

# thrive

Living Well  
with Limb Loss

ISSUE # 33

## Djibril "Champ" Kande

20  
WAYS  
to Inspire  
Yourself

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## FEATURES

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14

**Djibril “Champ” Kande**  
 Championing Amputee Community



24

**Fall-Proof Confidence**  
 A Practical Prevention Guide

## DEPARTMENTS

PUBLISHER’S NOTE ≡	.....	4
TAKE NOTE ≡≡≡	<i>A Good Sole</i> .....	6
	<i>Paralympic Pride</i>	
	<i>CN Tower Tints Orange</i>	
	<i>Stop Sugar-Coating Phantom Pain</i>	
	<i>Prosthetic Platform Bridges Gaps</i>	
	<i>Maintaining Joint Health</i>	
MIND OVER MATTER ≡	<i>20 Ways to Find Inspiration Within</i> .....	11
ASK AN EXPERT ≡≡≡	<i>I’m Fine. And Tired and Scared</i> .....	12
HEALTH & WELLNESS ≡	<i>Fear Factor. Why We Avoid the Gym</i> .....	18
BEGINNINGS ≡≡≡	<i>Pain Point Hurdles</i> .....	22
TRAVEL ≡≡≡≡	<i>See the World by Sea</i> .....	32
SPORTS & RECREATION	<i>Disc Golf is on the Fly</i> .....	33
FINAL WORD ≡≡≡	.....	34

## WELCOME

*“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.” – Viktor E. Frankl*

Great quote. As an amputee, it really resonates with me – personal growth often comes from adapting to circumstances.



*thrive* founder and publisher, Jeff Tiessen

That said, I'll be the first to admit that I'm not all that fond of change. I'm good at it but I don't like it. I leave my arms in the exact same spot in my bedroom every night (no explanation needed for fellow amputees, but for the uninitiated, I'm a double-arm amputee). It's very stress-inducing waking up to wonder: “Where did I leave my arms last night?!”

As amputees, I think we have to be good at it. For those who have lost limbs, amputation can represent our most profound change. But little things too. Volume changes in our residual limbs. Fit and function of our devices. Even environments... like for me, moving from the comforts of my home's lever-equipped doors, to the “roundies” on bathroom doors in the wild... like restaurants, hotels and friends' homes sometimes.

But if we don't change, we don't grow. And that brings me to my point. As we celebrate 10 years of *thrive magazine* in 2026, we're making changes to keep growing. While less printed pages, if you noticed, may not seem like growth, it is. We're investing in creating more content – digital content – for consumption in different ways (seems to be more than just a trend these days). More to come on that.

It has also been said that: “If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change” (Wayne Dyer). Well, yeah, but not so much with door knobs.

Jeff Tiessen  
Publisher, *thrive magazine*

**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 author 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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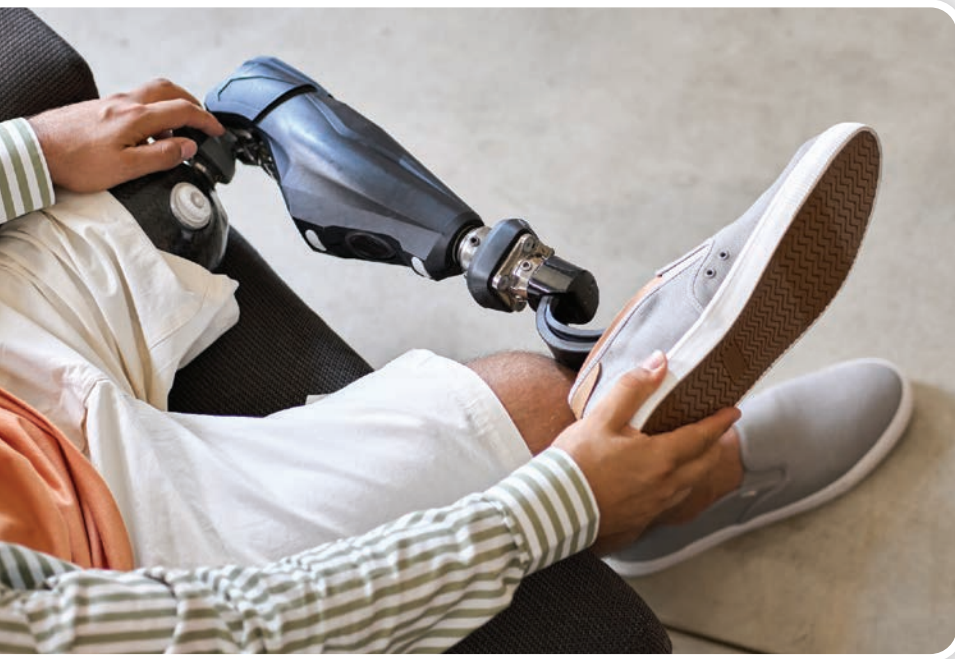


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# A GOOD SOLE



Finding shoes that work well with your prosthetic foot might present a challenge at times, and you're definitely not alone. Ill-fitting or poor-performing footwear can affect your comfort, posture, and even your safety. It's worth taking the time to choose wisely. Flat shoes are not necessarily the best option. Shoes with a bit of lift can ensure an optimal

socket angle. Looking for heels for an event? Too high and they may tilt you forward in the socket and put you off balance. And check not only the shoe grips, but also the soles for good support.

## PARALYMPIC PRIDE

Every finish line. Every victory. Canada's para-athletes wrapped up the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Milano Cortino with 15 medals. The Canadian Paralympic Team collected three gold, four silver and eight bronze medals. A total of 50 athletes, including guides, competed for Canada in six sports. Amputee athletes impressed on the slopes, trails, courses and ice to make our community proud.



## STOP SUGAR-COATING PHANTOM PAIN

Studies show that lowering sugar intake is a recommended strategy to help manage phantom limb pain (PLP), particularly for those with amputations due to diabetes or vascular disease. Evidence suggests that a low-carbohydrate diet can reduce PLP. Lowering blood sugar with whole grains, vegetables and lean proteins is known to reduce inflammation and improve blood flow which improves circulation, crucial for limb health. Keeping blood sugar levels within target ranges prevents further nerve damage and can help alleviate pain sensations in the amputated limb.

## SURVEY SAYS

The Amputee Coalition of Canada (ACC) is launching a national initiative to better understand and strengthen peer support groups across the country. The association is inviting amputee peer support groups and community support leaders to complete a short 10-minute survey to help identify support groups across Canada and strengths, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration. Insights will directly support the expansion and enhancement of peer support services for amputees nationwide. Share the survey with your support group and others for a stronger, more connected amputee community in Canada. Scan or link to the survey here: [trentu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bynuSpGfMrMSekm](https://trentu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bynuSpGfMrMSekm).



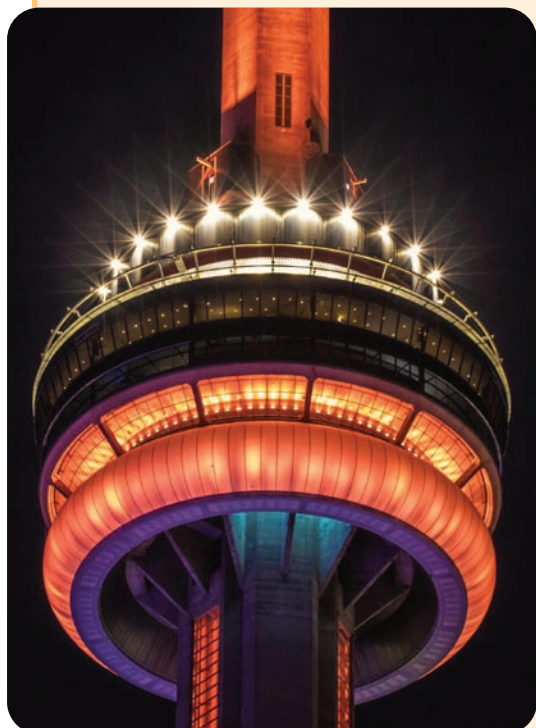
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*Cross-Country Skier Mark Arendz*

## CN Tower Tints Orange

On April 25th, Toronto's CN Tower will again light up orange in recognition of Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness (LLLDA) Month. An annual monthly event, April 25th is designated as the actual LLLDA Day to celebrate amputee resilience, experiences, and raise awareness. In honour of the day, a relatively new national organization – Limb Loss Connection – is hosting a Toronto event featuring the music of Nathan Gray, with keynote speaker John Cairns, a climber and three-way amputee known as The Mountain Man. For more info on the event and the organization's services, visit [limblossconnection.com](http://limblossconnection.com).



## TAKE COVER FROM THE ELEMENTS

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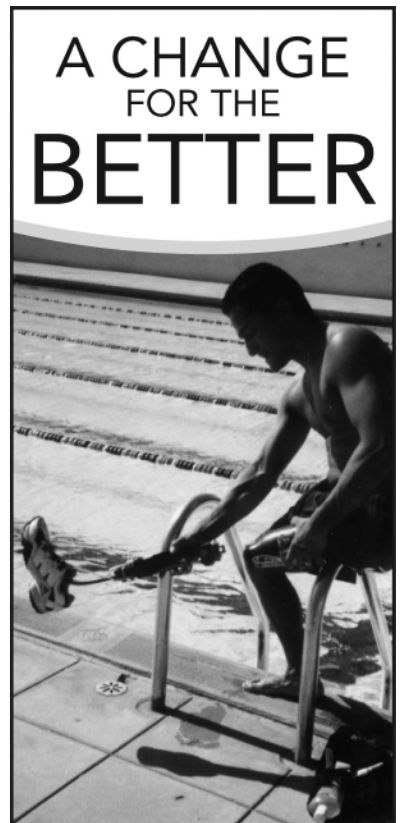
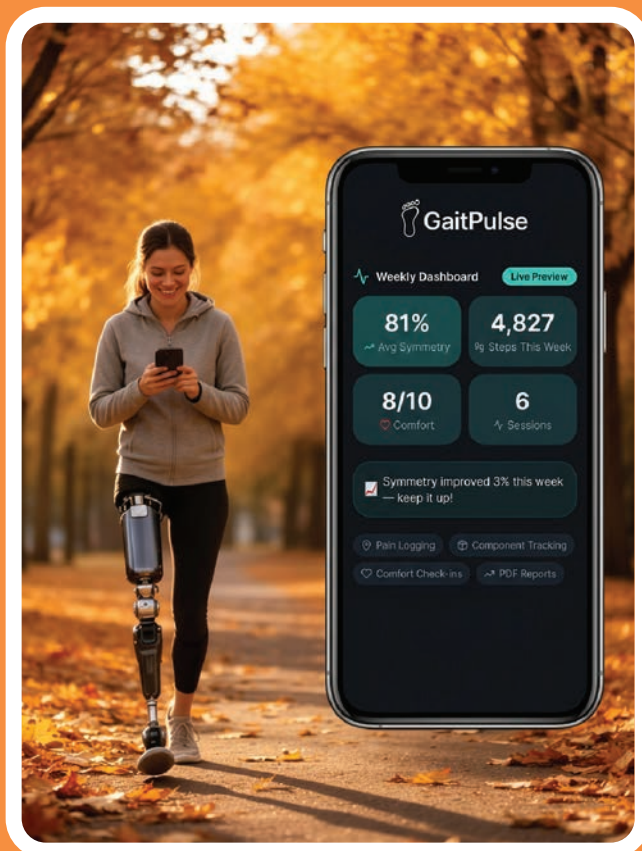
prosthetic feet and components from the elements — water, dirt, dust, sand and snow. The Lite is designed for use with footwear. The PLUS offers the same protection and features a rubberized non-slip sole. For more info visit [pro-armour.com/amputee](http://pro-armour.com/amputee).



# Prosthetic Platform Bridges Gaps

Designed by Paul Tubberville, an above-knee amputee of 30+ years, the new GaitPulse wellness app helps prosthesis users passively track what's happening between clinic visits... things like comfort shifts, activity and pain levels, gait symmetry, volume changes, and component wear. It then cross-correlates these signals — patterns, changes, levels, trends — to bring insights and information to the surface that patients and clinicians might otherwise miss.

GaitPulse, a free prosthetic intelligence platform, provides amputees with a simple way to log daily patterns they otherwise might forget. Practitioners get a dashboard that turns that data into trend alerts, automated reports, and documentation that supports equipment changes or adjustments. “I built it because I lived the gap between appointments for over three decades,” explains Tubberville. “Every feature exists because of something that fell through the cracks. GaitPulse is all about proactive prosthetic care and early intervention because for prosthesis users the most critical data about fit, comfort, and mobility is generated during the hours between clinic visits.” To learn more visit [gaitpulse.com](http://gaitpulse.com).



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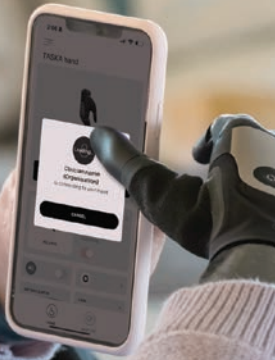
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**TASKA**  
by eqwal

# Calling My Clinician

Attention TASKA Prosthetics users! Did you know that the remote connection feature in MyTASKA lets your clinician configure your settings remotely, saving you time and eliminating the need for an extra visit to the clinic? EMG settings and grips can be easily adjusted, providing users with convenient support when it's needed most. This time-saving feature is available on the latest version of MyTASKA for iOS and Android devices. To learn more, visit [taskaprosthetics.com/support/mytaska-app](https://taskaprosthetics.com/support/mytaska-app).

# Maintaining Joint Health

After limb loss, your remaining joints often compensate for your missing limb which can increase the risk of overstrain, stiffness, and arthritis. Maintaining joint health is critical for comfort, mobility, and long-term function. Winnipeg P&O offers five self-care practices to help protect your joints.

- **Daily Stretching.** Muscles near the amputation site tend to shorten which can fix joints in a bent position increasing strain on other joints. Daily stretching will help to prevent contractures.
- **Low Impact Cardio & Movement.** Regular, low-impact exercise maintains joint flexibility, improves circulation, and strengthens the surrounding muscles without adding unnecessary pressure.
- **Proper Fit & Maintenance.** A poorly-fitting socket can force your body to alter its posture, causing joint pain in the hips, back and shoulders. Check your prosthetic fit regularly and monitor changes in your residual limb.
- **Strengthen Core & Supporting Muscles.** Building strength in the core and muscles surrounding the joints helps reduce the load on the joints themselves.
- **Weight Management & Nutrition.** Extra body weight puts increased stress on joints, particularly the knees and hips. Maintain a healthy weight. Even slight weight loss can significantly reduce knee strain.



## Prosthetist

(pruh-s-the-tist) noun.

1. Someone who solves problems you didn't know you had in ways you don't understand.
2. Someone who does precision guesswork based on unreliable data provided by those of questionable knowledge.

See also: **Wizard, Magician**



# Create, Explore, Expand

## 20 Ways to Find Inspiration within Yourself

By Lori Duschene

I suspect there is a feeling that we all wait for in life: a sense that there's boundless beauty out there and that we have the capacity to feel, channel, explore, and express it. We all want to feel moved, and then use that to create love, joy, passion, and purpose. If you've been feeling stuck or uninspired, these ideas may help you find inspiration.

1. **Try something new** and revel in the sensation of stretching beyond your comfort zone.
2. **Teach someone** to do something and tap into your potential as a leader.
3. **Immerse yourself in something** and forget about the limitations of time.
4. **Think about the challenges you face** and identify possible solutions.
5. **Read *50 Ways to Open Your World to New Possibilities*** ([tinybuddha.com/blog](http://tinybuddha.com/blog)) and pick one to try today.
6. **Join an organization** of people that is making a positive difference in the world.
7. **Disconnect for a while** and write in a journal.
8. **Embrace a new healthy habit** that can change your life for the better.
9. **Give yourself a pressure-free day** with nothing to do except the things that you enjoy.
10. **Express yourself creatively** in a way that you never have before.
11. **Enjoy something you created in the past** — a blog post, a video, a drawing, or a project.
12. **Listen to music that moves you** and think about what the songwriter might have felt.
13. **Recognize in yourself the strengths** that you see in other people.
14. **Make a conscious decision to let go** of something that doesn't serve you.
15. **Go for a walk in nature**, practice mindfulness, and lose track of time for a while.
16. **Take a camera outside** and photograph everything that looks beautiful to you.
17. **Watch a TEDx video** for some inspiring ideas.
18. **Join a forum of people** who can relate to your challenges.
19. **Reflect on everything you've accomplished.**
20. **Share yourself authentically** in a blog post — give inspiration to receive it.

### About the Author

Lori Deschene is the founder of Tiny Buddha ([tinybuddha.com](http://tinybuddha.com)). She is the author of the *Tiny Wisdom eBook* series (which includes one free eBook) and *Tiny Buddha's Guide to Loving Yourself*. Follow @tinybuddha for inspiring posts and wisdom quotes.

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# I'm Fine.

And I'm Tired  
and Scared.

By Lynn DeCola, CPO



In 1993, I wasn't fine. That's something that I understand now in a very different way. As an amputee coach, one of the most important skills I bring is active listening. It isn't just hearing someone's words. It's listening for what's underneath them.

Limb loss is not a one-time event. It is lifelong. Bodies change. Circumstances change. Support systems change. What worked five years ago may not work today.

Sometimes a client would say that something isn't working. Yes, it may be something straightforward. A liner may need to be a different size. It may need to be thicker for added padding. Alignment may need to be adjusted. Something basic may improve comfort and quality of life.

But sometimes it has nothing to do with equipment. It may be connected to changes in home support, job loss, financial stress, relationship strain, insurance barriers, anxiety, or depression. And sometimes it's even quieter than that.

Sometimes, "I'm fine" means... I'm overwhelmed.

I'm tired. I'm frustrated. I'm scared. I don't want to burden anyone. I don't know how to explain what's wrong. Too often, amputees compare themselves to others or quietly blame themselves when something feels harder than it "should." We are all different. Every body. Every history. Every home. Every layer of support.

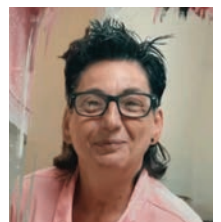
Active listening means creating space where someone doesn't have to be fine. It means slowing down. It means understanding that strength doesn't always look strong. It means that challenges show up in many forms.

As an amputee myself, I know what it feels like to say, "I'm fine," when I wasn't. Sometimes it's physical. Sometimes it's emotional.

And sometimes it's everything at once. It's life.

## About the Author

Lynn DeCola, CPO, is an above-knee amputee with over 30 years of personal and professional experience in orthotics, prosthetics and amputee care. An Amputee Coach and Mental Health First Aider, reach out to Lynn for support or to join her Amputees Preparing Amputees for Life group. Contact her at [facebook.com/improvingqualityoflifeafteramputation](https://www.facebook.com/improvingqualityoflifeafteramputation) or visit [lifelongprosthetics.com](http://lifelongprosthetics.com).





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# Djibril KANDE

## Championing Amputee Community

By Rouzalin Hakim



Hello, my fellow *thrive* readers. Every time I sit down to write for our community, I'm reminded of how powerful we are when we share our stories with one another. For the past four years of writing for *thrive magazine*, I've mostly told my own story of recovery from amputation. I've shared raw moments, victories, setbacks, and the reality of rebuilding life after limb loss. This year something shifted for me. Instead of only looking inward, I started looking outward toward others in the limb loss community whose stories should be heard just as much as my own.

***I met Djibril Kande two years ago at a Ride Again motorcycle event in Pennsylvania. He was the only other Canadian there, and that alone felt like fate nudging us toward a conversation. But what drew me to him was something deeper. As two people navigating life as lower-limb amputees, there was an immediate understanding between us — one of those rare connections that doesn't need much explanation. "Everyone calls me Champ," he was quick to insist.***

From the moment we met I sensed two distinct qualities in Champ, and both have proven to be true... emotional strength and kindness. Since we met, he has become one of the people who I turn to during my own emotional downfalls. He's the kind of person who always carries a good heart that presents in an unwavering smile regardless of what life puts in front of him.

In connecting for this feature story, I realized that there was much more to understand about Champ, on a deeper level, even deeper than before. After exercising the unique freedom to unabashedly ask

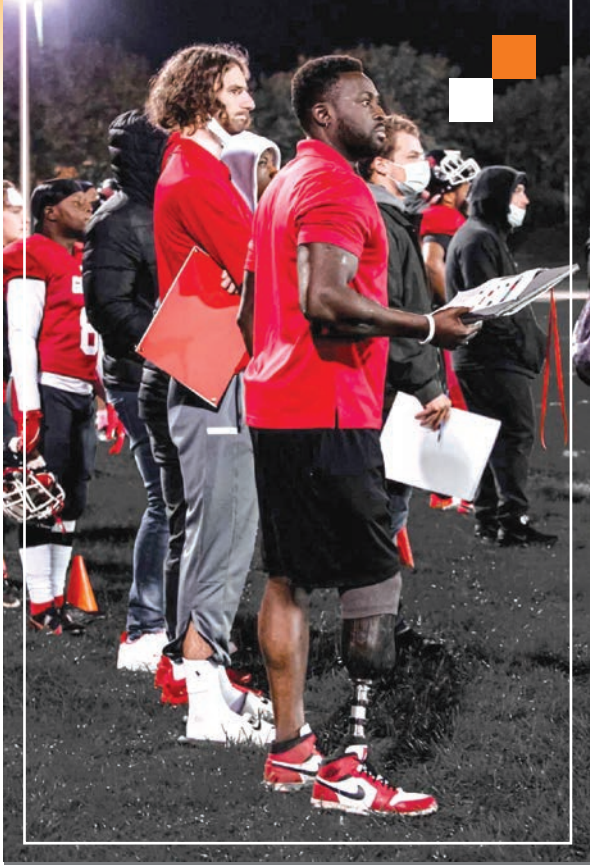
questions of another as a writer, I became more connected to his journey than ever. My hope is that as you read about Champ, you'll find the same inspiring connection in him that I have.

Like so many personal stories within our limb loss community, Champ's path as a new amputee didn't unfold in a straight line. It's layered with moments of uncertainty, resilience, and the kind of quiet perseverance that those who have lived through limb loss uniquely understand.

***His story, as it relates to the amputee community, begins in 2010 when a motorcycle accident changed the course of his life.***

At the time he was in his twenties, in a season of life when the future feels wide open and limitless. He was an athlete — a football player — and a volunteer with the Edmonton Police Services. Not unlike other twenty-somethings, Champ was focused on building a life, chasing goals, and imagining where the years ahead might take him. But as many





of us know well, life sometimes has a way of rewriting our plans without warning.

He was clipped by a passing car, but it wasn't the motorcycle accident that claimed his foot. He survived with only a few cuts and bruises. It was sepsis.

A few days after the crash Champ started to experience flu-like symptoms. He was shivering with a fever and couldn't warm up. His body was aching. His stomach was off. He knew something was wrong but barely remembers getting to the hospital. His blood pressure dropped dramatically shortly after he got there and he lost consciousness. A bacterial infection from one of those cuts sent him into septic shock.

Surviving on life support for weeks, Champ sustained damage to his hands and feet. He awoke weak – losing over 40 kilograms in coma – and afraid and confused as discussions of multiple amputations swirled around him. He didn't know any amputees except for the story of Terry Fox. That's why peer

support and giving back is so important to him today.

Recovery was long and lonely. After multiple surgical procedures, at one-year post-infection he became a metatarsal (partial-foot) amputee. But his quality of life still suffered – constant antibiotics, chronic pain and crutches. So did his mental health. He was gravely affected by the thought of losing his identity and he honestly believed that his life was over.

After nine years of suffering, Champ made the difficult

decision to have his leg amputated below the knee. A decision that can be hard to understand for some, for Champ it was rooted in hope rather than defeat – the belief that a better quality of life existed on the other side. He says that it was one of the best decisions he's ever made.

The early days of recovery were not without doubt. There were moments when he questioned whether he had made the right choice. Recovery can feel like standing at the bottom of a mountain and not knowing how long, or difficult, the climb will be.

But slowly, as time passed, something began to shift. Movement returned. Strength followed. And with that strength came something just as powerful – confidence. Before his accident, physical activity wasn't just something Champ enjoyed; it was part of how he understood himself. Losing a limb challenged his identity in ways that he finds difficult to put into words. Determined to find his way back to movement again,

becoming a para-athlete reconnected him with a part of himself that was still there. Athletic discipline, drive, and desire pushed him past physical and emotional limitations. The gym became more than just a place to train. It became a space for rebuilding, where strength returned not only to his body but to his sense of self as well.

Living with limb loss also means learning about how the world sees you. For Champ, that experience brings with it another layer. As a black man standing with a formidable presence at six-foot-two, visible scars, and a prosthetic leg, he knows that people are often unsure of how to approach him. Sometimes curiosity turns into quiet assumptions. He shares that there are instances when people notice him, his scars and missing leg, and implicitly assume that he was shot.

Champ lives at the intersection of race and disability, two identities that society often underestimates. It is that experience that has shaped his mission to help others transform adversity into strength. And yet, what he appreciates most are the moments when the people closest to him see beyond all of it... when friends who know him well simply forget that he's an amputee. In those moments, he's simply Champ.

A deeply indelible moment for him happened in a quiet encounter with someone he loves. Returning home after his amputation Champ anticipated with uncertainty what might be the reaction of his two-year-old nephew Gabriel who would see his uncle as an amputee for the first time. Typically, Gabriel would run straight into his arms without hesitation. But this time the little boy paused, standing back, trying to understand what had changed. Gabriel kept his distance until, with encouragement from Champ's sister, he slowly made his way over.

Champ did his best to keep the moment light so his nephew wouldn't

feel uncomfortable, but inside it impacted him immensely. It was an early reminder for him, he says, that limb loss doesn't just affect the person experiencing it. Families, friends, and even little ones in our lives must learn to adapt too.

Over time, those experiences helped inspire something that would become extremely meaningful to Champ. *Champstrong* began as a seedling idea and evolved into an over-arching message centered on resilience, mindset and community. His organization exists to remind and reinforce that losing a limb does not mean losing our identity, strength, or potential. Champstrong brings amputees together through connection, mentorship, and shared experiences. It brings amputees together to support one another and see that life after limb loss can still be full of possibility.

Champ also pours his heart into others through his passion for

coaching. During the time when his world had become very small — largely revolving around medical appointments and rehabilitation — a former coach encouraged Champ to help with a team. He agreed to do it for just one year. What once gave him something incredibly meaningful during a time when he needed it most now generates something even more meaningful for Champ eleven years later. He's mentoring young athletes with lessons from his own experiences, and helping to shape a generation not only as players but as people.

Listening to Champ share his story reminded me of something I've come to wholeheartedly believe about this community... each of us living with limb loss carries a story worth sharing with others like us. Not because those stories are defined by loss, but because they are scripted by resilience. Champ's

journey isn't just about an accident or an amputation. It's about rediscovering strength, rebuilding identity, and choosing — again and again — to move forward.

Champ's choices around moving forward have paid dividends in many aspects of his life. He pours his energy into the many passions that drive him — like being in front of the camera to model for brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Adidas and Lululemon, and using those opportunities to proudly bring visibility to amputees in spaces where we're rarely seen. He also loves the freedom of the open road, riding his motorcycle whenever he can. But beyond the photos, the miles, and the accomplishments, the thing that he's most passionate about is family.

In a world that can feel isolating after limb loss, finding people who truly understand can make a world of difference. For me, Champ is a reminder of just how strong and connected this community can be. His story is a powerful illustration of what can happen when resilience and purpose unite. It's a reminder that true strength can simply be the willingness to rebuild yourself, piece by piece, until you learn to stand in a way that feels comfortably and entirely you.

Follow Champ on  
Instagram @Just.Champ.k

#### ABOUT THE

**AUTHOR:** Rouzalin ("Roz") Hakim is an above-knee amputee of four years and a respected voice in the disability community. She blends lived experience with advocacy, writing and public speaking. A volunteer with the Amputee Coalition of Canada, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Sunnybrook Hospital and St. John's Rehab, she supports children with disabilities and fellow amputees. Follow Rouzalin on Instagram @1\_bionic\_beauty.



Champ and nephews Samuel (left), Gabriel (middle) and Anthony.

# The Fear Factor

## Why So Many People with Disabilities Avoid the Gym

By Megan Williamson, BA,  
*National Academy of Sports Medicine CPT,  
Founder & Coach, Ocean Rehab and Fitness*



Walking into a gym for the first time can be intimidating for anyone — new environment, new equipment, new people. But when you have a disability, that fear factor hits on an entirely different level.

For many people with disabilities, the gym isn't just a place to exercise. It's a space where they're hyper-aware of how they move, how others perceive them, and whether the environment works for them. And that can turn something as simple as a workout into an emotional marathon before the physical one even begins.

### Fear of Being Judged

One of the biggest, least talked-about reasons why many people with disabilities avoid gyms isn't motivation or discipline — it's the fear of judgement. Not always overt judgement, either. Most of the time, it's subtle: the lingering stare, curious double-take, unsure smile, or whispered "should we ask if they need help?"

Even well-intentioned curiosity can feel like scrutiny when you're already aware that your body moves and looks differently. For those with limb loss, it may be the feeling of eyes drawn to the prosthesis. For wheelchair users, it might be wondering whether people are staring at them or the chair. These feelings aren't imagined; they're very real. Social judgement is a powerful barrier.

### Positive Curiosity Can Be Uncomfortable Too

I'll be honest: when someone rolls into a gym using a wheelchair or rocking a prosthetic device, I often look. Not to judge — but because I love seeing how people move, adapt, and train, especially in environments that weren't built for them. And that's the tricky part. Even the kindest look can land the wrong way.

When you're entering a space that already makes you feel like the "only one," even a moment of someone watching can feel like pressure. But it's not the intention — it's the impact. And for someone with a disability walking (or wheeling) into a gym for the first time, that moment can sometimes be enough to make them decide that the space isn't for them.



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## The Environment Plays a Huge Role

Gym intimidation isn't only about people. It's about the physical space too. Most gyms are designed around able-bodied movement: equipment packed tightly together, machines that don't adjust enough, benches that don't move, cables or racks that aren't reachable, no adaptive tools, no staff trained in adaptive exercise. When you're navigating a space not built for your body, everything feels amplified. The uncertainty feels bigger.

## The Emotional Load for People with Disabilities

For many, entering a gym can mean carrying the fear of becoming a spectacle, pressure to "prove" that they can do it, the worry about being overly helped, frustration about being stared at, anxiety about being approached with assumptions and/or the burden of educating others — again. Fitness should not come with this much emotional weight. But for people with disabilities, it often does.



## What an Inclusive Gym Looks Like

Creating accessible fitness spaces isn't just about ramps or wide aisles. It's about culture and an educated staff. A gym doesn't need to have every piece of adaptive equipment in the world to be inclusive. But it does need to cultivate a mindset of curiosity without judgement, support without pity, and accessibility without being an afterthought.

## You're Not the Problem

If you've ever felt intimidated about walking into a gym, please hear this: You are not the problem. The environment is.

Your body, your movement patterns, your equipment, your adaptations — they are not barriers. They are simply part of how you train. You deserve spaces where you feel safe, welcomed, respected, and supported.

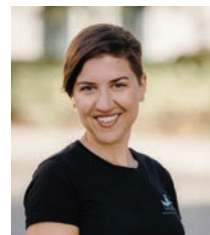
If you're looking to start going or returning to a gym, consider calling ahead to ask about accessibility, visiting during quieter times, bringing a support person, asking a trainer what options exist for modifications, choosing a facility that aligns with your comfort level, and remembering that you belong in any space that supports human movement.

Your fitness journey is valid and you deserve a community that recognizes that. Gym intimidation is real. But it's not inevitable.

---

### About Ocean Rehab and Fitness

Megan Williamson is a certified fitness coach through the National Academy of Sports Medicine and the head coach at Ocean Rehab and Fitness. Alongside her team, she offers adaptive training for those with physical disabilities. Her mission is to make exercise inclusive for everyone.



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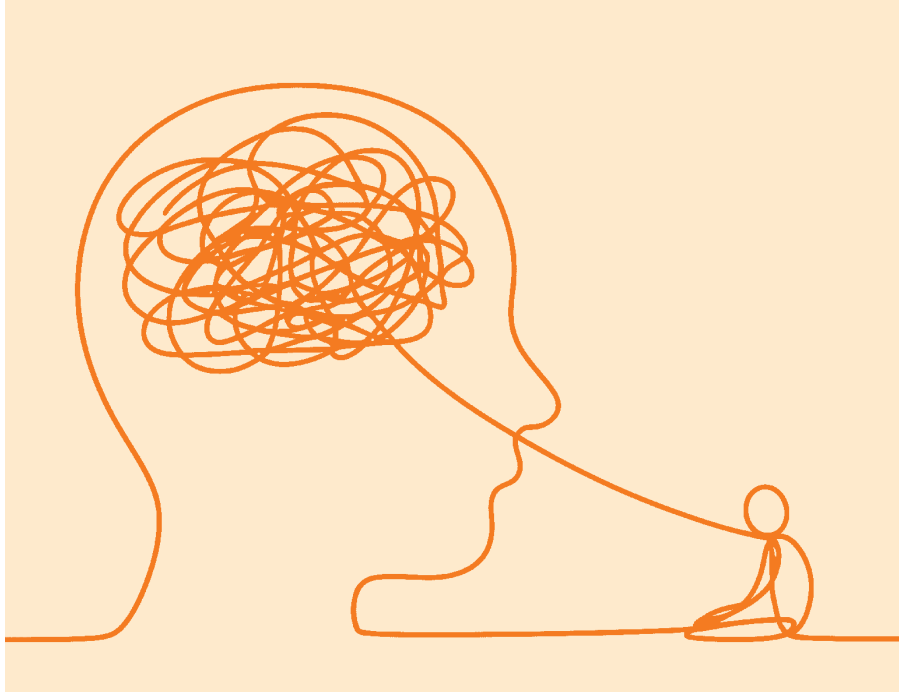


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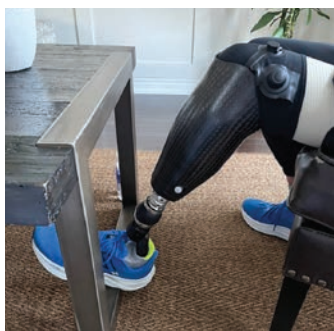
# Pain Points

## Hurdles on My Recovery Pathway

By Tony Korosak, @al3gup



What I experience daily as an amputee is difficult to explain to those who aren't amputees. I always appreciate the chance to share my story and truly appreciate it when non-amputees take the time to engage with me to learn more about what us amputees experience.



Being an amputee is something that is demanding, both physically and mentally. The past two and a half years since my amputation have presented hurdles for sure, especially around learning to be independent with a below-the-knee prosthetic leg.

And add to that, coming to understand and educate myself on the best ways to care for my body and my prosthesis.

As I shared in my last installment, I recently received my definitive leg which is designed to perform in concert with my daily life. What a remarkable journey it has been! While I'm still getting used to my new lifestyle, I am happy to have my final leg (for now I suppose) and to continue to work on improving my walking.

I still have bouts of pain in my residual limb that include nerve and phantom pain. I monitor it and continue to report my pain levels to my prosthetic team. In sharing my pain situation with my medical team, it was discovered that I am experiencing erythema of the skin. Erythema is not necessarily a common condition for amputees. Mine was discovered through discolouring of my stump which led to an ultrasound to confirm the diagnosis.

The best way that I can explain this as a non-medical professional is that I have a small mass of nerves or blood vessels inside my stump. Standing or sitting can place pressure on the nerve and cause pain. My team has suggested that I try injections to break up the erythema. The success rate is positive but there is a chance that the injections may have adverse effects on my stump. I am willing to take the chance right now. I'd be grateful to alleviate any of the pain.

### About the Author

Before becoming an amputee in 2023, Tony Korosak had a successful career in the automotive and pharmaceutical industries. As a below-knee amputee, he has shifted his focus toward educating fellow amputees. A regular contributor to *thrive*, he shares his journey of acceptance and independence. When he isn't writing, he is enjoying a round of golf or exploring ways to engage with the world.





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# FALL-PROOF Confidence

## A Practical FALLS PREVENTION Guide

By Folarin Babatunde  
PT PhD, MScSEM,  
MScPT, BScPT

**Falls are one of the most common – and most consequential – setbacks after limb loss. Research from Canadian outpatient clinics found that about one in two amputees with lower-extremity limb loss reported at least one fall in the past 12 months. But falls are not only a lower-limb issue. In a study of people with upper limb loss, almost half reported at least one fall in the past year as well, and one in four subjects reported two or more falls. Beyond bruises, for amputees, falls frequently lead to injury and can trigger a cycle of reduced activity, community participation and confidence.**



## Falls Aren't Random

Falls after limb loss are common, but contrary to popular belief they aren't necessarily all that random. Falls follow specific patterns which explains why attempts at prevention can be very effective. A study of unilateral lower-limb prosthesis users found that falls occur on level ground too, not only on obvious hazards like stairs. The authors suggest that prevention needs to include base-of-support disruptions while walking and not just the usual suspects like throw rugs, slippery and uneven surfaces for example. The fact that falls aren't just "bad luck" is encouraging in that prevention strategies can be effective. A useful way to think about minimizing the risk of falling is to consider the several factors that interact during movement.

### Body + Device + Environment + Attention

When there are changes in any one of these factors — fatigue, pain, socket discomfort, low light, rushing, distraction — the risk of a fall rises quickly. But, the goal isn't to be cautious all the time. It's to be strategic in the moments that matter most. So, let's focus on fall-proof confidence. That is, identifying your highest-risk moments and training "catch yourself" skills that matter most in real-time. Here are some of the most common high-risk moments and fall prevention strategies:

## 1 TRANSFERS (toilet, bed, chair, car)

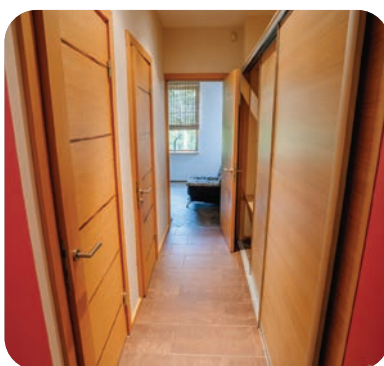
**WHY IT'S RISKY:** Transfers combine turning, shifting weight, and sitting and standing, and often happen when we are tired or distracted.

**TRY THIS:** "Slow the last 20% down."

- Slow the final "landing" phase when sitting/standing.
- Be certain that you got your body close to the surface before you sit.
- Stabilize hands first, then move feet — not both at once.
- Use nightlights in hallway and bathroom areas for nighttime safety.



## 2 Quick Turns (a surprisingly common trigger)



**WHY IT'S RISKY:** Turning too quickly changes your base of support really fast. Many falls happen in tight spaces like the kitchen, bathroom and busy hallways because of quick pivots.

**TRY THIS:** "Small steps to turn."

- Turn with several small steps rather than twisting over a planted foot.
- Pivot on your unaffected leg when possible.
- If you are carrying something, slow down and widen your base slightly.
- Use this rule: one risky thing at a time (don't combine fast turning with carrying with rushing).

## 3 Stairs and Curbs

**WHY IT'S RISKY:** A combination of changes in step height, narrow base and divided attention make steps and curbs high fall-risk areas.

**TRY THIS:** "Stop. Align. Step."

- Treat curbs like mini-stairs: stop and line up, then step with intent.
- Always use rails whenever available.
- Practice controlled step-downs (often harder than step-ups).



## Most Common Causes of Falls

26%  
Slips

22%  
Trips

22%  
Prosthetic  
Factors

## 4 Slippery When Wet (floors, stairs, icy sidewalks)



### WHY IT'S RISKY:

Slips are sudden and demand quick recovery steps when the ground is wet.

**TRY THIS:** “Reduce speed. Increase traction.”

- Shorten your stride and slow down on slick surfaces.
- Choose routes with better snow clearing and lighting in winter.
- Use traction footwear; consider ice grippers when conditions warrant.
- Keep your hands free outdoors. For example, carry a backpack instead of carrying things in your hands.

## 5 Tripping Hazards (uneven ground, toe catchers, clutter)

**WHY IT'S RISKY:** Tripping often happens when the foot is moving fast and there's little time for recovery.

Biomechanics research in unilateral below-knee amputees shows that minimum toe clearance occurs near peak swing-foot velocity, and that prosthetic-side toe clearance may not increase with faster walking the way it does on the sound side. This potentially increases the risk of tripping when you rush.

**TRY THIS:** “Clear the path to clear the toe.”

- At home, remove loose rugs, cords, clutter in walking paths.
- Outdoors, avoid last-second direction changes and always scan a few steps ahead.
- Avoid sudden speed-ups in crowds or on uneven ground.
- Ask your physiotherapist about toe-clearance strategies and drills.



## 6 Prosthetic “Off Days” (when fit, comfort and stability are just not right)

**WHY IT'S RISKY:** Fit and comfort changes can change gait mechanics and confidence. Plenty of factors can lead to residual limb volume changes, like heat and humidity, colder temperatures, weight changes, menstrual/hormone changes, diet/salt intake, or dehydration.

**TRY THIS:** “Don't push through unstable days.”

- If it feels “off,” reduce high-risk tasks that day (curbs, crowds, winter routes).
- Check skin early; address irritation before breakdown.
- If instability persists for a few days, contact your prosthetist or physiotherapist.



## 7 Fatigue Is Not Your Friend (it's a late-day fall multiplier)

Even if your balance is good, attention matters. When you're fatigued, your reaction time drops.

**WHY IT'S RISKY:** “At times we try to do too much when we're tired.”

**TRY THIS:**

- Schedule demanding tasks earlier in the day.
- Break loads into smaller trips.
- Reduce “risk stacking” (fatigue and stairs and carrying and rushing when you arrive home from a full day of work).



## 8 Dual-Tasking (walking and talking, carrying too much, sight-seeing or checking a phone)



**WHY IT'S RISKY:** Many everyday situations demand dual-tasking — walking while talking, checking a phone, scanning a phone, scanning traffic, carrying a tray, or doing

mental math (“Where did I park?”). After limb loss, walking can require more attention, and when your attention is split, balance recovery and foot placement can be less reliable. A trial in above-knee amputees found that adding dual-task balance training (combining gait/balance work with a cognitive or motor task) improved dual-task performance and cognitive status more than single-task training.

**TRY THIS:** “One risky thing at a time.”

- If you’re turning, stepping off a curb, on ice, or carrying a load, pause the conversation, stop texting, or stop multi-tasking for a moment.
- In busy environments (malls, sidewalks or streets), slow down and create some buffer space.

### “Catch Yourself” Skills

Fall prevention isn’t only about avoiding hazards. It’s also about improving your ability to recover — reactive balance — when something goes wrong. Train what actually prevents falls.

A clinical trial in people with below-knee amputations tested task-specific fall-prevention training using controlled, trip-like perturbations and reported improvements in recovery mechanics and fewer prospective stumbles and falls.

These findings point directly to skills that many people don’t practice enough:

- Weight shifting (front/back/side control)
- Turning control (start/stop, small-step turns)
- Step-recovery (“catch yourself” stepping)
- Dual-task walking (walking while looking/turning/ carrying something light)

Ask your physiotherapist to build these into your program progressively, starting safe and getting more “real-world” exposure.



### Noting “Near-Falls”

Researchers have emphasized that fall prevention improves when we document the details around a fall because patterns tell us what to change and what to train. Take just a minute to log the circumstances and consequences of a fall or near-fall to learn from it and prevent it from happening again the same way. After any fall or near-fall, jot down:

**What were you doing?** (transferring/turning/level walking/stairs/curb/carrying)

**Where were you?** (home/outdoors/store/parking lot)

**What started it?** (slip/trip/toe catch/misstep/rushed/distracted/prosthesis off)

**Outcome?** (near-fall vs fall; injury — yes/no)

Bring this to your physiotherapist or prosthetist. It often reveals a scenario where a small change prevents future falls.

## Ask Your Physiotherapist

*If trips/toe catching is an issue, ask about:*

- Toe-clearance training and obstacle/curb practice
- Safe speed progression (how to build pace without more toe catches)
- Prosthetic review (alignment, foot behaviour, swing/clearance strategy)

*If slips are an issue, ask about:*

- Reactive stepping (“catch yourself” drills)
- Start/stop and turning control
- Winter gait strategies (route + technique + traction)



*If turning in crowds is an issue, ask your physiotherapist about:*

- Dual-task walking progression (walk + head turns + carry + conversation)
- Community simulations (busy hallway, tight spaces)

*If transfers are an issue, ask about:*

- Transfer retraining (“slow last 20% down”)
- Home setup: lighting, rails, chair height, clutter, pathways

Bring your fall or near-fall notes to your appointment to identify patterns.

### Prosthesis Reassessment

*Early help is preventive care. Book a check-in with your prosthetist if you notice:*

- Increasing near-falls

- Worsening fear of falling that limits activity
- Prosthetic fit feels “off” for more than a few days
- Skin issues that change how you walk

Confidence doesn't come from avoiding life. It comes from practicing life — safely and progressively — especially the moments that trigger falls. Many falls happen during ordinary walking, which means everyday strategies and targeted training can make a meaningful difference.

**For a Falls Risk Screening Tool and a list of references from the author, go to the Health section on [thrivemag.ca](http://thrivemag.ca) or scan this QR code.**



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Folarin Babatunde, PT PhD, is a physiotherapist, researcher and educator with expertise in evidence-informed rehabilitation, performance training and community reintegration for people living with limb loss. He is the Owner/Principal at Cogent Physical Rehabilitation Center, a physiotherapy, rehab and wellness clinic. A former Western University Assistant Professor, he provides practical, real-world rehabilitation solutions after limb loss. For more information, visit [cogent-rehab.com](http://cogent-rehab.com).





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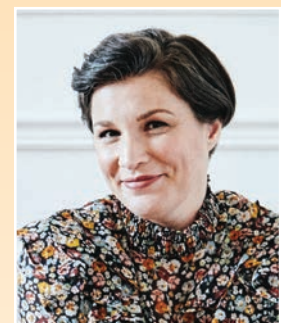
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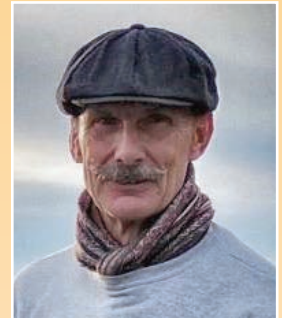
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# See the World by Sea

By Tanya Rabe  
Right Foot Adventures  
*Travel Consultant &  
Accessibility Specialist,  
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When it comes to accessible travel, one thing has become crystal clear over the years: cruising truly is for everyone. Seniors, multi-generational families, couples and solo travelers, and those from the 2SLGBTQ+, neurodivergent, and disability communities — there is a cruise for every ability, comfort level, and lifestyle.

For travellers who require wheelchair-accessible accommodations, guaranteed accessibility matters. The ability to select and confirm an accessible stateroom at the time of booking is beyond peace of mind. It's everything.

Knowing — not hoping — that your stateroom will meet your needs the moment that you book removes an enormous amount of stress. There's no waiting, no uncertainty, and no follow-up emails asking if your request was noted. Your accessible stateroom is confirmed. Period.

Unfortunately, accessible accommodations at all-inclusive resorts are still not guaranteed. While accessible travel agents and advocates continue working toward change and making our voices heard across the industry, cruising remains the only form of travel where accessible accommodations can be fully secured in advance. That certainty is critical for anyone who depends on accessibility to travel confidently.

Accessible cruise staterooms are designed with space and function in mind. There is room to ma-

neuver a wheelchair or scooter, and bathrooms include roll-in showers, shower seats, grab bars and roll-under sinks. Depending on the ship, these staterooms are available across various categories, from inside cabins to balconies and suites.

For travellers dreaming of a beach getaway, it's important to know that you don't need an all-inclusive resort to enjoy the Caribbean. A Caribbean cruise that includes a cruise line-owned private island offers a true beach experience with far greater accessibility. These private islands are designed specifically for cruise guests and often feature accessible pathways, beach wheelchairs, and supportive staff, allowing travellers to enjoy the sand and sea without unnecessary barriers.

Another often-overlooked benefit of cruising is access to onboard pools. Most cruise ships are equipped with at least one pool lift, making it possible for guests with mobility requirements to enjoy the pool — something that is still surprisingly rare at many all-inclusive resorts.

---

To read the full story, including information on cruising with mobility and medical equipment, caregivers and families, ports and tenders, ship life and choosing the right travel agent, go to the Ask an Expert section on [thrivemag.ca](http://thrivemag.ca) or scan this QR Code.



# Disc Golf Fun

## Playing the Social Game

By Max Warfield

Photo by Stewart Stick

A somber trend exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic that shows no signs of slowing down is the loneliness epidemic. Social disconnection is a prevalent problem in Canada, a multi-dimensional issue worsened by the many stresses of today. It has a strong connection to loneliness and depression, anxiety and substance abuse.

Loneliness has long been experienced by amputees due to compounding factors such as social isolation and stigma, and aging with a disability. There is a psychology to grieving a limb that can lead to loneliness. Decreased mobility can lead to reduced opportunities for social activity.

Suggested strategies to combat loneliness include support groups, peer mentorship, routines, creative endeavours and hobbies. Ah-ha... enter disc golf, an inclusive, inexpensive sport that is growing in popularity and combines all of these coping mechanisms.

If you can throw something, you can play disc golf. The motto of the sport is, "he or she who has the most fun, wins!"

Jeff MacKeigan and Cara Hovius, founders of Toronto's ChainLink Disc Golf, design and install courses, run disc golf tournaments and events and are completely enamoured with the community spirit that this sport encourages. "We love the inclusive nature of disc golf," says Hovius. "We focus on making spaces that anybody in the community can enjoy."

Disc golf delivers a long list of accepted health benefits like improved flexibility, confidence, hand-eye coordination, endurance, independence and weight loss. And it's an inexpensive hobby with most courses, and the sunshine and Vitamin D they provide, being free to play.

The physical payoffs are many, but the mental health gains are priceless. A common recommendation for loneliness, depression, anxiety management and stress relief, is to go for a walk in the park. Disc golf is that with a purpose. It inspires mindfulness, fosters mental clarity and reduces stress. The course is a sanctuary for rejuvenation filled with camaraderie and the social benefits of making new friends and being part of a community.



To learn more about the social benefits of disc golf, its growth in Canada, and Udisc, a course accessibility app, go to the Sports and Recreation section on [thrivemag.ca](http://thrivemag.ca), or scan this QR code.

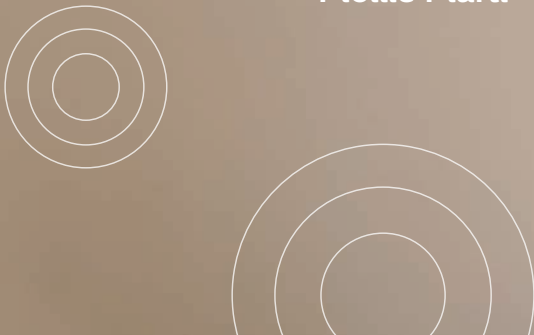
### About the Author

Max Warfield is *thrive magazine's* lead feature writer, an author of numerous novels and an avid disc golf enthusiast. Always eager to dig deep into his assignments, Warfield excels at exploring real-world problems and solutions and how they impact or serve the amputee community.



“Our power lies in our small daily choices, one after another, to create eternal ripples of a life well lived.”

– Mollie Marti



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