a lot can change but it doesn't mean your relationship is over. Your physical, emotional, intimate and parenting roles may change somewhat to accommodate your capabilities.

However, an SCI doesn't only affect the injured person, but their partner as well. The initial phases after a new SCI can be especially traumatic and disruptive for both individuals and the relationship as a whole.

Supporting your partner through their SCI has a definite impact on you too. Research has found that partners often experience three phases after an SCI. The initial phase is the immediate negative impact of the SCI on the partner's life. This is an uncertain waiting period with feelings of powerlessness, watching your partner from the side-lines, and having your own needs become secondary.

The main focus of this stage is survival, in a physical sense for the person with the SCI and in an emotional sense for the partner. Partners often have the greatest need for emotional and practical support at this time.

The second phase is characterised by feelings of isolation or being separated from your partner. It is in this phase that a lot of partners realise the impact of the SCI on themselves and their relationship going forward. The focus during this


time moves somewhat to planning for a life that has now changed forever.

This phase is also marked by a long period of separation while in hospital, managing the overwhelming tasks of a household or family during a partner's rehabilitation and discharge process.

In the third phase the two individual journeys merge to re-establish the relationship. Emotions that are common during this phase are grief and loss, exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed or inadequate, vulnerable and/or depression.

The process of re-establishing a sense of normalcy while going through the major life crisis of an SCI and navigating its impact on the relationship is extremely stressful. This phase after a partner stabilises physically can often be the most difficult for the uninjured partner.

It is unfortunate that the needs of the partner is often neglected. It might even feel selfish to think of your needs while your partner is suffering. However, building a relationship is a two-way street. Your partner's SCI is part of your sexual health and should be included in your decisions, thoughts, and feelings.

Try to build trust with each other and have open dialogues about your relationship. Regular discussions and an acknowledgement for both partners' needs in the relationship is of paramount importance when navigating such a difficult experience. 



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.



# PROSTHESIS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

For **HEINRICH GRIMSEHL** rehabilitation is much more than simply fitting a patient for a prosthesis. He shares his thoughts

**W**hat is a rehabilitation protocol and why is it so important? This is better explained by an example. Let's say for example your leg was amputated below the knee, the wound healed nicely and you now consider acquiring yourself a prosthesis. The path that the prosthetist will follow to put you back on your feet is called his rehabilitation or treatment protocol.

To cone your stump for a week (with a stretch bandage), casting and manufacturing a finished final prosthesis, thereafter sending you on your merry way with a pair of crutches, is not what I would call a complete rehabilitation protocol.

Experienced prosthetists know that your stump will change rapidly for a few months and that an adjustable test socket phase of several months could be the difference between a successful fitting and a troublesome prosthesis.

Furthermore, proper gait training and exercises with a physiotherapist to identify weaknesses and gait deviations are key to your future success. You might suffer mental challenges or excessive weight gain or loss. Your prosthetist should be able to identify these obstacles in your rehabilitation path and refer you to the appropriate discipline within his rehabilitation circle for further treatment.

To summarise, how do you know that you will receive appropriate treatment by a group of experienced professionals?

First, you should enquire from the prosthetist what his rehabilitation protocol entails. Find out what time frames are involved and what outcome measures does he expect from you during this process. Most important, ask who the other team players (other disciplines) are in his rehabilitation team, and how they are integrated.



**ABOVE:** Diagram by Össur.

This information should be available at the drop of a hat. The diagram above shows a possible rehabilitation circle or multidisciplinary team that should form the basis of your rehabilitation process.

A strong rehabilitation team could mean the difference between you rehabilitating to your full potential or stagnating and regressing instead. **®**



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

# FINDING THAT DREAM JOB

The job market can be very intimidating. **MARISKA MORRIS** investigates ways to find and apply for your dream job

**I**n the age of interconnectedness and information, it can be easier than ever to find your dream job. However, it also makes it much more challenging to shift through all the information to find a career that suits you. Fortunately, there are ways to make it easier for yourself.

## FINDING THE RIGHT JOB OPENING

Arguably one of the most challenging aspects of a job hunt is finding companies that are hiring. Fortunately, a simple internet search can put you onto various websites where job openings are advertised, for example, Bizcommunity, Career24, Indeed.

If you would like to work at a specific company, you can visit their website to see if they are advertising any positions. Most larger companies have job listings on their website. Alternatively, you can phone these companies to speak with the recruitment officer. They might be able to provide more information on whether there are positions vacant.

Once on one of these sites, you can narrow down the search by completing the filters at the very top of the page. Specify, for example, for what job you are searching (for example, copywriter, accountant or admin assistant) and where you would like to be based (province and country).

## CHECK THE REQUIREMENTS

When the job listings appear, be sure to go through each listing to ensure that you meet the

company criteria. In some cases, you can still apply even if you don't meet all the criteria. For example, the company might require four years' experience when you only have three.

If there are more than one or two criteria that you don't meet, avoid applying. You are less likely to be asked to an interview.


## SUBMITTING YOUR CV

Some websites require CVs to be submitted through the site. However, if you are provided with the recruitment officer's details, be sure to indicate in the subject line for what position you are applying. In the body of the message, you can indicate where you saw the position advertised and when.

Some companies directly request for a cover letter. If they don't, consider adding one. A cover letter can be a great opportunity to motivate your reason for applying, stating why you would be a good fit for the company and how you are qualified for the position.

## BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media platform, LinkedIn, can be a great professional resource. You can find job opportunities on the site, follow industry leaders and promote yourself by sharing your professional achievements, skills and more.

However, be careful of what you post on this and other social media platforms as recruitment officers might visit your social media accounts to learn more about you. 

**RUSTIM ARIEFDIEN** explains how the ownership element can benefit people with disabilities and businesses

**T**he benefits of the ownership element of the BBBEE Scorecard may be the most misunderstood element from a disability perspective. Disability can be a direct benefit to a company as a Black Designated Group, which is defined as black people who are persons with disabilities. The understanding of “disability” is defined in the Code of Good Practice on employment of people with disabilities issued under the Employment Equity Act.

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

- Voting Rights (up to four points)
- Economic Interest (up to 13 points)
- Realisation (up to eight points)

To avoid this, a company, for example, should have a black female with a disability who owns at least 10 percent (debt free) of the company. Thus, the company will avoid being discounted and would earn over 20 of the available 25 ownership points.

Furthermore, if this black female with a disability forms part of the management structure, additional points can be scored. In the scenario of the black female with a disability owning 10 percent of the company, holding a position on the company’s board and being employed as an executive manager then another four points out of 15 points for the management element would be scored.

If other companies are procuring items or services from the company in question, they would

earn additional points on their BBBEE Scorecard. This is a significant benefit for the company. Black men with disabilities are also good candidates, although less points would be earned.

In order to work towards the above scenario, companies need to identify a candidate who would meet the criteria and either “gift” a portion of the company or come to a sales agreement. Of course, no company would simply “gift” their business, therefore, it is important to identify someone who can add value to the business.

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

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

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

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



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

## RISING STARS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON THE TOYOTA SASAPD NATIONALS



The 2021 Toyota South African Sports Association for the Physically Disabled (SASAPD) National Championships showcases outstanding athletes – such as Mpumelelo “Mpumi” Mhlongo, Puseletso Mabote and Simoné Kruger ...

**M**pumelelo “Mpumi” Mhlongo, Puseletso Mabote and Simoné Kruger all have two things in common: resilience and determination.

Mpumi was never expected to walk, let alone run, when he was born with amniotic band syndrome, resulting in clubfoot and a right leg that was shorter than his left.

Growing up, though, Mpumi’s close-knit community of family and friends fostered his spirit of resilience and he took his first steps at the age of six. “My mother was my childhood protagonist, making decisions to push me to go out and find my inspiration,” he says. “I learned to be prepared to seize any opportunity. For athletes, I think dreams are vital, but it is also important to focus on setting goals to which you can hold yourself accountable.”

This sentiment shows what makes Mpumi such a significant role model for all South Africans, regardless of any disabilities or interests in sport. In fact, his favourite recent career highlight didn’t even take place on the track, as he was incredibly proud to be awarded the 2020 Ministerial Commendation Award, in recognition of his services to sport and the community.

Away from athletics, Mpumi is set to complete a PhD in chemical engineering at the University of Cape Town (UCT) this year. He also does a lot of advocating for South Africa’s disabled community, including starting the #someonwhocares online campaign in 2019 to shine a light on those persons living with disabilities.

You can expect to hear much more from this impressive young man, who in 2019 alone was named

Western Cape Sportsman of the Year with a Disability, one of News 24’s “100 Young Mandelas”, and one of Mail & Guardian’s “100 Young South Africans”.

Puseletso Mabote’s story is equally inspirational. When he was just five years old, a truck driver lost control of his vehicle and rammed into Puseletso on his way to school. Puseletso lost his right leg above the knee and spent the next three years struggling to get around on crutches. Despite this considerable challenge, Puseletso has become a successful athlete – and his goal is to inspire young South Africans living with physical challenges.

“It was a traumatic experience for my whole family,” says the Grade 9 pupil, who will be competing in the men’s T-63 100m and long jump events at the Toyota SASAPD National Championships. “In 2013, my Orthopaedic Surgeon, Dr. Brooke Puttergill, referred me to the Jumping Kids Prosthetic Fund. Thanks to her, I became a beneficiary of the fund.”

With the fund’s support, Puseletso was fitted with his first high activity prosthesis (also known as a blade) and was introduced to track and field athletics to help strengthen his core muscles and assist him to get a handle on his new prosthetic equipment.

Puseletso wasn’t really interested in athletics until Jumping Kids founder Johan Snyders introduced him to it, but suddenly a whole new world opened up to him: “I was shy, and I didn’t have much confidence. Becoming part of a team and seeing that being different is okay helped me a lot. Now, I am proud to be who I am.”

Like many others, Puseletso looks up to teammate and role model, Paralympian Ntando Mahlangu. “Just

like Ntando inspired me, I want to inspire more kids living with physical challenges to dream big, even though they may be different,” he says.

When asked about his personal career highlight so far, Puseletso has no hesitation. “Definitely when I broke the men’s 200m T63 World Record at the 2019 World Para Athletics Junior Championships in Nottwil, Switzerland. It was unexpected and a great moment,” he enthuses.

Like Puseletso, Simoné Kruger has overcome adversity and achieved a great deal. At just 16 years old, Simoné Kruger already has a glittering array of successes and medals to her name, having taken part in her first SASAPD Championships in 2016 aged just 11.

The following year, Simoné won four golds and shattered the U/16 National records for discus, shot put and javelin, while in 2018, she won gold medals for both discus and shotput at the senior SASAPD Nationals and the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports (IWAS) Junior World Games in Ireland.

Competing in F-38 shot put and discus, Simoné has continued her upward trajectory, becoming a double world record holder in 2019. She now holds both the junior and senior discus world records as well as the senior African shotput record, breaking the women’s F-38 discus world record four times in 2019 alone.

Simoné has hemiplegia – resulting from a stroke she suffered while still in the womb, which cut off all communication from the left of her brain. This meant that she had to retrain the whole right side of her body. “I needed a stimulation machine to learn to walk,” she says. “Probably my biggest challenge when I started sport was learning how to control my balance. But my faith has kept me strong. ‘Do your best and God will do the rest’ has always been my motivation.”

Glenn Crompton, Vice President for Sales and Marketing at Toyota South Africa Motors, says that people such as Mpumelelo “Mpumi” Mhlongo, Puseletso Mabote and Simoné Kruger are the reason why the company sponsors the SASAPD Nationals. “They are absolute inspirations! At Toyota, we believe that movement and mobility are all around us. Sport has the power to connect people. This is where we learn the true power of sport – it can challenge us, inspire us and, most importantly, unify us,” he says.

“As the Worldwide Official Mobility Partner of the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee, Toyota shares the vision to inspire people to push onward – past their finish line, past their impossible. We have seen so many



**MAIN PHOTO:** Mpumi Mhlongo’s close-knit family helped foster his resilient spirit.

**ABOVE:** Puseletso Mabote wasn’t very interested in athletics until he met Jumping Kids founder Johan Snyders.

**RIGHT:** Simoné Kruger has a collection of gold medals and hopes to continue adding more.



examples of people achieving the impossible at the Paralympics and also at the Toyota SASAPD National Championships,” adds Crompton.

All eyes will be on Mpumi, Puseletso and Simoné at the 2021 Toyota SASAPD Nationals. Having previously set T-44 world records in the 100m, 200m and long jump, and collecting five international championship medals, Mpumi can’t wait to get back to competing. “Obviously, the build-up to the Nationals has been incredibly difficult for everyone. With regulations constantly changing, scheduling training has sometimes been a bit of a nightmare,” he says. “But to be honest, I just want to run and hopefully inspire people. Right now, we all need some hope. The Nationals can be the first ray of light that we, as a community, can shine on South Africa.”

Puseletso feels confident going into this year’s Nationals. “Although the coronavirus pandemic halted plans, I remained active and feel like I am in good shape,” he says, adding that he hopes to better his world rankings in the T63 long jump and 100m, for a chance to represent South Africa at the Paralympics.

Simoné feels mentally and physically ready and confident ahead of the 2021 Toyota SASAPD Nationals. She has been working hard on her technique with her coaches: “At this stage, I’m actually throwing further than before lockdown! But there’s still more work to be done for the Nationals and then focusing on the Paralympics,” she says.

We wish all three incredible athletes great success at the 2021 Toyota SASAPD Nationals! 



## MAINTENANCE TO KEEP YOUR CHAIR HAPPY

With a little attention and love, you can add years of use to your wheelchair's life. **MARISKA MORRIS** investigates the best ways to care for your chair

**W**heelchairs are expensive, but incredibly essential. Fortunately, it is easy to extend your chair's life by ensuring you service, repair and clean your wheelchair frequently. In addition, wheelchair maintenance can ensure that your chair performs at its best at all times.

A wheelchair might seem harder to push or veers off course. Unless your health has been impacted, this is most likely due to a fault on the chair – some of which can be fixed with a simple service. With some maintenance, your chair will run smoother, which also removes strain on your arms, wrists and shoulders. Less injuries and a more reliable chair!

So, where do you start? Well, there are a few wheelchair maintenance tips to consider. Some of the parts will need to be checked yearly while others might need to be checked more frequently.

If you use your wheelchair on a daily basis, it is worthwhile to do a daily or weekly check of the condition on some of the important elements, such as the wheels. If you don't require your wheelchair every day, you might consider checking it once a month.

Follow the user's manual that comes with the wheelchair or the manufacturer's instructions when inspecting and servicing your wheelchair. But, here are a few general things to consider:

### FRONT CASTOR WHEELS

The front wheels provide stability and assist with turning and propulsion. They should spin freely and smoothly. If this is not the case or they turn slightly right or left, the wheel alignment is most likely off. Simply adjust the angle or replace the bearings.

The forks that attach the castor wheels to the chair should also move easily from side to side without hitting the footrest. If they wiggle, consider wrenching them tighter. Be careful of fastening them too tightly as it could result in them turning difficultly.

### REAR WHEELS

The rear wheels propel and steer the wheelchair. They should be easy to push and spin freely. If they wobble or make a noise, the ball bearings may need repairing or replacing. It is also important to check the spokes, replacing any broken spokes and tightening those that are loose.

### TYRES AND INNER TUBES

The tyres are essential to ensuring a comfortable ride. A flat tyre will make it difficult or impossible to push the wheelchair. A flat or deflated tyre can also impact the brakes. A worn tyre can cause the brakes to slip. An overinflated inner tube, however, is at risk of bursting. While you should keep your tyres fully inflated, avoid overinflating.

Keep your tyres at the recommended pressure as per the wheelchair manual. You can inflate your tyre using a bicycle pump. The tyre should be very firm to the touch.

Regularly inspect your tyres for punctures and ensure the thread isn't worn. If there is something stuck in the tyre, like a nail, don't remove it until you are able to replace the tyre. A patch from your local bicycle shop can offer a temporary fix, although the tyre might be prone to deflating. You can replace it or simply check the pressure more often.

Fitting a wheelchair tyre is similar to that of a bicycle. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. If those aren't available, search for the instructions for replacing a bicycle wheel online.

### **BRAKING LEVER**

An essential element, you should check your brakes, ideally, on a weekly basis. It might not be performing correctly if you have wet tyres or the tyre pressure is incorrect. If the wheel is deflated, the brakes are likely to slip. They will also be inefficient if poorly placed or incorrectly adjusted.

### **PUSH RIMS**

Used to propel the rear wheels, push rims are often banged against door frames or furniture. This can cause rough or jagged areas on the metal that can bruise your hands. Be sure to file away any pieces that stick out and have the potential to cut your skin.

### **UPHOLSTERY AND FOOTREST**

Even with many relying on wheelchair cushions, the chair's fabric sustains quite a bit of wear and tear. Fortunately, the fabric can be replaced. This can also be a good opportunity to check whether your wheelchair cushion needs replacing, and re-evaluating your seating needs.

### **FRAME**

The most integral to the structure, the frame of a chair is the most durable, but still prone to dents, cracks or rust. A visual inspection weekly can help identify any impurities.

Cracks are of a particular concern as it can cause your frame to break. Depending on its

“ Follow the user's manual when inspecting and servicing your wheelchair. ”

severity, cracks can be welded back together. If you live near salt water (for example the ocean) or in high humidity, you want to check for rust more frequently.

It is also important to check screw points for any loosened bolts or joints. These can easily be fastened at home.

### **CLEANLINESS**


Keeping your wheelchair clean is one of the easiest ways to ensure that you keep your chair in a good condition. You can wipe down the chair with a damp (not wet) cloth on a daily basis with a more thorough wash once a week. Use this as an opportunity to inspect your chair.

Use a mild detergent when cleaning your chair. You can use soap and water when cleaning the upholstery. Depending on the material, you can polish fabric.

Give your chair a thorough wash if you've been in a sandy or muddy area or in contact with salt. Make sure the wheelchair is dried well.

Applying oil on the moving parts can assist with motion and disassembling the chair. Apply oil every couple of months. The frame can also be waxed.

If you are not planning on using your chair every day, be sure to store it in a safe space, preferably away from direct sunlight and with a waterproof covering. When using it again after a long time, be sure to check the essentials – especially the tyre pressure.

If you find something more substantially wrong with your chair, or you are unsure of how to service it yourself, it is best to contact a wheelchair provider or manufacturer who can assist with servicing the chair. There is a cost involved, but for the ease of a smooth ride, it might just be worth it! 

# WE ARE WHAT WE EAT

Are you a Rolls-Royce or a City Golf? **JOY DUFFIELD** shares how food can influence our appearance

**S**ome of us are born with stronger constitution than others. Some of us (the Rolls-Royce) can eat unhealthily with loads of sugar and alcohol, and yet others (the City Golf) developed diabetes or liver conditions even when eating well. Our bodies contain an engine which requires consistent servicing and refuelling with the correct fuel.

Even the Rolls-Royce requires good quality fuel and oil to run smoothly! However, the City Golf may require a little more engine attention and body polish just to keep going. The same applies to our bodies. The older or more damaged (for example wheelchair users) the vehicle or, in this case, body, the more attention it needs!

So, let us talk about the fuel. The basic rule is to eat a variety of foods and a variety of colours every day. See below a general guideline:

## **CARBOHYDRATES**

Carbohydrates should make up a quarter of your plate. It is one of the main forms of fuel. The fibre in carbohydrates assists in the movement of food through the digestive system and removal of waste. For those who struggle with bowel management issues, this is an absolute must.

Carbohydrates can be found in fruit, vegetables (like potatoes) and starches such as pasta, rice, bread, quinoa, oats and brown rice. For individuals with diabetes, it is advised to opt for the healthy starches like brown rice. However, it is best to consult a dietitian before making any dramatic changes to your diet.

## **PROTEIN**

Protein also should make up a quarter of your plate. It is made up of amino acids which are

found in animal and plant proteins. Protein is essential to the growth and repair of cells in the body. For athletes, protein can assist in muscle recovery. It is also essential to those who are seated in a chair and struggle with compromised skin.

It can be found in red meat (for example, beef), white meat (for example, chicken), fish and other dairy products. Protein is also common in beans, nuts, grains and lentils for those who prefer not to eat meat.

## **VITAMINS AND MINERALS**

Arguably the most important food source, vitamins and minerals should make up half of your plate. They assist with the growth and repair of all cells, healthy skin, hair, teeth and vision, antioxidants, immune boosting, repair and function.

All fruit and vegetables contain some or other vitamins and minerals. It is best to have a variety and colourful selection of fruit and vegetables in your diet. Choosing seasonable fruits and vegetables will give you the most benefit and are usually cheaper.

However, be wary of potatoes if you have diabetes. It can have a negative impact on blood sugar. Consult a dietitian for more guidance.

## **FATS**

Although an important aspect of a diet, fats can be harmful to some. It should always be consumed in moderation. Individuals with high blood pressure, cholesterol or diabetes should consult a doctor or dietitian regarding the recommended amount of fats to include in their diet.

Fats assist with insulation, warmth and protects the internal organs. It also stores our vitamins A, D, E




and K. Fats can be a source of fuel and it is essential to keeping the intestinal tract running smoothly.

There are various fats. Some healthy fats are safe to consume (although moderation is still recommended) while others should be avoided completely.

Some fats, for example, are chemically altered to stay solid at room temperature, which gives them a much longer shelf life. These should be avoided. Trans fats increase your bad cholesterol and clog the arteries and put us at higher risk of heart disease and strokes. They should also be avoided completely. Read the

food labels rather than simply assuming your products are “healthy”.

Ideally, you should focus on polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, which are found in oily fish, plant oils, meats, avocados and olive oil. A second choice can be saturated fats, which are found in meats, dairy products, eggs and coconut oil.

When in doubt, opt for a colourful plate to keep your motor running smoothly. If you are still unsure, consult a doctor or dietitian on the best diet for you. 



Joy Duffield is a C4 - C5 quadriplegic since 2005. Married with no children, she founded the Beauty Academy International in 2002. She was also a finalist in the entrepreneur category for the Business Woman Association (BWA) in 2015.



# ACCESSIBLE HOME LEARNING



**EMMA MCKINNEY** provides some tips on how to make an environment more accessible for home learning

Previously many parents and caregivers of children with disabilities felt that schoolwork, activities and therapy were best left to their children's school, teachers and in some instances, therapists. However, the COVID-19 lockdown has shown the valuable role parents and caregivers can play in assisting their children at home.

With a COVID-19 'third wave' expected and regular winter illnesses anticipated, parents may be required to assist their children at home once again. In this article, we look at some practical tips to consider in preparing your home environment.

While all children with disabilities are unique with differing strengths and challenges, before starting please check your home to make sure that it is safe. The more comfortable and accessible the environment, the less energy they will need, and the more likely your child will be to try new activities and tasks.

- Check that there are no pieces of furniture that could tip over or fall on your child if accidentally bumped. Use heavy, stable furniture and equipment that can't easily be knocked over.
- Check for coverings such as tablecloths or couch throws that can be pulled off. Also consider what might be resting on the

coverings if accidentally grabbed (such as a vase). The child could grab hold onto the cover and pull the vase onto themselves.


- Check your surfaces, especially loose rugs or carpets, to make sure they cannot be tripped over or slid on. If needed, tape the rugs down with double-sided tape. Equally, smooth tiles or polished wooden floors can also be a slipping hazard.
- Based on your child's mobility and needs, arrange furniture with a wide aisle so that children can move between using assistive devices such as walkers; or push them closer together so that the child can hold onto something to balance or steady themselves.
- Look out for sharp edges and corners such as counters and tables. Consider taping some sponge to the edges if needed.
- Find a suitable place for assistive or personal devices such as crutches, so that they don't become a tripping hazard. Try to keep them in one accessible place so that your child and other family members always know where they are.
- When working with your child in a seated position, make sure it is comfortable. When on the floor, make sure that they are stable and won't topple over if they spasm, lose their balance or get tired.

“ The more comfortable the environment, the more likely your child will be to try new activities. ”

- You might want to look at placing your child in a corner with two walls for support, on your lap or between your legs, or add cushions, wedges or foam for comfort and stability.
- If seated on the floor or in a wheelchair, make sure that you are seated in a place that allows your child to see you in a comfortable way. Avoid positions where they are staring up at you as it can be straining to make eye-contact.
- If your child is more comfortable remaining in a wheelchair, standing frame or chair consider adding a tray so that they have a steady surface to work or play on. Make sure the tray is the appropriate height, comfort and won't tire your child by, for example, bending down to lift objects.
- Make sure that surfaces are steady and that objects won't slip. You can use everyday objects such as paperclips, washing line pegs, or Prestic to stop paper from sliding.
- Some children find it easier if their working

surface is slightly tilted towards them making a small wedge that slides under their books can help.

I encourage you to involve your child, asking them what would help them to work or play best as they may come up with creative and suitable solutions that you haven't considered.

In our next article, we will be looking at how to adapt certain objects such as pencils, and materials like books in the home using recyclable and low-cost items to make them more accessible to children with physical disabilities. 



Dr Emma McKinney is a lecturer at the University of the Western Cape. She is also the owner of Disability Included, a company specialising in disability research, children, and employment of adults with disabilities. email: emma@disabilityincluded.co.za



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# HATE YOU, COVID!



COVID has devastated many families and individual lives. **LEON FLEISER** shares how this virus has caused havoc in the sporting world

**O**n December 23, I got my COVID test results back ... positive for COVID-19. I started feeling sick that morning, but not too bad. A day later, I was man down for 14 days ... but I survived! So many people have not.

It is horrible! We all know of someone who has succumbed to this horrible virus and that makes it even more real. Besides this, it is also messing with people's livelihoods.

Unfortunately, sport is severely impacted, especially sport for people with disabilities. It is not only affecting their potential income; it is also influencing their chance of qualifying and being selected for the postponed Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Yes, the Tokyo Paralympic Games are going ahead but it will be very different to any other Games held before. The organising committee together with the International Paralympic Committee published a COVID Playbook, which discusses how we need to prepare for the Games.

For example, athletes need to isolate for 14 days prior to their departure to Japan; there needs to be a PCR test before departure; and a COVID test on arrival in Japan along with regular screenings and testing.


The athletes are only allowed to move between

their accommodation village, the training and competition venues. They won't be allowed to tour Tokyo when their competition is finished. This is not ideal, but I think it is important that the Games happen as a celebration of overcoming adversity; celebrating our resilience.

It's what all of us with disabilities have gone through anyway in our lives. This will showcase our strength and resilience to the world on the biggest sporting platform for people with disabilities.

At least some local sporting activities are still taking place. Wheelchair basketball has had a number of tournaments already. Cycling held their National Championships from March 18 to 21 in Swellendam. I was extremely happy to see the iconic Ernst Van Dyk make a comeback to paracycling. Hopefully, he can travel internationally soon so that he can qualify for the Tokyo Paralympics.

The postponed Toyota South Africa Sports Association for the Physically Disabled and Visually Impaired is set to take place in Port Elizabeth from April 23 to 27. Good luck to all the participants. I hope to attend as well. Wow, I can't believe how much I miss travelling.

Hopefully the next issue will have the names of our heroes who will do us proud in Tokyo. Stay well and stay safe, wear your masks and sanitise! 



Leon Fleiser has been involved with sport in the disability sector since 1992 when he started playing wheelchair basketball. He captained the national team to the Sydney Paralympic Games and the 2002 World Championships. He started working for Disability Sport South Africa in 2001 as a Coordinator for High Performance. It merged into SASCOC in 2005 and he is now the Manager for Team Preparation and Academy Systems. He has delivered Team South Africa to numerous Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth and African Games. email: [leonf@sascoc.co.za](mailto:leonf@sascoc.co.za)



## MEAGRE INCREASE FOR DISABILITY GRANTS

At the end of February, the increases for the disability and other social grants were announced for 2021/22. The announcement was met with backlash as the trade union federation, Cosatu, pointed out that the increases were less than inflation. The government was unapologetic about their approach.


Disability grants were increased by only 1,6 percent from R1 860 to R1 890. Inflation for 2021 is at 3,3 percent. To match inflation, the disability grants should have been increased by roughly R62 as opposed to only R30.

In its criticism of the decision, Cosatu explained that the failure to match the rate of inflation will mean beneficiaries of the grant will have less

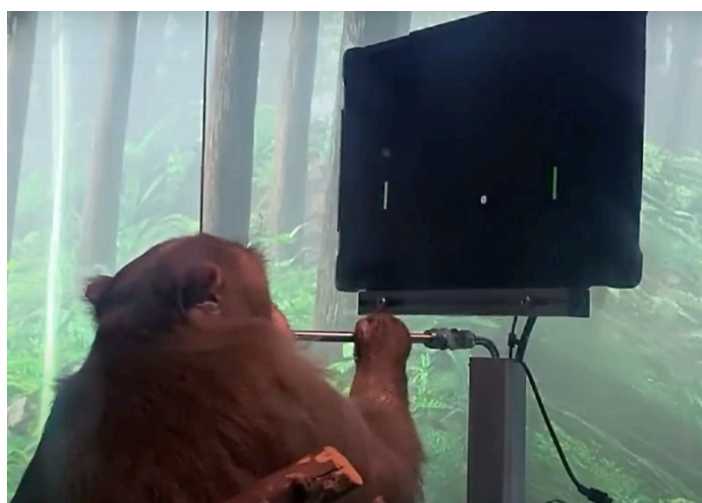
spending power as the price of goods climb.

However, finance minister Tito Mboweni argued that there was no reason for the government to apologise. He stated: “There’s no need to be apologetic about it. There’s no social contract that says every year there must be x amount of increase, so there’s no need to be apologetic at all.”

He continued to explain that the increases were based on the budget allocated and what the department was able to afford.

The government is also expecting a further increase in the number of people who rely on social grants as the economy tries to recover from the lockdown in early 2020. 


## LEAPS IN BRAIN CHIP TECHNOLOGY



**ABOVE:** Pager, the test subject for Neuralink, uses thoughts to move the cursor on the computer screen with the help of ground-breaking brain chip technology.

At the start of April, Neuralink – a company owned by Elon Musk – released a video to demonstrate the strides it has made in developing brain chip technology. In the video, the team demonstrates how its brain chip technology allowed its test subject – a Monkey named Pager – to move an object on a computer screen simply with thoughts.

This ground-breaking technology aims to assist people with paralysis to directly use their neural activity to operate computers and mobile devices with speed and ease.

To learn more about the device and technology, visit the Neuralink website at <https://neuralink.com/blog/> or watch the full video at <https://youtu.be/rsCul1sp4hQ>. 

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**Disability info South Africa**

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