thrive

Living Well with Limb Loss

ISSUE #22

BODY IMAGE EDITION

TALLI Osborne

Labels are for Boxes

Body Positivity

The Movement and the Message

The Beauty of Aging

Low-Down on Liners

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Trevor wears two MCPDrivers.

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Cover photo courtesy of Talli Osborne.

WELCOME

Seeds for Change

April was Limb Loss Awareness month, a national initiative for Canadians with limb loss or limb difference… "amputees" as most of us call ourselves. It's always an important month for storytelling, particularly to government representatives and policy-makers.

thrive founder and publisher, Jeff Tiessen

It's a month for sharing our lived-experiences, where things like accessibility, healthcare and prosthetic funding are concerned. It's a month dedicated to more than 225,000 Canadians living with limb loss or limb difference, a number that is expected to nearly double by 2050.

It's a month to focus on supporting peers and advocating for those who need it. And it's a month to remember that although our community is painted with a rather broad brush in April, we are all very different, at varying ages and stages, with unique stories of successes and struggles to tell… more like a canvas of very fine strokes.

Your unique story has the power to support other amputees in our community, particularly those feeling disconnected, isolated and alone. Your story can be a beacon of hope for those at the beginning of their journey and a reminder that there is plenty of life after limb loss.

Did you celebrate? Did we, as a community, do enough last month? If you didn't, and we didn't, it's ok. We've got this month, and next, and the next. While appreciating what Limb Loss Awareness month represents, advocating and educating needn't, and shouldn't, be relegated to just one month.

It's kind of like that parable-like question: "When's the best time to plant a tree?" Answer: "Twenty years ago… or today!" Keep planting those seeds for change.

Jeff Tiessen, *publisher* • jeff@thrivemag.ca

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER: Disability Today Publishing Group, a disability community leader for over 30 years, is known for its quality publications, and compelling editorial. The publisher of *Alignment* for Orthotics Prosthetics Canada, and a host of in-house magazine and book titles, the media firm is led by Jeff Tiessen, an amputee of 45+ years. Tiessen, a three-time Paralympian, award-winning journalist and Canadian Disability Hall of Fame inductee, is a respected advocate within the amputee community and healthcare fields as well.

thrive Living Well with Limb Loss

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WHAT CAMP CAN DO

Camp Candou at Camp Maple Leaf is an island sleepover camp where kids with limb loss and congenital limb differences (and their siblings) shine! With friendships that follow campers home, Camp Candou provides a supportive social network that campers can lean on and relate to throughout the year. The realization that they are not alone in their challenges, the camp works to normalize life situations, build resilience and present new possibilities. For more, visit campmapleleaf.ca.

What is LLLDAM?

APRIL IS
LIMB LOSS
AND
LIMB DIFFERENCE
AWARENESS MONTH

LLLDAM stands for Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month, started 13 years ago by the Tennessee-based Amputee Coalition. Celebrated in Canada as well, April is designated as the month to raise awareness around limb loss and limb difference, using the colour orange to represent LLLDAM events and initiatives.

Paralympian Skates World's Longest Ice Trail

Three-time Paralympic medalist Tyler McGregor skated 42 kilometres on the Lake Windermere Whiteway to fundraise for the Terry Fox Foundation. The Canadian Paralympic Ice Hockey Team captain took to the world's longest ice-skating trail near Invermere, B.C., as part of his cross-country campaign for cancer research.

McGregor's Sledge Skate of Hope campaign also included, among others, 42 km on Halifax's Emera Oval and the same marathon distance at Calgary's Bowness Park.

Growing up in Forest, Ont., McGregor was diagnosed with spindle cell sarcoma — an extremely rare bone cancer — after he broke his leg in a hockey game at age 15. His left leg was amputated soon after. McGregor said he survived because of cancer research funded by the Terry Fox Foundation's annual September charity event in which he has participated since childhood.

McGregor said Fox's Marathon of Hope inspired him to launch Sledge Skate of Hope, and he hopes his campaign will encourage young people facing challenges to strive for whatever they want to accomplish. "I'm thinking about the young boy or girl who is missing a limb and questioning what they're capable of. I hope it's a signal of possibility for anyone." He aimed to raise $100,000.

MAKING WAVES

Prosthetic manufacturer Össur has grown its waterproof solutions with the addition of Pro-Flex LP. The device gives individuals with longer residual limbs the push-off power of a traditional prosthetic foot. And when it comes to water, understanding what your prosthesis is designed to withstand is important. Whether it's visiting the beach, a pool, or time in the shower or tub, check with your prosthetist to ensure that your prosthesis gives you the support you need. Visit ossur.com.

Feedback Wanted

Ottobock would like feedback on its IFUs! The manufacturer's "Information for Use" documents are designed to be an essential part of every product in its inventory. With a lot of effort put into their informative and helpful documents, the company wants to make sure they're meeting user expectations. Access the survey at ottobock.rogsurvey.de/html/survey.htm.

Amputee reaches his goal at the
CN Tower Climb for Nature

Wayne Eyre has taken part in the CN Tower Climb for Nature event before, but this year was the first time doing it on his prosthetic leg. The 71-year-old trainer with the Nipissing Lakers varsity men's and women's hockey teams became a leg amputee less than two years ago.

Scaling more than 140 flights of stairs in less than 30 minutes, Eyre said "It went pretty well" when asked about his performance in the annual Toronto event. The average climb-time is 35 minutes.

Eyre made the decision to climb again shortly after he was able to walk again. "I could be satisfied to walk from point A to point B and that's it. Or I could decide to get my life back. For me, it was an easy decision," said the retired paramedic.

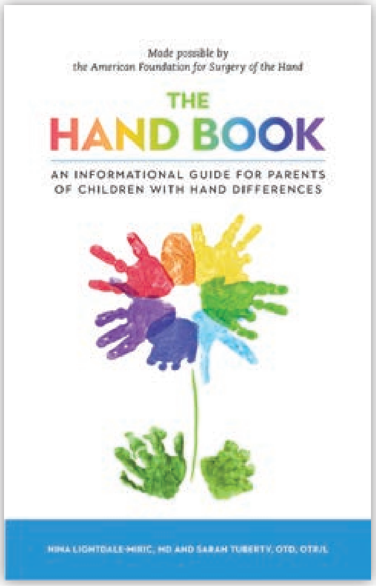
FEELING THE BURN

Did you know that lower-limb amputees can use up to 300% more energy just to walk? Above-knee amputees rely on remaining upper thigh muscles to control and propel their prosthesis forward, which burns energy at a rate far higher than a typical lower limb.

Research Participants WANTED

Attention lower-limb amputees! Holland Bloorview is conducting a research study on improving gait rehabilitation with wearable technology. The rehab hospital is developing cutting-edge technology to improve gait therapy in the form of a wearable system that analyzes walking patterns of lower-limb prosthesis users. Once developed, the system could serve as a training tool for lower-limb amputees.

If interested in taking part, contact Aliaa Gouda at agouda@hollandbloorview.ca.



HELPFUL *Handbook*

When Sarah Tuberty was growing up with a congenital limb difference in the 1990s, there weren't many signposts that her parents could follow to prepare her for life in an able-bodied world. Social media didn't exist, and the internet was a sparsely populated frontier. There were no online communities to turn to for answers.

Today's families can tap all of those sources of support but often still struggle to find the tools they need to raise kids with congenital limb difference. That's why Tuberty, a Pennsylvania-based occupational therapist, teamed up with pediatric hand surgeon Nina Lightdale-Miric to write *The Hand Book: An Informational Guide for Parents of Children With Hand Differences*.

Published by the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH), the volume takes an interactive approach to help families find their way to solutions that fit their own journeys. Available from the ASSH.

Helping Others through PEER SUPPORT

Have you ever considered becoming a peer visitor? You don't need to have a degree or be an accomplished athlete. You just need to be living life post-amputation.

In becoming a certified #ACC Peer Visitor, the Amputee Coalition of Canada provides you with tools, information and the opportunity to be the person you needed to speak with to start your journey with limb loss. There are plenty of benefits for Peer Visitors too, like helping you develop skills such as active listening, empathy, communication, and personal connections and learning from others. Find out more at amputeecoalitioncanada.org/peer-visitor-program.

Beautifully FLAWED

"Not all roses are red. Not all roses are perfect. But all roses have something beautiful about them! Take off a few of the petals and the rose is still so gorgeous. In the same way, each of us is a beautiful rose."

– Bethany Hamilton (on left), *Surfer and star of Soul Survivor film*

AMPUTEE WOMEN IN HISTORY

Women's History Month

Madeleine Jaffray

Soon after the start of the First World War, Madeleine Jaffray enlisted as a nurse with the French Red Cross. She spent 10 months working in a military hospital in France before being transferred to Belgium, only a few kilometres from the front lines.

While coming out of one of the wards, a bomb dropped in front of her, severely wounding her foot. The injury led to amputation, making her Canada's only female First World War amputee.

Jaffray became the only Canadian woman to receive the Croix de Guerre with an additional star for her services. After the war, Jaffray continued working as a nurse and stands as The War Amps's only female member from that global conflict.

#DearTerry

On April 12, 1980, Terry Fox began his Marathon of Hope. When he stopped running, Canadians started writing messages of love, hope and inspiration. Today, there's a global call for #DearTerry messages, celebrating how Terry's legacy continues to inspire people around the world.

Share your message for the chance to be featured in the campaign, including a commemorative #DearTerry poster designed by famed artist Mutant 101® to be released in association with the 2023 Terry Fox Run. The annual event has become a classic Canadian tradition every fall with more than 650 communities across the country coming together to fundraise for cancer research.

Join Canadian celebrities like Catherine O'Hara, Michael Buble and Tessa Virtue in supporting the #DearTerry campaign. Send your personal story, photo, video, handwritten note or drawing to terryfoxstories@gmail.com. Learn more at terryfox.org.

Is Your Positive Attitude HURTING YOU?

By Ginelle Testa

> *“Positivity is a dogmatic insistence on turning away from what is painful.”*
>
> – Susan Piver, Wisdom of a Broken Heart

Positivity can be beneficial. In my life I've found optimism to be quite wonderful, crucial even. But what if I told you that there may be a flaw in positive thinking? "How could being positive possibly be unhelpful?" you'd probably ask.

Being around people who are generally positive is just far more pleasant than being around people who are constantly negative. Life seems a little bit more manageable when you can practice gratitude. Smiles are had, and spirits are lifted, with simple platitudes like *c'est la vie* and *it is what it is!* Not only is it helpful, but optimism can actually provide a number of benefits.

There was a study done by the University of Kentucky where nuns were rated on a positivity scale based on their diaries in the 1930s. Sixty years later, researchers found that some of these ladies, aged seventy-five to ninety, were still alive. The survivors were mostly the women who scored high on the positivity test, insinuating that happiness leads to a longer life.

Happiness expert and psychologist Michael F. Scheier says that optimists do better in life than pessimists because they're problem solvers and have better coping mechanisms. Dealing with trauma from earlier in my life has been made much easier by having these two things at my disposal.

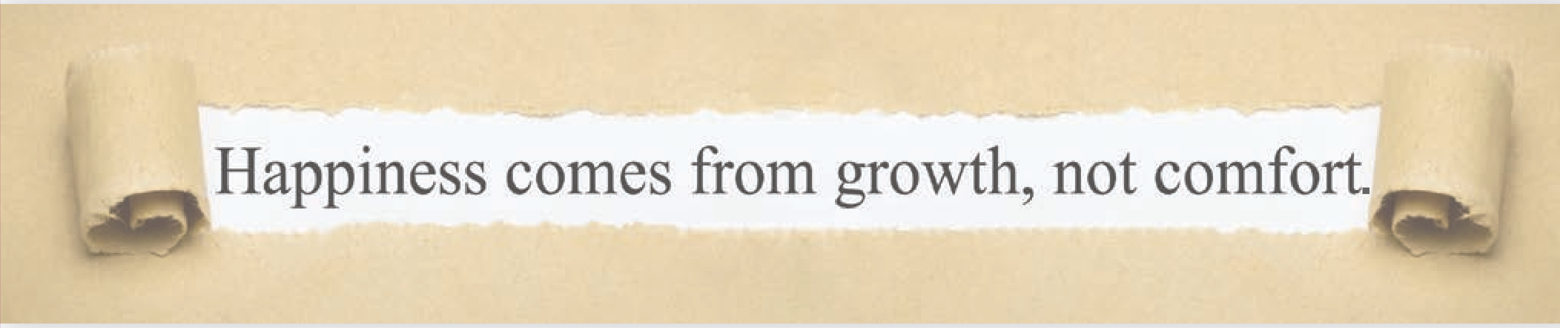
In her Broaden and Build Theory, psychologist Barbara Fredrickson discovered a model of how positivity interacts with resilience. She says that people who are more positive have more physical, psychological, and social resources. They may be better able to exercise, better at keeping away from rumination, and they have the best of buds to lean on.

When my grandmother died, I was devastated. How could I possibly draw positivity from death? Well, it turns out that I can and I did. My coping mechanism was to gain life lessons. In fact, her passing was the catalyst for me to get sober. I began to cope in a healthier way, without the crutch of substances. I had to adapt to see the sunlight, and optimism brought me there.

I now have great positive coping mechanisms like meditation, playing hockey, and the ability to discuss emotional matters with others. I regularly practice gratitude; I even write a daily gratitude list and send it to a friend. I express my appreciation for things like my job (which isn't always perfect) and having financial security.

Don't get me wrong here, I love optimism; I just can't help but look at where it fails us.

I used to be the "fine" queen. When someone asked me how I was doing I was always "fine." Whenever something happened, maybe someone did something to wrong me, like the guy I was dating being a real jerk, it was "fine." I was the girl who kept the smile on her face.



I was bubbly and eternally positive, no matter what the situation. While on the surface this may seem like a wonderful trait in a person, in practice it meant that my needs weren't being met. I was letting people treat me poorly, and I wasn't always listening to my mind, body or spirit.

To grow from this has been a long journey of realizing that it's okay (even important) to slow down and take a look at what's going on. It's necessary to give my feelings space and let them come out to play. I learned this through heartache after heartache. Breakups, dreams crushed, and death — all of these things helped me to discover that I deserved my own presence.

Heartbreak shook me to the core, leaving me feeling like I'd never be okay again. The feelings I had at that time demanded to be felt; there was no getting around it. In order to move past the suffering, I needed to feel it. I couldn't tell myself I was fine or that everything was going to be okay. I just needed to sit with the hurt.

Sure, there were good things that came from heartbreak like lessons learned and new opportunities, but there were also times when I just needed to feel, heal and deal. I needed to look my heartache squarely in the face, cry, and let my facing it begin to repair the damage done.

Man, did I spill tears when my grandmother died. It felt like my heart had been put through a meat grinder, and the pieces were never going to fit back together again. I cried in the grocery store and at the mall. I couldn't mask what I was feeling. I couldn't plaster that fake smile on, and when someone asked me how I was doing, the answer was often "not so good."

Little did I know that these experiences were gifts, moving me closer to being with myself. They encouraged me (with much force sometimes) to be with my truth, to be with the heart of the matter without turning away. Allowing and visiting feelings may take the form of letting myself cry without redirecting my attention anywhere else. Just giving myself the space to cry without judgment.

Instead of being with what's in your heart, many people put up a wall. Susan Piver puts it beautifully in her book Wisdom of a Broken Heart: "Positive thought is a method of stepping away from what ails you rather than toward it." You're often stepping away with avoidance, because who wants to feel the tough stuff?

Leaning into that takes work and courage. It's a societal norm to avoid feeling pain. We hate it; we'll avoid it at all costs. That's just what we do: mask our struggles. At work, in life, even in relationships with loved ones.

There's a pressure to be okay and put a game face on. This pressure comes from the idea that you should always aim for positivity, in all cases. This is what Susan Piver coined the "Cult of Positivity," continually turning away from what is uncomfortable and painful.

I have a bone to pick with "positivity": I don't believe that looking at the bright side of things is always the answer to solving life's problems.

There are those who believe that positive thinking undoubtedly makes

What can I learn from this?

their lives much better. In many ways this is true. However, not so much when it comes to what happens to you in the world. I dislike the idea of a "positive mind, positive life." It ends up victim-blaming because people may feel at fault for something they had no control over.

I've experienced this as someone who deals with mental health issues. I've had people tell me to just suck it up and think more positively. Don't you think if it was that easy that there wouldn't be mental illness? No one wants to be depressed. It's just not that simple. Telling someone that they can control the outcome of their illness with optimism is just placing blame when there's no blame to be had.

The idea that someone has control over all outcomes in their life baffles me. What you put out in the world is what comes back to you, according to author of The Secret, Rhonda Byrne. If you put out those positive vibes you'll reap the rewards, like a good seat at the movie theater or a gorgeous partner.

This insinuates that you deserve it when bad things happen to you just as you deserve it when good things happen. It's similar to some sort of merit system. I don't believe a tragic accident happens because someone didn't practice enough positivity. Hitting the lottery is pure luck.

Next, always looking on the bright side to answer life's problems is just a way to avoid feeling. It's superficial. It's okay, important even, to be sunny, but it becomes problematic when your feelings are lying untouched below the surface. There's nothing to be gained by lying to the world and saying that everything is fine when it's not.

Sometimes I feel like I need to "practice gratitude" when I'm sharing my struggles with a friend. While gratitude is a magnificently powerful practice, I may be selling myself short here, missing out on digging just a little deeper into what's going on. Instead of turning away from my suffering, I could turn toward it to take a peek and to let it be felt.

So, what to do with all of this? Next time a close friend says "good" when you ask them how they're doing, try asking them how they're really doing. You'll likely take them off-guard, but it'll be worth it to help them open up. Listen to their answer.

In yourself, watch for those moments when you're quick to shut a feeling down. Look out for "buts," like when you say, "I had a crummy weekend but it's totally fine." Practice just letting the tough stuff hang there. Don't try to make it better for a moment.

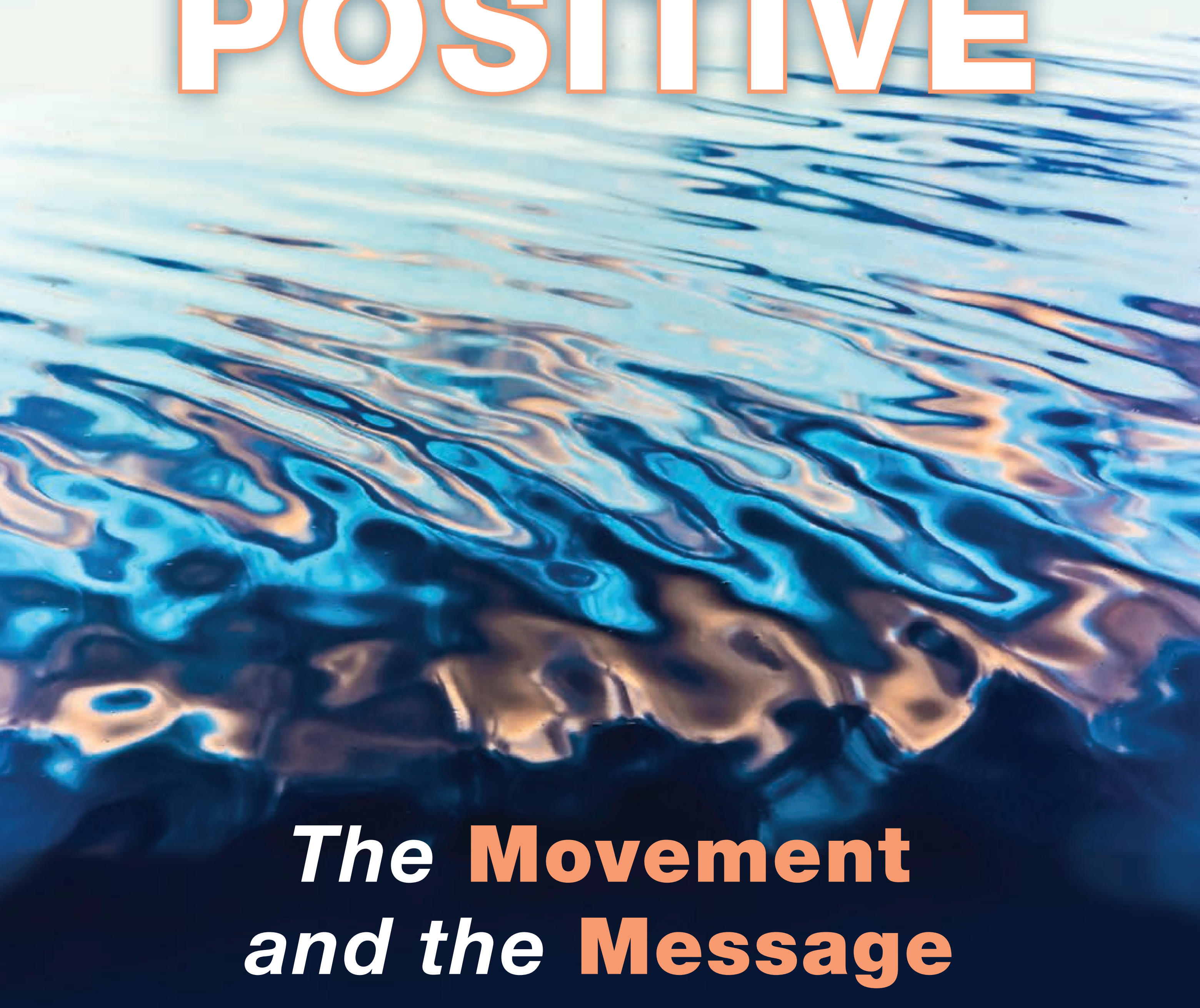
Of course, eventually, you do want to move on, and positivity can help with that. Once you've looked squarely at your stuff, then it is the time to find something to be grateful for. Then you've really honoured yourself. Because only when you're seen can the real healing begin.

This article was published at www.tinybuddha.com. For daily wisdom, join the Tiny Buddha list at www.tinybuddha.com. You can also follow Tiny Buddha on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ginelle Testa is a passionate wordsmith. She's a queer gal whose passions include recovery/sobriety, social justice, body positivity, and intersectional feminism. In the rare moments when she isn't writing, you can find her holding her own in a recreational street hockey league, thrifting eclectic attire, and imperfectly practicing Buddhism. You can find her at ginelletesta.com.

TRY AND BE POSITIVE



The Movement and the Message

By Jeff Tiessen

Swimming pools, shower stalls, and sleep-overs. Three of my harshest childhood fears. After I lost both arms I mean. It's hard to think back four decades and remember exactly why those three things brought on such abject anxiety. But I do know that vulnerability was involved. So was utter self-consciousness and insecurity.

It was scars and skin flaps on display. Just-one-quick-look stares from kids who knew me but couldn't help it. I get it, I'd have to look too. Totally looking away and pretending oblivion would've been just as weird probably.

Or maybe, it was as simple as being the only kid with no arms in the pool. But not a cool thing to be so different like the gal in town with some wicked ink, both arms sleeved in Sailor Jerry tattoos. Or the guy who works at Tim's with the slick lime green mullet cut. A dubious celebrity for all of us the same. The difference though, is that they chose to solicit attention. We, with amputations or limb difference, mostly did not.

Public pools and busy beaches today still conjure a twinge of those childhood anxieties. Maybe for some of the same reasons and maybe some new ones too. I just don't like taking my arms off at any time or place during the day. My aluminum hands and plastic elbows are important parts of my body. They are my independence and my identity. I am not comfortable leaving them laying around on a chez lounge or a beach towel.

Or maybe it's the reverse farmer's tan that amputees are susceptible to that I'm not keen on sporting. You know, the lovely summer tan to the top of our socket trimlines, and the fish-belly white stump inside of it!

It's much different for me today. Those stomach-cramping fears and tears associated with swimming with peers or bedtime at sleep-overs are long gone. Somewhere, sometime thereafter, I became more confident in my changed body. I became accepting of its differences, and appreciative of its strength and durability, and the unique opportunities it affords me when I let it. Body-positivity, in some form, is what that is I suppose.

* * *

Research shows, and bear with me on this comically-obvious academia, "amputation represents a drastic impact on the patient's body and perception… body image and self-esteem" (Front. Psychol., 11 January 2021, Sec. Health Psychology). Add to that from Sarah McDonald et al., from the University of Sydney in Australia: "Research indicates that with body image disturbance, the poorest body image reported is for individuals with visible bodily changes." Uh, right you are.

So, enter Body Positivity, a social movement that argues for the acceptance and celebration of all body shapes and sizes. It's not driven by therapists, but mostly by social-media-savvy individuals with atypical bodies and real-life experiences. It's all about finding your own path toward emotional wellness and well-being.

The body-positive movement is not new. It has gone through three waves since the mid-twentieth century. The 1960s saw the rise of the first wave of body positivity. It was hinged on a fat acceptance movement, bringing public attention to the mental health issues around beauty and weight loss. It called out the toxicity of media beauty standards and societal body shame, and heightened awareness about the dangers of diet culture and eating disorders. The concern was the prevalence of negative body images, especially among young women and adolescents.

The second wave of the body positivity movement, in the 1990s, evolved to focus on exercise inclusivity. Proponents of the movement emphasized exercise for all body sizes and shapes and aimed to create safe, inclusive spaces where individuals of any body type could exercise comfortably without body or fat-shaming.

The body positivity movement has evolved again in recent years to respond to the influence of social media and edited photos. The movement now focuses on body functionality, self-esteem, and loving your body regardless of perceived flaws.

Interestingly though, the body positivity movement is considered to come with pros and cons. Benefits include drawing attention to beauty standards as a social construct. What that means is showing people that modern beauty standards derive from cultural expectations rather than objective truths about bodies and appearance. This helps break down the idea that your body somehow falls short of the ideal or that it needs to look different to look beautiful.

At its core, body positivity means self-love, and that can help many people achieve a positive body image — feeling more at peace with themselves and appreciating it for its unique traits. And many beauty standards in

the media are not only unhealthy but unattainable, made possible through digital photo editing techniques. The body positivity movement emphasizes realistic bodies.

But there are criticisms. One concern is that the body positivity movement can encourage individuals to ignore physical health. Some suggest that extreme body positivity can enable the rejection of professional opinions on healthcare and lifestyle.

Overemphasis of positive feelings has its shortcomings as well. Occasional negative feelings are a natural part of the human experience that encourage us to enact positive, healthy change in ourselves.

What's for sure is that our bodies are much more than their appearance. And physical and emotional self-care practices can help you recenter yourself and remember to appreciate your body for how it is.

Some say it's all about self-love. But on that point, body acceptance doesn't have to be self-love at all, says Ginelle Testa who describes herself as a queer gal whose passions include recovery and sobriety, social justice and intersectional feminism.

“Body acceptance is damn hard,” says Testa. “I didn't find relative peace with myself overnight. Even with finding some peace, I'm not ‘cured.’ I don't have a magic dose of body love all of a sudden.” She goes on to explain that body acceptance can be a moment-to-moment thing rather than a state of being. “It's something that has to be fought for but is sometimes settled on.”

Petra Scott, a Registered Holistic Nutritionist who helps women create a strong self-image through wholesome eating, says that thinking that you'll never be happy because of your looks is a gut-wrenching thing. “It's isolating. It's maddening. It's frustrating and a thousand other things,” she emphasizes.

Scott argues that accepting that you don't like everything about your body is the first step toward having a more positive frame of mind. “It's about acknowledging that you may feel ‘meh’ about some parts of your body, but not letting that stop you from doing things you want to do,” she shares. “Be kind to yourself. Be gentle and remind yourself of all the other things that you love about yourself.”

While it is sad that anyone is emotionally wrapped up in appearance, it's not just a female problem. The body positivity movement's raison d'être is to embrace all physical forms, irrespective of build, colour, gender, disability or anything else. It's not, in theory, a gendered campaign. But, so far, it has focused on women. It is an unfortunate fact that women's bodies (unlike men's) have always been up for public discussion.

Writes Jamie Waters from *The Guardian*: “There is a long history of admiring shapely female forms… think of the voluptuous Renaissance portraits; the fuller figures revered in

> *“Give yourself the time and space to come to terms with your new body. Time is a real healer, especially as a new amputee. Allow yourself to feel the emotions…”*

many African societies; or previous body-positive waves in the 1960s and 1990s. For men, though, lean has always been in – from Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man and ancient Greek statues to the moustachioed Marlboro man and Diet Coke hunks."

And, because men typically aren't comfortable talking about appearance, the grassroots campaigning that sparked the women's body positivity movement hasn't been mirrored by men.

From the male amputee perspective, Great Britain's Jamie Gane shares online about his personal journey with body image. He has experienced that how we think and feel about our bodies is ever-evolving and can be heavily influenced by others and the media. And he understands that even with the promotion of body positivity and difference, many amputees still struggle with the mental health implications of body image.

"Since my amputation," he says, "my body confidence has increased significantly and now I happily and proudly wear shorts most of the time. But when I am feeling tired or with general leg discomfort, I am very self-conscious if I limp slightly. The wandering eyes of the public and pointing hands of children affect how I feel about my body."

Gane notes that when he's active and being seen as an 'able-bodied amputee,' he feels confident and happy within his body. On the flip side, when he's seen as disabled and unable to perform certain tasks, he takes on negative feelings about his body image.

When Gane finds himself struggling with amputee-related body image issues, he reminds himself of the advice that he offers others. "Give yourself the time and space to come to terms with your new body. Time is a real healer, especially as a new amputee. Allow yourself to feel the emotions and ride the wave until you're ready to talk to someone for support."

Toni Furmanski, a body-positive blogger and Instagram influencer

Jamie Gane

Photo courtesy of Jamie Gane.

> *"There is a difference between self-love and body positivity. Self-love is feeling good about who you are. It's for every person. The body positivity movement was meant to be a safe space for those who have marginalized bodies — for the people who society kind of looks down on, or rarely recognizes."*

in the U.S. who lives with limb loss, encourages her fans and followers to think differently about body acceptance and body liberation and how we feel about who we are. Now thirty-something, she has been an amputee essentially all of her life, after surgery was decided upon to remove her shorter leg when she was just 13 months old.

In a 2020 interview with Carol Blymire and the Amputee Coalition, Furmanski spoke about the importance, for her, of self-care and kindness. “Sometimes self-care is whatever makes you feel better at the time,” Furmanski said. “I think we hear ‘self-care’ and we think of getting our nails done, doing a face mask, a little retail therapy, maybe a game of golf. And it can totally be all those things. But I think self-care should also be a deeper level of taking care of yourself.”

What she means is: “Are you doing those things to avoid a problem? Are you digging deep inside to heal old wounds? For me, I actually feel like my Instagram has been such a great way to realize that I wasn’t as okay as I had assumed I was. The more I was posting, the more I realized that I had issues I was pushing down and hiding from. It’s almost like journaling for me.”

Furmanski also talked about kindness, to herself, something she finds to be very powerful. “It’s amazing how different my life got once I started to be kind to myself,” she shared. She started off with simple things like small positive affirmations. “Sometimes they felt phony and fake,” she admitted, “but eventually I started to believe them and I started to feel those positive things in my bones. And, wow, once I was kinder to myself, it was so much easier to be kind to other people as well.”

In her work as a blogger and influencer Furmanski is more apt to talk about body acceptance and body liberation than body-positivity. She feels that the latter term has become watered down and almost always gets confused with self-love. “It lost its original meaning,” she explained.

“There is a difference between self-love and body positivity. Self-love is feeling good about who you are. It’s for every person. It’s what I think we should all strive for. The body positivity movement was meant to be a safe space for those who have marginalized bodies — for the people who society kind of looks down on, or rarely recognizes.”

Spring season always comes as a reminder to Furmanski. It’s shorts and dresses season again. “This means more chances for people to see my prosthesis and more stares and more comments,” she is reminded.

Furmanski said that she would do whatever she could to hide her prosthetic leg in high school, by wearing jeans, long dresses, or prosthetic covers. By her senior year, though, her outlook began to change. She stopped trying to hide her leg and began opting for whatever wardrobe choice felt the most comfortable. “I used to wear covers over my leg to try to blend

Photo from Amputee Coalition

Toni Furmanski

in a little, but now I embrace my leg. I welcome the comments and look at them as opening a door to conversations and chances to normalize disabilities and differences."

Furmanski said that she knows that most people don't stare and make comments to be rude. It happens because they are curious. "This may be our norm, but it isn't theirs," she acknowledged. "So, I try to give people the benefit of the doubt and try not to think of it as them judging me, but as them trying to understand."

* * *

Ella Dove is the host of ampLAfy, a podcast from the U.S.-based Limbless Association's Young Ambassador Project. Focusing on key themes affecting amputees across the country, Dove welcomed Lianne Forrest as her guest in 2021 to explore the topic of body positivity.

Forrest shared that she struggled with body confidence for a long time after becoming an amputee. She couldn't look at her stump, let alone touch it. She avoided mirrors. She hid her prosthetic leg with baggy, shapeless trousers, and she walked with her head down in public places.

But she has now reached a place of self-acceptance. "I've revamped my wardrobe and, with it, my attitude," she said. "I have learned to feel proud of every milestone I achieve. It has taken time, introspection and a real shift in mindset."

Forrest was born with spina bifida, which left her with very little sensation in her right leg. She became a below-knee amputee as a child after contracting a bone infection and complications called for an above-knee amputation at the age of 18.

Lianne Forrest

Photo by DAN ROWLANDS

For many years, she hid the fact that she was an amputee. "I had spent years hiding my leg from the world, asking for a prosthetic leg that was skin-coloured and never wearing shorts. Then two years ago I got a new leg, called a C-leg, which was difficult to cover with the flesh-coloured silicone that I was used to. And yet, there was something liberating about having no choice.

Her first outing with it was to go out for lunch with her family. "I put on my first pair of denim shorts, took a picture and gave myself a talking to," she recalled. "I am going out, showing my leg and I'm going to let people stare, because this is me, this is who I am. I need to be proud."

It was a teachable moment for her, from her. "You really need to see that your body is unique; your body is yours. It's not for anyone else to approve of, or for anyone else to judge. Learning to love your body and embracing what you have sets you free."

Changing the way we think about our body and how we look can take time. It can feel more difficult on some days than others. That's okay. Accepting your body is a process. If body-positive is a work in progress for you, being body neutral may be a good compromise – accepting your body even if you aren't 100 percent happy with it. Body Neutral – maybe the next wave?

Changing the Lens

*An interview with **thrive** publisher Jeff Tiessen.*

Talli Osborne Focuses on Positivity Punk & Personality

Three-foot-tall Talli Osborne is never short on words and life experiences to sagely share. From adoption to girl guides, to speaking and music hall stages, and on to the Punk Rock Museum, it's been a life lived through a lens uniquely her own.

Born without arms and bones in her legs, a very atypical family and childhood upbringing didn't so much tell her that she could do or be anything she wanted, as much as it reinforced in her that she was different. That was a gift to her. And embracing that is everything to her. And to others too, as Virgin's Sir Richard Branson said himself in his endorsement of Talli in his Top 10 Most Inspirational video blog.

thrive:* *There's a saying about how it's not how you start but how you finish, but your life is very much about your start isn't it?

Talli: You could say that for sure. I was put up for adoption immediately after I was born because my birth parents didn't think they could take care of a child like me. I lived in a hospital nursery for 13 months before I was adopted by the amazing Jean and Ray who are incredible people. They never planned to have a lot of children but they just kept seeing babies up for adoption that weren't perfect white ones. They kept adopting and adopting and adopting and ended up with 22 children. Yup, I have 21 siblings.

thrive:* *I've heard you say that dinnertime at your house was like a United Nations summit.

Talli: You've got that right. About half of us have special needs – from prosthetic wearers to wheelchair and scooter users – and half are able-bodied. My siblings are White, Black and Asian. Lots of different nationalities. Being part of a family with such different abilities, ethnicities, and body shapes and sizes, was a really cool place to be brought up because it was so different.

Looking around the kitchen table I knew that I was adopted. My parents never had to sit me down and tell me that. It didn't matter because we were all very, very loved. We were wanted. Really wanted. Nobody lets two people collect 22 kids. There were a lot of people against it and against my parents. The neighbours would call Children's Aid on my parents all the time.

Photos courtesy of Talli Osborne.

thrive:* *It's hard to imagine how your parents managed. Then consider 11 kids with disabilities and the extra attention that would take. How do you remember it?

Talli: I had an amazing upbringing. My parents didn't coddle me. I had to contribute to household chores just like anyone else. Everyone did. My mom made sure that if I couldn't do one, I'd better figure out how to do another. It's truly why I am who I am today. I live independently, and it is challenging every day, but it's a mindset.

You know, I've often wondered, "what were my parents thinking?" I had two step kids in my last long-term relationship. That was hard. And financially? It's hard to imagine how my parents managed. We were all legally adopted. They paid for us. They weren't foster parents. We weren't rich. My dad was an electrician.

I remember my dad just kept building onto the house as my parents got more kids. It started as a small house in Hamilton and ended up being pretty huge with 11 bedrooms. It was our mansion.

My mom couldn't work because we were always going to different medical appointments. Three of us wore prostheses. But all kinds of medical appointments all the time. They just made it work by stretching every dollar.

***thrive:* Hearing all of that, what kind of kid were you?**

Talli: I was a typical kid. I was interested in a lot of things and joined them. Girl Guides, school band, little league, camp, and even a wilderness school. I figured out how to help carry a canoe, and start fires with my feet. I was a Girl Guide until I was a young teen. I loved the community that these activities brought me.

I always wanted to be involved and do things. I remember thinking that if I want to go to sleep-over camp or sleep over at a friend's house, I need to figure out how to dress myself, put on my pajamas and take myself to the bathroom. And I did.

It's important to understand that in my mind, I didn't, and still don't, see myself as disabled. I've worked really hard to get on board with the word "disabled", but I just don't buy into that label. The world is what's not on board. It's not built for me. Today I live in an apartment that I put together where I can do everything. I definitely am not disabled in my apartment.

***thrive:* You're not a prostheses user anymore, but do you identify with the amputee or limb loss community?**

Talli: Everyone's experience is a different experience. I had no trauma. I was born this way. I have friends who are missing limbs, but we have more in common than just that. All of my life, people have been putting me in a box that I fight to get out of. I don't like labels that restrict me. The only label that I put on myself is Punk Rock. Because I am punk rock.

I wasn't amputated. That's a different experience completely. We all have our own story. We don't have the same story because we look like we have similarities.

***thrive:* Everyone has tough days. And those with disabilities can be pretty good at putting on a brave face. What do you struggle with?**

Talli: My life is challenging, and I'll never pretend that it's not. Right now, what I'm challenged with is not driving. I worked hard for five years to get my car, and license and getting it modified. I'm in Las Vegas, but my car is still in Canada. I just want to drive so badly. I've lived independently for 20 years and I'm having to rely on people to drive me places. I'm driving along eight-lane highways on my scooter right now. It's really scary. I've been hit by six cars in my lifetime and I don't want to get hit by a seventh.

***thrive:* The little that I know about punk rock is that it really celebrates difference. I know that you're high profile in the punk community. Let's hear about your new job.**

Talli: This job is all about who I am. I manage the new Punk Rock Museum in Las Vegas. I'm the face of it. It's the most comprehensive punk rock museum in the world. For my whole life I've been trying to prove that I'm just as good, if not better, than the average candidate. I was never really seen for my true value. This one I didn't even apply for. I was poached for this job. I finally feel seen in my job. This job is all about what I offer with no arms, not in spite of having no arms. I'm known as Nubs in the punk world. It came from a song that was written about me. You don't pick your nickname. I sang in my own punk band for years, performing in Toronto mostly. The nickname gave me an insane amount of confidence. Not in a cocky way. But in a don't-cover-up-who-you-are way. It's me.

***thrive:* You talk a lot about confidence and you exude it. But for those who are underconfident, what do you share with them?**

Talli: It's a journey. You can't just buy it at a store or pull it out one morning over coffee. For me, it was about accepting who I am and accepting me for me and not just being neutral about who I am. I attracted so many really cool people by just being me. That gave me confidence.

I was insecure before. And I was attracting other insecure people. But positivity is in my core. It's a gift. Everyone does not have that. It's not just my pink hair. Being me, three feet tall with no arms. I wanted to fit in all my life. I think what people appreciate is that I'm standing outside of that box now.

There were times in my life that I needed to make changes that made me feel more comfortable, like for example, not wearing my prosthetic limbs when they became more of a burden to me than helping me.

***thrive:* What do you mean, more of a burden?**

Talli: I always tried to fit in by wearing prosthetic legs. I'm grateful for my mother for giving me the opportunity to wear them, to see if that worked for me. It didn't. And if I was a parent of an amputee child I would do exactly the same thing.

I'm not anti-prosthesis, but for me I was wearing prosthetic legs for everyone else and not me. They actually made my life harder. I wore them for society. I wore them for my peers. I wore them for the school system. I wore them for my parents. I wore them for everybody who told me I had to wear them.

There was a lightbulb moment for me. It was at university and one of my new friends, who only knew me

Photo by Michael East

without prostheses, saw me struggling in them and asked, “what the hell are you doing?” I took them off that day and never put them on ever again. That same day I went out and bought new clothes that accented my short body, how I wanted to look, and my style, and my sexuality.

thrive:* *In your public speaking and media interviews you talk a lot about body positivity. It seems you’ve really embraced it. What does it mean to you?

Talli: Doing the work that I do [public speaking] I see so many people who don’t love their bodies. Most people don’t. I do. Not every day. But I find that putting out body positivity really affects people in a positive way.

I love shock value, so I posted some naked hula hooping during the pandemic. I got so much positive response. Of course, there were trolls. But it wasn’t sexual. It was nudity, not pornography. I was showing the world that I love my body. It was about helping people get to a more positive space with their body. We can’t get out of the body we live in so why not embrace it?

thrive:* *You challenge the cliché of inner beauty. Why?

Talli: As someone with a different body growing up, people would say to me, “you’re so beautiful on the inside.” “Look at your inner beauty.” “Boys are idiots.” “Don’t worry, someone will see who you are on the inside one day.” It made me feel ugly.

I look in the mirror and I think I’m beautiful. If someone is going to be attracted to me, it’s going to be the whole package. To say that it’s just on the inside is bullshit. It makes that person feel badly about the outside of them.

People who are attracted to me are attracted to everything about me, my body and my personality and my good heart. Be real, physical attraction is part of life.

It’s not a good way to raise children: “You’re ugly on the outside but someone will someday see your inner beauty.” Of course inner beauty matters, and it does trump all, but it’s the whole package that matters. We need to embrace everything about ourselves to feel happy on this planet.

It’s not about how I think you look; it’s about how you feel. People don’t feel beautiful just because someone says so. It really has to come from within.

thrive:* *Last question. Do you ever think, “what if things were different?”

Talli: I know that I’m different, but we are all different. I am very able. I just moved me and my cat to another country by myself to start another career. I love who I am and I wouldn’t change it. I don’t ever think about, or wish, that I had arms. Well, honestly, maybe every blue moon I wish I had just one hand, even for just five minutes. And then they can take it back. Ha!

The Beauty of Aging
(Gracefully or Not)

By Vaidehi

> *"Mrs. Miniver suddenly understood why she was enjoying the forties so much better than she had enjoyed the thirties: it was the difference between August and October, between the heaviness of late summer and the sparkle of early autumn, between the ending of an old phase and the beginning of a fresh one."*
>
> ~Jan Struther,
> Mrs. Miniver

IN A SOCIETY THAT VALUES YOUTH TO THE POINT OF INSANITY, REACHING THAT TERRIBLE "MIDDLE AGE" SEEMS LIKE A TICKET TO THE CIRCUS OF FORGET-ME LAND!

> **As I journal and reflect my way through all this, I wonder why this is a big deal at all. In fact, in many families across nature, growing older is a good sign. It's a symbol of status and respect.**

Take the example of the silverback gorilla: all that gray hair on their back gives them the authority to make decisions for the group! Wolf leaders, elephant mothers, and older dolphins are all instances where nature favours age.

Why then, are humans obsessed with youth? From creams that remove wrinkles to references like "well-maintained" (as if we were a car!), we are told repeatedly that being younger is somehow better.

Personally, growing older has taught me a few things, and I wish I could go back in time and share them with my younger self. However, that's not possible unless we invent a time machine, so I'll list them here and you can take what you will.

Don't obsess over beauty. Or rather, what society tells you beauty is.

All through my growing up years, I pursued being beautiful even at the cost of my true talents. I underplayed my reading habit, and I acted meek so men would perceive me as "more beautiful." I have no idea where I received these ideas, but they were debilitating.

I wanted to be beautiful so I would be chosen by men, but I never stopped to ask myself: Which man?

It is sad that I desperately wanted to be chosen by someone even as I rejected myself, day in and out. After severe blows to my self-esteem, I realized that the pursuit of beauty has been absolutely useless.

What really helped me during difficult times was my sheer bullheadedness and foolish optimism. Surprisingly, being myself, with gray hair, crooked teeth, and a few extra pounds, is easy to do and has also earned me some beautiful friendships, with men and women alike.

Secondly, age is really just a number.

My dog doesn't know how old she is, so she is free to act as she pleases. She jumps on beds, goes crazy over sweets, and gets jealous. She runs if she wants, and as much as her body allows. It's easy for her to do all this and more because she doesn't have that limiting belief called "age."

Ellen Langer, a Harvard psychologist, conducted an unusual experiment where elderly subjects were asked to live like it was twenty years earlier, in a simulated environment. The men who underwent the experiment supposedly showed improvement in memory, cognition, and much more.

Even if the experiment seems outlandish to you, there's an important takeaway: How you perceive your age makes a huge difference in how you approach it. So why not approach it with positivity?

A few months ago, I read a very powerful quote, and it made a huge impression on me: "Do not regret growing older; it's a privilege denied to many."

How true! My mind immediately goes to my own father, who passed away before he fulfilled many of his dreams. I am sure he would have welcomed many more years with open arms, warts and all.

For a patient with a terminal illness, each day growing older can only be a blessing, even when the body feels frail. We don't have to wait for something like this to feel grateful for our age. We have that opportunity each day and in each moment.

You don't have to 'maintain' yourself.

You don't have to look younger.

You can be thin, overweight, or anything in between or beyond.

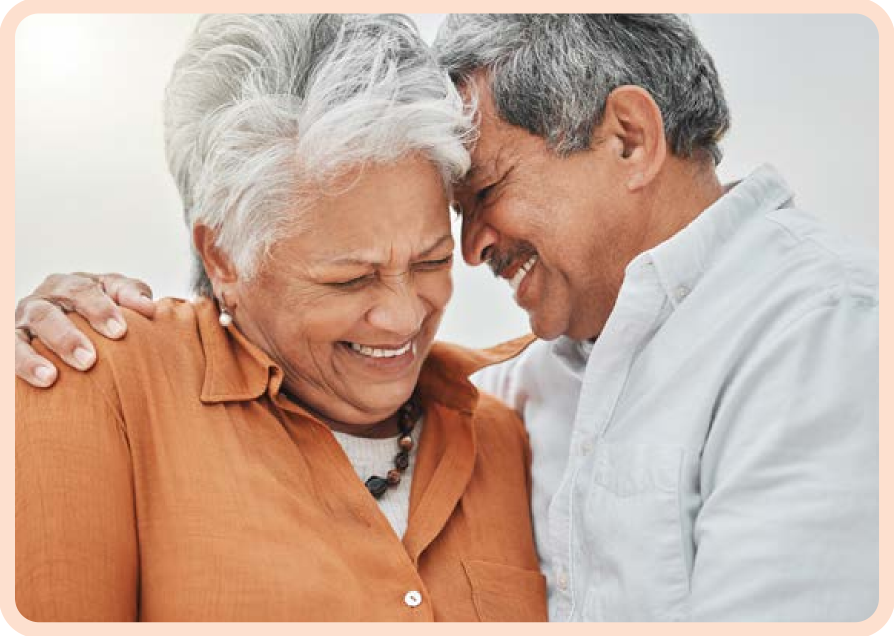
Don't hold yourself back from things you love just because you feel older.

Don't feel the pressure to age gracefully or anything else that society tells you to do. You have the freedom to age messily if you like. Heck, it's your life, and it's in chaos that order is born!

Maybe you don't have a head full of black hair, but so what? You probably sucked your thumb at six, but you don't do that anymore, do you? It's the same thing.

Nostalgia is only helpful if it uplifts you. If it's taking you on a downward spiral of "how I wish I was that age again!", then it's high time you closed that album of old photos. New sunrises and sunsets await you. Make yourself some frothy cold coffee and move on!

There's nothing that you need to tick off by a certain age. We all have our own trajectories and our own truths to learn. Be courageous enough to own your messy self and your messy life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Vaidehi is a teacher and mentor who is extremely passionate about pedagogy, writing, and the arts. She enjoys long conversations, writing and music. She runs her own website at www.alearninghut.com. She also curates a magazine called *the Halli Times*, with the aim of reviving old-fashioned habits like reading and writing.

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BUILDING RESILIENCE

Body Image in Kids with Limb Difference

By Dr. Gemma Tatangelo, Australian Catholic University

> **Many people assume that body image just refers to the way that a person feels about their appearance. While this is one aspect of body image, another important aspect is how a person feels about the things that they can do with their body.**

Having a healthy body image means being comfortable with the way you look, most of the time. It means being satisfied with what you can do with your body, most of the time. And it means accepting yourself as you are, most of the time.

It's important to remember that everyone has bad days. Just because you feel frustrated with yourself sometimes, doesn't mean that you have an unhealthy body image! The same is true for children. Children will have bad days when they feel disappointed or unhappy with themselves and their bodies. Unless this is the case most of the time, they probably do not have poor body image.

BODY IMAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

Body image begins to develop in children around the age of three. But it's not until the ages of about five to eight years old that children begin to compare their body to others and become aware of the ways that they are similar and different from others.

And while there is no simple answer to the question of definitive contributors to body image in kids, it is a combination of factors including parents, children's peers and the media.

Parents can be influential in shaping their child's views about the importance of physical appearance. In addition, research shows that children copy the attitudes that parents have towards their own bodies. Teasing from peers can also have an impact on children's feelings towards their body. And of course, children are inevitably exposed to various types of media such as television shows, movies, advertising, online games, etc. Unfortunately, media tend to create an impression that only one kind of body shape is 'ideal'.

It is impossible to shield children from all of the factors that may have a negative impact on their body image. Media is pervasive and everywhere. It's difficult to protect children from the insensitivity of other children. And as for modelling, even the most well-meaning parents will occasionally be critical of their body in front of their children.

The best way to protect children from these influences is to build-up their self-esteem, resilience and body image, so that they are not as vulnerable to these pressures.

FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

1. Reinforce the message that "everybody is different and that is ok."

For parents of children with limb differences, it can be difficult to hear their child talk about the things that they feel they can't do. Sometimes, the natural reaction is to change the subject or distract the child. However, it can be stressful for the child if their feelings about their differences aren't validated. So, if your child wants to talk about the ways they are different, use it as an opportunity to discuss the ways that no two bodies are the same and that is okay.

Celebrate diversity with your child by discussing ways that everyone has different characteristics and personal qualities (an activity example: with your child, help them to list all characteristics that they have in common with other family members, and then ways that they are unique from other family members, and finally how other family members are unique from each other).

It's also important to demonstrate to your child that everyone has something special to offer regardless of their size, shape, appearance and abilities.

2. Stress that people are valuable for who they are, not what they look like or what they can do.

Encouraging children to focus on their strengths in areas other than their appearance and physical abilities will ensure their self-esteem is not as vulnerable to appearance-related pressure. There are some simple ways that you can encourage your child to

> *"Help your child find ways to explain their limb difference that is age-appropriate and comfortable for them."*

value and accept themselves for who they are.

Remember that you are a role model. Try to speak respectfully about your own body and appearance and other people's appearances. Children copy the attitudes that parents have towards their own bodies. Also remember that most of us are very self-critical, so don't worry too much if you slip up now and again!

Praise their personality traits, behaviours and skill development. For example, in addition to saying things like, "you're so strong" or "you look pretty", it is important to also praise their personal qualities, "you are so kind" or "you're a fantastic reader".

3. Build their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy relates to a person's belief in their ability to succeed in their activities and goals. It determines how we approach tasks, challenges and goals in our lives. It's important to foster children's confidence in their abilities, particularly children with limb difference. Help your child find the things they are good at. Every child should feel like they are good at something. Allow your child to try different activities until they find some things that they enjoy doing and feel that they are good at. They can be simple things like drawing, painting, singing, storytelling, etc.

4. Prepare your child for their peers.

Children are naturally curious and unfortunately, they can be insensitive in the ways they ask each other about their differences. Therefore, it's important to prepare your child for questions about their limb difference to help with confident responses to their peers. Help your child find ways to explain their limb difference that is age-appropriate and comfortable for them. This can be empowering for them and encourages a feeling of openness and acceptance of diversity for your child. Also, be mindful that children will listen and take-on-board the ways their parents talk about their limb difference.

5. Encourage your child to use 'helpful' thinking strategies.

All children will have days when they feel badly about something that has happened, something that someone has said, or something they feel they can't do. While this is unavoidable, there is something you can do to make it easier for your child and improve his or her outlook. Help your child to restructure how they think about their strengths and weaknesses as a strategy to use when a difficult situation arises.

ELEVATED VACUUM

Putting the Brakes on Pistoning

As lower-limb amputees well know, the lack of a good "connection" between the socket and their residual limb often results in what's commonly known as "pistoning" – technically speaking, the axial movement between the residual limb and the prosthetic socket. And that can lead to a litany of unpleasant issues, like poor proprioception (awareness of body position) and control of the prosthesis, falls and serious skin problems.

The elevated vacuum created with the use of a pump like the ALPS VIP™ ensures that the socket fits perfectly and that weight is distributed evenly over the surface of the residual limb. These benefits significantly reduce some of the most troublesome problems that can arise when contact between the socket and the residual limb is compromised.

So, what is elevated vacuum exactly? In the case of the ALPS VIP, it starts with user comfort in the prosthesis.

Elevated vacuum suspension is a system that relies on a pump to pull the air out of the socket which generates negative pressure across the whole surface of the socket. This negative pressure pulls the liner and the user's residual limb toward the inner socket wall. It is called "elevated" to distinguish it from a simple one-way expulsion valve which is able to reach a minimal level of vacuum. The elevated vacuum generates a higher pressure, that tightly secures the residual limb and the prosthetic liner inside the socket.

The benefits of this mechanism for lower-limb amputees are numerous. First, according to a variety of research studies, elevated vacuum systems with air-expulsion integrated pumps preserve residual limb skin health by improving circulation and increasing residual limb oxygenation.

How? It's all about maintaining an effective skin barrier (as measured by trans-epidermic water loss).

This system also deals with the problem of stump volume fluctuations quite efficiently, which of course improves prosthesis control.

Changes in residual limb volume present serious challenges for most prosthesis wearers, upper limb amputees included. Residual limb volume changes can impact prosthetic fit, which creates discomfort and diminished control of the limb. Increased pressure points in the socket can happen too, and that can quickly translate to residual limb health problems.

Elevated vacuum systems help limit residual limb volume changes throughout the course of the day, maintaining a more steady stump volume and socket stability. Reducing axial limb-socket movement also helps keep the residual limb's skin healthy.

And with all that comes improved comfort and greater freedom of movement.

ALPS®

"

I have been wearing ALPS products for over 12 years. ALPS makes my life better by being comfortable every day in my leg. My liner gives me that extra cushion so that no matter what sport I'm competing in, I feel safe and comfortable. At the end of the day, when I take my leg off, I know that I don't have bumps or bruises and that my leg is in a safe space all day.

Sometimes I wear my leg about 18 hours a day, so between the liner and the sleeve, keeping my leg on, and getting some good suspension, it has made my life easier to play with my kids, be active, and drive my car as an amputee. It has allowed me to feel like I'm a regular person - like my prosthesis is a part of me.

- ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

Elite Para Triathlete, Team USA

- **Ⓐ Superior Performance Liner (HD)**
- **Ⓑ Flex Sleeve (SFX)**

#makinglivesbetter

Photo courtesy of WillowWood

THE Low-Down ON LINERS

Liners function as the interface between the skin and the inner socket wall to protect the residual limb and provide comfort. Liners are available in a range of designs to suit different residual limb conditions and activity levels.

Thrive *readers were asked "How do you like your liner?" While the consensus was quite good, there were some consumer questions around fashion, fit and function. So, we looked to liner manufacturers for answers.*

Q. Fashion. Aren't there more colour choices?

A. While your favourite shirt may be available in a multitude of colours, liners are usually limited in colour offerings due to manufacturing processes. Not all fabrics may take or hold dyes well through the manufacturing process, especially when combined with gel, silicone and urethane interface materials.

Q. Function. How do I prevent pooling?

A. Breathability and sweat are common concerns for amputees. There are liners that work to manage or evacuate the sweat from the prosthesis. One-way valves on the socket help generate a better vacuum and more secure fit. It reduces the damaging effects of motion on damp tissue.

Q. Function. Is there such a thing as a breathable liner?

A. Breathable technology for drier skin and socket security has been introduced which works by letting air and perspiration that are often trapped between the liner and skin to escape. Heat management technology is being used to pull heat away from your limb throughout the day and during high activity.

Q. Fit. Are they all made the same?

A. Not all liners are designed the same. Liner profiles represent the shape of the residual limb more closely inside of the liner, whereas the outside of the liner looks tubular in shape. Different manufacturers have differing thicknesses. Some companies also pre-flex their liners and suspension sleeves.

Q. Stink. What can I do to prevent odour?

A. Unless a liner has specific properties to eliminate or control odour, the best rule of thumb is to make sure liners are being cleaned daily and disinfected weekly. At the end of each day, wash the liner with water and a body soap that does not irritate the skin. Allow the liner to dry on a drying stand overnight. Once a week, disinfect the liner by wiping the gel with ethyl or isopropyl alcohol and allow the liner to dry overnight.

It's also important to take care of your skin in this area too. Wash daily with a simple, unperfumed soap (ideally pH balanced) and rinse thoroughly to remove any soapy residue before drying. Use a lotion for dry skin and be sure that any damaged skin is properly cared for.

Q. Noise. As in controlling embarrassing bodily function sounds from my leg?

A. Noise usually comes from a liner that's either too loose or becoming loose during the day. Moisture and air can get trapped inside (between the liner and the residual limb) and is then expelled when you're walking.

Make sure that your liner fits properly. Socket trim lines might need adjusting to provide support to the liner and help prevent moisture and air from getting trapped. Also, make sure that your residual limb surface and the liner surface are as dry as possible before donning.

Ask your prosthetist about liner options that are right for you and be sure to let your clinician know of any fitting issues.

NOTE: *Many common household or bath products, including soaps, deodorant, perfumes, aerosol or alcohol sprays, or abrasive cleaners may cause or contribute to skin irritation. In the event of a bacterial infection, discontinue use of the liner immediately and see your family physician, prosthetist or a dermatologist.*

Photo courtesy of WillowWood


Rouzalin Hakim
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Kayla Crnecki


Andrea Dalzell


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Back to Work

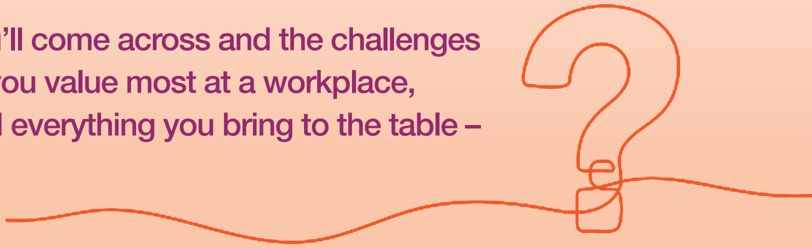
Deciding How and When After Amputation

By Rouzalin Hakim

Starting a new job is a daunting, yet exciting experience. It's filled with unfamiliarity both in terms of who you meet and your day-to-day routine. That feeling of uncertainty is amplified even more when you're starting a new job (or returning to your previous workplace) as a new amputee.

You're met with questions about your own skillset and strengths that you can internalize – will I still be able to work the way I did before? Is 9-5 going to be too tiring to maintain? Am I going to be on my feet or working with my hands all day? How will I handle stressful work situations?

These are just some of the many questions you'll come across and the challenges you'll face, but it's important to focus on what you value most at a workplace, and ensure that your workplace values you and everything you bring to the table – because it's undoubtedly a lot.



I struggled to get this article started because I'm still undecided about the subject itself… returning to work. My personal pros and cons list is split right down the centre about my decision to go back.

Allow me to share a little of my journey so this makes sense. I'm a one-and-a half-year-old amputee. Before my accident I was working one full-time job and two part-time ones. At the same time, I was working out at the gym every day, enjoying my motorcycle and traveling a lot.

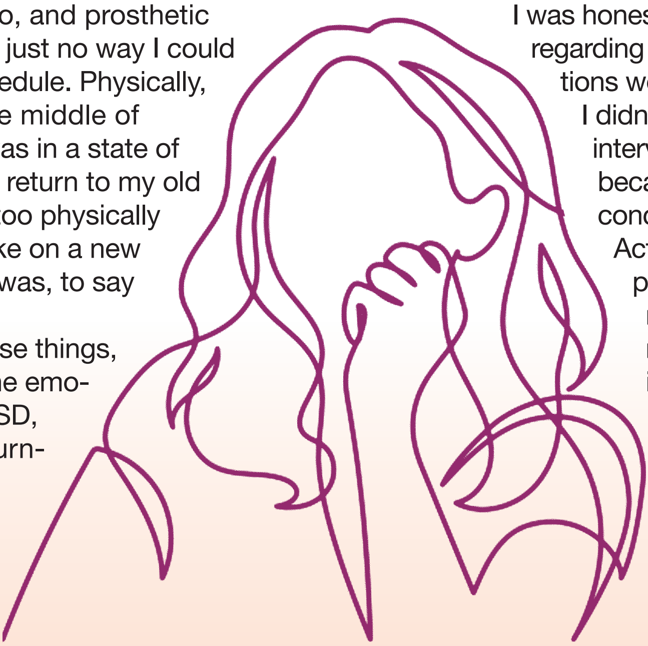
I was always out doing something in the community. So, as you can imagine, the lifestyle change of a traumatic amputation was a shock to every part of my system. My world was turned upside down and I wasn't handling it well by any means.

I went from being a very active, independent, and on-the-go person, to completely losing that life. My independence was stripped away from me, and my finances were depleting rapidly. I'm a homeowner who lives alone with no other financial resources.

It came to a point where I was deferring my mortgage and using lines of credit just to make ends meet. So, financially speaking, I was desperate to return to work. I searched endlessly for work-from-home jobs but pandemic restrictions were loosening up, and employers were expecting staff back in the office again.

Between rehab, physio, and prosthetic appointments, there was just no way I could commit to a working schedule. Physically, I was drained. And in the middle of relearning everything, I was in a state of financial panic. I couldn't return to my old jobs because they were too physically demanding. I couldn't take on a new role due to scheduling. I was, to say the least, stuck!

In addition to all of these things, I was also dealing with the emotional side of trauma: PTSD, anxiety, depression, mourning, and fear of being around people again. By the one-year mark, I was running out of options.



I had returned to one of my previous jobs, but only with part-time hours which barely made a dent in the bills. It was time to push further outside of my comfort zone and start looking for something else. That meant I would have to cut back on my physical recovery regimen, but I had no other options.

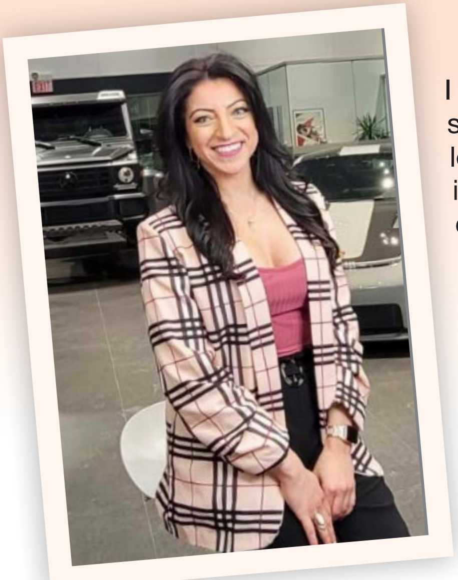
After an extensive search, I came across a role that I was very familiar with, one that I had done for years. A role that I felt I would be comfortable and successful doing. I hesitantly applied, mindful that the competition for job seekers was stiff. After seemingly endless interviews and conversations, I was offered the role. The job was perfectly suited for me. But it came at a price.

The job required full-time, 10-hour shifts. For a new AK [above-knee] amputee who was still learning how to… well, do everything again, this was a lot to consider. I'd have to give up my part-time job for this one. If this new one went south, I'd have nothing to fall back on. I thought long and hard. The employer needed an answer ASAP. I thought about all that I had overcome in the last year. I found enough confidence in that to say "yes".

I was honest and transparent from the start regarding my situation. I knew modifications would need to be considered.

I didn't share this in my first and second interview. But when the opportunity became more certain, I expressed my concern. It didn't discourage them. Actually, this employer seemed impressed and onboard which gave me great relief. It's important to mention that this was not the case in other job interviews. It saddens me to say that even though we aspire to be an 'equal' working world, that's not the case from my experience.

Let's fast-track to the first two weeks at my new job.



I was extremely self-conscious of my leg and how I walked in front of my new colleagues. I was extremely shy and very uncomfortable. I internalized comments that weren't meant to be hurtful, but I received them that way. My colleagues didn't know that I was wearing a prosthesis and asked, "how did you hurt your leg?" and "why are you walking differently today?"

I was embarrassed and extremely hurt, but Human Resources and other staff were of great support in sensitively announcing that comments are to be kept to oneself in the workplace. My OT [occupational therapist] also offered a lot of support. He set up an assessment of the workplace with management and myself. Things were slowly getting slightly easier to cope with, but I was still struggling with the physical demand of the job itself. Ten hours for four days a week was, and still is, a lot to handle. I think that might be the case regardless of your physical condition.

Every day I leaned on the great advice of my OT: "Just one more day. Just make it through today and when you get home, relax and unwind. Listen to your body."

But sometimes we act in the moment of emotion: exhaustion, embarrassment, shyness, hesitation. Many things can make us feel like it's time to throw in the towel and walk away. But by taking some relaxing time away from the circumstance, your head and actions can be much clearer.

One more point to share... as I write this I have been with my current employer for exactly five months. I'd love to give you a definitive answer on whether I'm glad or regretful of my decision to return but I can't. Some days are really tough, and some days are not. I will tell you this: in knowing that I'm doing this for me gives me great pride and a genuine sense of accomplishment. That's what gets me through a tough day. That, and a glass of wine at the end of it. Cheers!

Photo: Kristin Streff, *Lincoln Journal Star*

Driving Toward INCLUSION

By Joe Millage

Driving Toward Inclusion is a new program from ParaGolf Ontario, formerly the Ontario Amputee and Les Autres Sports Association. Supported by a grant from the Ontario Government called Enabling Change, the initiative is intended to open the minds of golf course managers to the benefits of the inclusive and accessible side of the game.

"It makes sense that a sport that encompasses a never-ending array of challenges sees no problem in opening doors to include physical, sensory and intellectual ones," says Ken Mulgrew, ParaGolf Ontario's president. But, on the course, that has not always been status quo.

"It was one thing when they let me play, but things moved to a whole new level when I routinely beat them," shares Kurtis Barkley. The five-foot-tall golfer has seven fused vertebrae and three major curves in his spine yet the handicap that means the most to him is the one provided by Golf Canada. Barkley has been ranked as high as number two in the world by the European Disability Golf Association, the world authority on accessible golf.

Amputee golfer Chris Garner loves the game as well, with a slightly different focus than Barkley's. Garner loves the long game. The para-athlete is a long drive competitor with hopes of breaking 300 yards this year. "I own the Canadian Long Drive Championship belt," Garner is proud to say. "But I've only been golfing for a few years and I know I am capable of much more.

Garner's dedication to the game extends to the prosthetic clinic. "I'll be working with my prosthetist to make sure that my leg can withstand the torque," he explains. Although he loves the distance skills that he's honing, Garner is also quick to zero-in on how the game is perfect for inclusive outings with his friends and family.

Mulgrew, an upper extremity amputee, played two varsity sports while studying at the University of Toronto and was the only amputee in either. Now a retired school teacher, Mulgrew has leaned into his love of the game of golf. He can compete at a high level but equally important to him he says is that "it's one of the few activities that I can do that allows me to spend time with my friends, celebrating little successes on the course and laughing at things that don't go so well. It's a passion that I want to share with other amputees, or anyone with a disability. Volunteering for ParaGolf Ontario allows me to do that."

There are two really unique aspects to the growth of paragolf. For the past six years the PGA of Canada has embraced a unique event called the Para Pro-Am hosted by ParaSport® Ontario. The tournament pairs corporate golfers with paragolfers (golfers with a disability) and PGA of Canada professionals, and the winning team qualifies for the regional finals in the world-class RBC Scramble.

"The Para Pro-Am has been a tremendous chance for us [paragolfers] to showcase our talent on the course and in the minds of PGA pro golfers," notes Mulgrew, adding that the Para Pro-Am event served as the driving force behind the idea for the Driving Toward Inclusion project.

Golf Ontario has played a role in heightening awareness around the game's natural potential for inclusivity. The association initiated the Ontario Disability Championship in 2019 and brought significant exposure to the inclusive side of the sport while also showcasing excellence.

This year's event sees a name change to a more contemporary Ontario Adaptive Championship. It's open to players from around the world and a strong challenge to the reign of returning champion Kurtis Barkley is expected.

Another notable step forward in building better inclusivity in the game came three years ago when Golf Canada – the national governing body for all golf in Canada – introduced the Canadian All Abilities Open. And more importantly, when Golf Canada put its support behind the First Tee program (a program specifically designed to engage and introduce kids and youth to the game) it also saw that it was essential to be available to all children, disabled kids included.

Working closely with First Tee, ParaGolf Ontario will be offering fully-inclusive opportunities to include six progressive lessons that are worth getting excited about for young golf enthusiasts. And what's more, First Tee is drawing from the paragolf community to ensure that paragolfers have a place on their team of instructors.

You might say that this article is incomplete. That would be the hope of ParaGolf Ontario anyway. It's hoped that these great gains in recent years are only the beginning chapters in a story that sees growth in a great game to include everybody!

For more on ParaGolf Ontario, visit paragolfontario.ca. For opportunities in other provinces contact the Canadian Amputee Golf Association: caga.ca.

Photo: *Tampa Bay Times*

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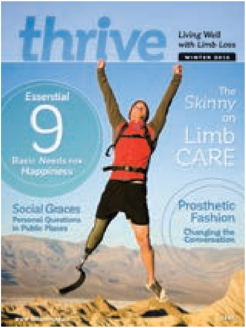

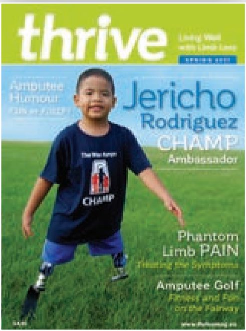

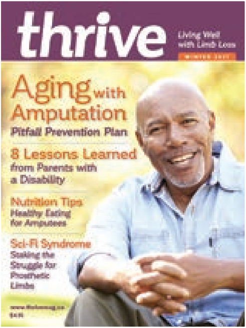

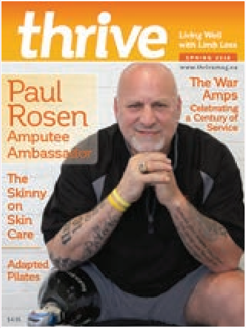

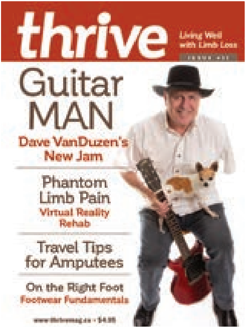

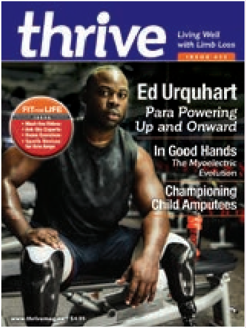

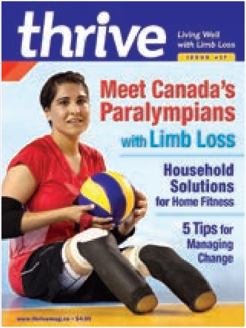

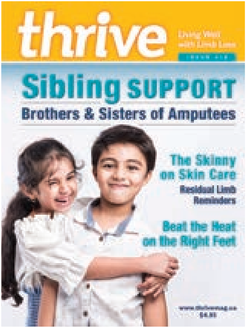

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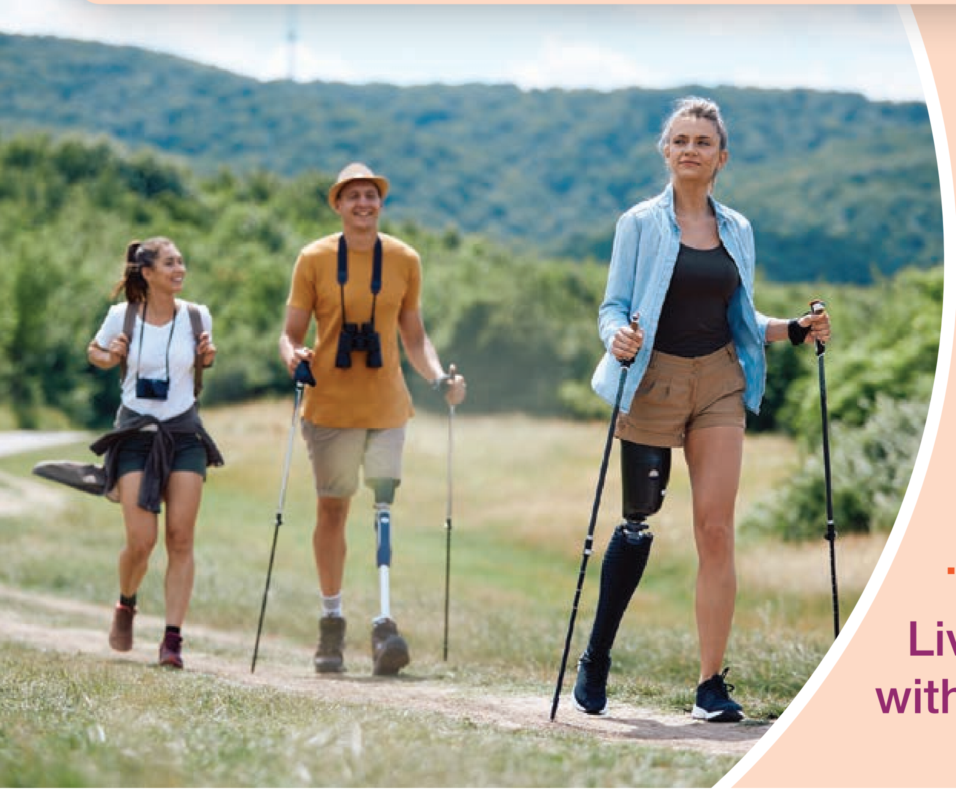

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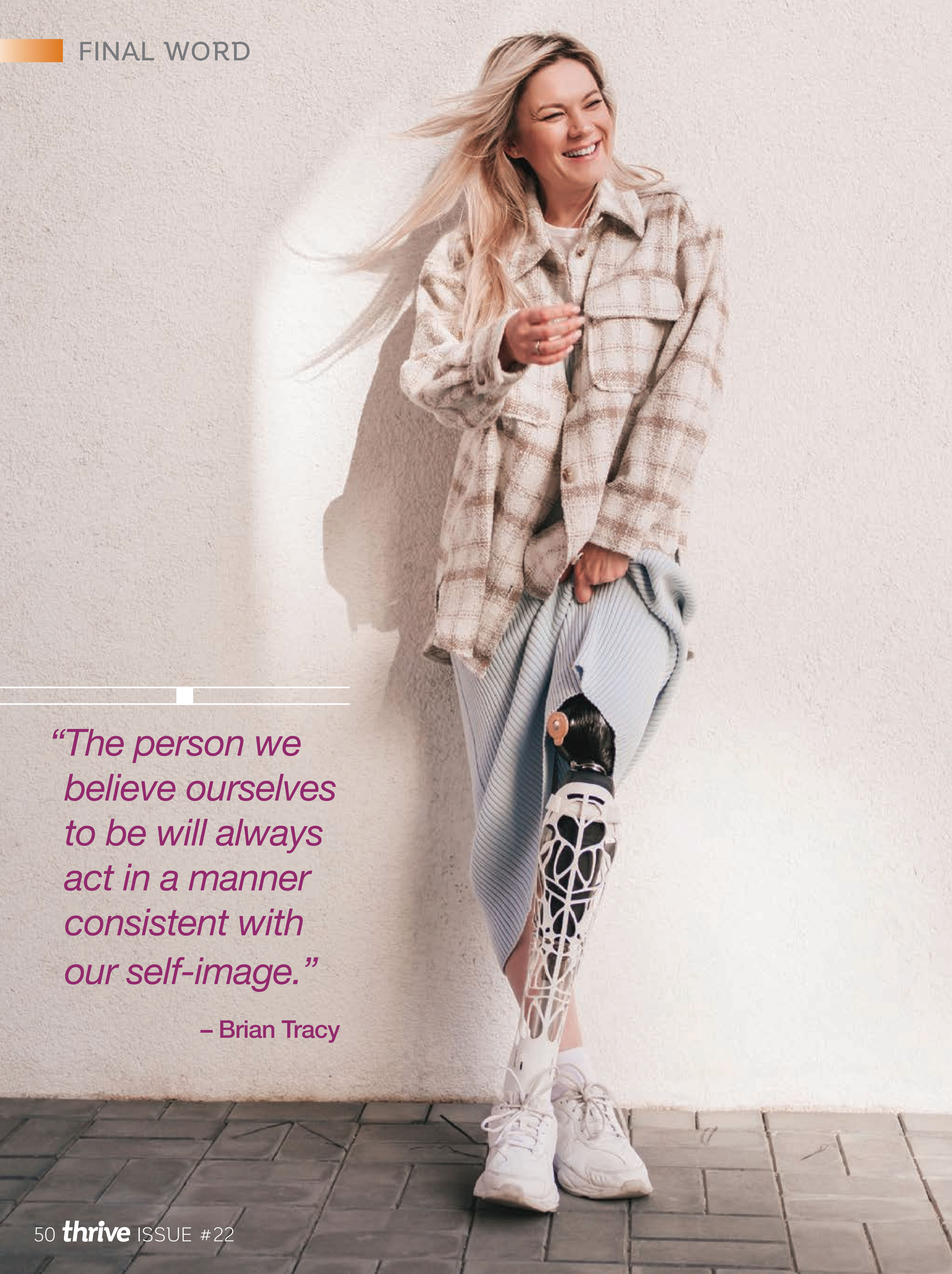

“The person we believe ourselves to be will always act in a manner consistent with our self-image.”

– Brian Tracy