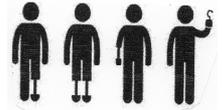


MOVING FORWARD

LIMB LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

NEWSLETTER

6th Edition – February 2014



MOVING FORWARD

FEATURE ARTICLE

My Gift

– by Belinda Jacobi



I remember the day when I phoned my brothers and my sister to tell them that my biopsy had shown that I had cancer, and my orthopedic oncologist told me that my best chance of surviving was to have my leg amputated. I promised my siblings that I would try to let it change me only from the knee down. I was determined not to let it change the type of person that I was. I didn't want to let it overwhelm me, changing me into a sad, depressed, or withdrawn person.

But it did change me, and I would like to think that the change is for the better. I am definitely a much stronger person emotionally than I was. When you are fighting for your life, battle after battle, you realize that you can endure much more than you ever thought that you could. I always felt that I was a good person, and always tried to do what I felt was right, and to help those in need; but now I have found myself in the role of being an **inspirational** person, and I consider that a gift. When you think of someone who inspires you, it is always someone who has faced an obstacle in life but yet persevered.

I received a book while recovering from my amputation surgery entitled "My Beautiful Broken Shell".

In it the writer, Carol Adams, talks about walking along a beach looking for shells, and as everyone does, she steps over the broken ones to find only the perfect shells; until one broken scallop shell catches her eye, and she stops to pick it up and realizes how hard that the shell had to fight not to be totally crushed by the pounding surf. I quote from her book, "Broken shells mean lots of tears, lots of pain, lots of struggles, but they are also valuable for teaching faith, courage, and strength. Broken shells **inspire** others and demonstrate the will to go on in a way that no perfect shell could ever do. Broken shells are shells that have been tested, and tried, and hurt, yet they don't quit. They continue to be."

It truly humbles me when someone tells me that I have been an inspiration to them. There are so many people out there who have endured far more than I have. Yet if I can uplift someone in even some small way, then it is my honor to do so. The amputees that I have met in the past 4½ years have truly been an

– Continued on Page 2 Column 1 –

AMPUTEE COALITION ADVICE

inMotion Volume 23 • Issue 3 • May/June 2013

Fitness, Wellness and Body Image **More Than the Sum of Our Parts**

by Bill Dupes, Senior Editor

Diet. Exercise. Genetics. All of these things are important for living a long life – but there's more. What you really want is to live longer *well*, to be healthy enough to continue doing the things you love. A positive mental attitude, the ability to laugh & find the humor in situations, getting outside of yourself & helping others, working at something you love to do, & having the will to beat the odds all contribute to a long & healthy life.

Living life to its fullest is challenging in today's world; for those with limb loss, the physical challenges are even greater. However, the most difficult barriers are the ones in your mind. But it's easier to deal with the physical barriers if you can get a handle on the emotional ones.

The way to learn to overcome these perceived obstacles is by recognizing that you're still basically the same person inside that you were before the amputation. Successful adjustment is achieved by learning to do the things you enjoyed before (even if you have to learn to do them differently) & seeing yourself as a whole person who just happens to have a missing body part. The focus should no longer be on what's gone, but on the future.

In its simplest sense, wellness focuses on taking proper care of your body through exercise, nutrition & routine medical exams. But you shouldn't forget the *whole* – mind body & spirit. You might, for example, consider techniques for tending to your mind like visualization & guided imagery to deal with tension & anxiety or playing word games & cards to maintain mental sharpness. Or nourishing the spirit through meditation, prayer or letting go of resentment & self-criticism.

We hope that this issue will provide some insight into achieving balance in your life. Whether you're already on the road, or you're just starting or even getting back on track after a temporary setback, the integration of mind, body & spirit is key to living well. We are more than the sum of our parts.

"Most psychologists treat the mind as disembodied, a phenomenon with little or no connection to the physical body. Conversely, physicians treat the body with no regard to the mind or the emotions. But the body & mind are not separate, & we cannot treat one without the other."

– Candace Pert

My Gift (cont'd)

inspiration to me. Their stories, their determination, and their friendship have enriched my life.

Looking back 5 years ago, my life today is not what I imagined it would be. Life was far less complicated when I had all 4 limbs, but this is my life now. I have accepted it, and I have embraced it, and I encourage you to do the same. We are not less because of our limb loss; we are **more!**

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## RECAP OF JANUARY

Our first meeting of the New Year was held on Jan. 25 at Baptist East. It was a cold and snowy day, but we decided that it was important to go ahead with the meeting; because we hadn't held our monthly meeting since October, and we have so many activities to plan. We were thrilled to have 2 new members join our group. They are Valerie Evans and Sharon Morehead. We look forward to getting to know them in the coming months.

An open topic discussion was held and many issues facing new amputees were talked about, including the emotional aspects and the way to help our family members and friends to deal with our limb loss. The meeting concluded with planning of our many projects and upcoming events. This should be a very busy and exciting year for *MOVING FORWARD*.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

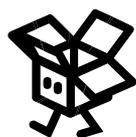
Unscramble these words and then use the letters in the parentheses to finish the sentence. You can find the answer at the bottom of PAGE 4.



CDECFINON __ () _____ () _____
 EDTTUAI _____ () _____
 LAPIYRENOST ()_ () _____
 ARTHCECRA () _____ () _____
 DVIUDLAINI __ () _____ () _____
 TPVOSIEI () _____

Your _____ of yourself may influence your relationships with others.

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## Special Announcement

We are still collecting donations of items for our Care Package Project. The first packages will be delivered this month. This will be an ongoing project so we appreciate your continued support.

## Q & A



In this section, we ask you to submit questions pertaining to limb loss, & then we will get responses from members of *MOVING FORWARD Limb Loss Support Group*. We are not offering medical advice, but will share tips & information to try to make living with limb loss easier. You may submit your question(s) by email to [belindajacobi@yahoo.com](mailto:belindajacobi@yahoo.com) or by calling 812-620-3694.

Since in last month's issue 2 members of the group stated that their goal for this year is to improve their gait, or to be able to walk more naturally, I decided we would use that for our "?" this month.

I contacted group member, Darren Frison, to get his response. As many of you know, Darren, who is a bilateral below knee amputee, is quite athletic and can be seen riding his bicycle around downtown Louisville. He says that the key is to tone your leg muscles. He likes to use stairs to do this. This not only will help tone those muscles but will help to improve your balance, which is another key to having a good gait. He suggests starting going up & down 2 or 3 steps in the beginning while holding on to the rail. Do this at least 3 times a week and gradually increase the number of steps. If you don't have steps in your home, you can go to a park or public building that does. Before starting any exercise program, you should always check with your physician to see if you are physically ready to begin.

Darren also encourages amputees to do stretching. You can use either a band or a towel. Start by lying on your back with the band behind your leg and use your hands to gently pull your leg forward. After doing a few sets of those stretches, you can roll onto your side and use the band again while raising your leg upward, to the front, and to the back. These stretches will help with your flexibility, which is important in having a more natural pattern of walking.

I encourage you to talk to your physician or prosthetist to see if they feel that you would benefit from gait training. Many insurance companies will pay for it when it is ordered by your physician. Even if you have been an amputee for many years, it's never too late to improve your mobility & quality of life.

Kelly Reitz, also a bilateral below knee amputee, says: "I have spent most of my life working on my gait. I have always walked with a limp so I have spent a lot of time on ways to improve my gait. It has been easier for me since I had my revision and went from having a Symes amputation on the left and a partial foot on the right to being about mid-calf on both sides. First of all, working with your prosthetist on perfecting your gait is one of the biggest ways to get a smooth gait. Your prosthetist can help because they know so much about anatomy and where pressure might be too much or too little while you walk. However, learning techniques such as relaxing your hips when you walk helps you to walk in a more natural, smoother way. I even used to do things such as video myself walking so that I could see where my weak spots were. Regardless of how much you try to improve your gait, if you are in pain in your prosthetic, it is extremely

- Continued on Page 3 Column 2 -



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sat., Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>** – Bowling Fundraiser 11:00AM - 1:00PM at Incredible Dave's, 9236 Westport Rd., Louisville, KY. Please come & join us and bring your family & friends for this fun event. The price is \$12.00/person for 13 years & older, \$7.00/children under 13 years old. There will be no charge for children 2 & under. The price includes bowling, 1 slice of pizza, and refillable drinks. In order to do our various projects, including the care packages, the newsletter, events throughout the year, and our monthly meetings; we



have to raise funds. Our group would really appreciate your support of this event. I do need to give them an estimate as to the number of people by Monday Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, so please call or email me to let me know if you plan to attend ([belindajacobi@yahoo.com](mailto:belindajacobi@yahoo.com) or 812-620-3694). Also, we will be required to pay with one check so we will be taking payment at the door, and it will need to be cash or a check made payable to *MOVING FORWARD* Limb Loss Support Group. **We hope to see you there!!**

**Sat., Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>** – 9:00 - 11:00AM - Some members of our group will be setting up a booth at the Harrison County Hospital in Corydon, IN for a health fair. There will be several types of free screenings offered at the health fair. For more info, contact Kelly or Belinda. We hope to take part in many more of these events in order to reach out to amputees in our surrounding communities.

**Sat., Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Meeting at Baptist East in the Education Center Room 2G from 2:00 - 4:00PM. Physical Therapist, Lauren Hall, will be there to speak to the group and answer our questions. If you have an idea for a future topic or speaker, please let us know.

**Sat., MAR. 8<sup>th</sup>** – "March Madness" Chili Supper at the Okolona Fire Station from 5:00 - 8:00PM. We will have a chili cook-off this year. You can register your chili at the event. A prize will be awarded to the judge's choice & the people's choice. This will be a pitch-in so please bring either chili or another item. The group will provide crackers, hot dogs & buns. There will be a prize for the best dressed fan and basketball related games for adults & children.

**APRIL** (DATE, TIME & PLACE TO BE ANNOUNCED) – An amputee health fair is being planned. This will be a wonderful opportunity to get the word out about our group and to provide information to all amputees in our area. If you have any suggestions, would like to volunteer, or are a business who would like to have a booth, please contact one of the officers listed on the back page of the newsletter.

### **Other events being planned or considered are:**

- May – Pegasus Parade & picnic, a spring hike
- June – attending a Bats game, and a tennis clinic
- July – Pie & Ice Cream Social
- August- softball game & picnic
- September – Walk/& Roll fundraiser, Belle Cruise
- October – Halloween costume party, a fall hike
- November – Thanksgiving event
- December – Christmas Party

## Q & A (cont'd)

hard to walk 'normal.' So, if your prosthesis is not fitting well and causing you pain on a regular basis, then you should get that fixed first and foremost. Also, I notice that when I am tired I walk more with a limp than usual. So, getting rest is a big part of walking well. Lastly, I have learned that EVERYONE has a particular/specific walk so don't sweat it too much. It may just be part of your walk as an amputee now and that's ok. I have learned to accept it as just being part of who I am."

As for me (Belinda), the best advice that I received when in physical therapy was these two words: "Walk Tall". When I find myself limping, which is usually when I am fatigued, I just say those 2 words and it reminds me to "walk tall" and to keep my head up and my shoulders level.

One thing that I plan on doing is installing a full length mirror in my basement. That way I can stand back and walk toward it. People can tell you that you are doing something wrong while walking, but for me if I can actually see myself doing it, it makes it easier for me to understand and to correct it. I have also been told that walking on a treadmill is an excellent way to improve your gait. A treadmill forces you to spend an equal amount of time on each leg and walk at a steady pace. I hope these tips help, and please keep submitting your questions.

– by Belinda Jacobi



## SPOTLIGHT



Each month in our spotlight section, we will get to know one of our members a little better. This month the spotlight is on a lady who has been with the group from its beginning.

Name: Marcia Evans

Hometown: Currently, Louisville KY, but was born and grew up in Canton Ohio and lived for many years in Akron, Ohio

Number of children: Marcia has one daughter and one granddaughter.

Hobbies: She enjoys playing bunco with a group of ladies once a month and also likes to play Match Threes on her PC.

As many in the group know, she is also a wonderful cook.

When asked her favorite things to cook, Marcia said chili and homemade pizzas.

How long have you been an amputee? I lost my left leg below-the-knee 3 years ago.

What do you enjoy most about the support group? I enjoy talking to the other members, hearing their stories, and it has given me an awareness.

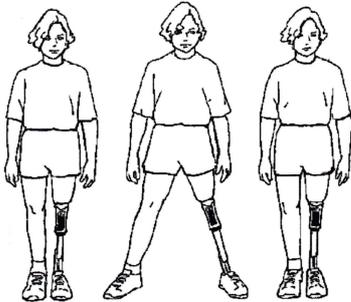
Do you have any advice for new amputees? Try to keep your spirits up and watch your weight. It can be very frustrating when you gain a little weight and your socket no longer fits.

What group activities are you looking forward to? Going to another Bats game and Chuck is looking forward to going fishing again and we both like the picnics.



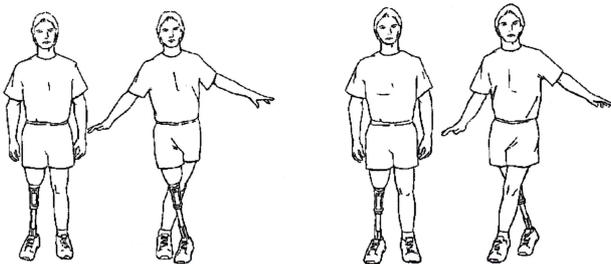
## LET'S GET MOVING!

We are beginning a new section this month to provide amputees with information on exercise and healthy eating. If you have an exercise tip or recipe that you would like to share with us, please let us know. Following are two basic exercises to help you get started:



### Side Stepping

- Side Stepping:** Stand at one end of a kitchen counter or at a long sturdy table. Face the counter & place both hands on it for support. Begin by side stepping to your unaffected side. Try to concentrate on keeping your hips even with each other & not leaning way over your prosthetic limb as you move your unaffected limb.



### Braiding

- Braiding:** From the standing position with your feet comfortably apart, cross your prosthetic limb in front of your unaffected limb, then bring your unaffected limb from behind, to return to your original standing position. From the standing position cross your prosthetic limb behind your unaffected limb, then bring your unaffected limb across your prosthetic limb, returning to your original standing position. Repeat the maneuvers as previously described alternating each step as you move sideways. Use your arms, & rotate your trunk to assist you with your balance. As you become comfortable with these maneuvers, increase your speed. When you first attempt this exercise, hold onto a kitchen counter for balance.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ANSWER (from Page 2):
 CONFIDENCE, ATTITUDE, PERSONALITY,
 CHARACTER, INDIVIDUAL, POSITIVE
 Answer: P E R C E P T I O N



Laughter Is The Best Medicine

With our bowling event taking place this month, I thought that I would share another of my amusing moments. Those of you who have been to our meetings have heard this story, but for those of you who haven't, I hope that it brings a smile to your face.

My husband, my grandson, and I decided to go on an outing to a bowling alley. I had every intention on just being a spectator. It had been about 1½ years since I had lost my leg, and I wasn't quite sure that I could manage to bowl without falling down. My grandson, Carter, had other plans. He pleaded with me to join them, so I decided to give it a try. I remember vividly walking down the alley and with each step repeating to myself, "Just don't fall down, just don't fall down." I remember releasing the ball and feeling sheer relief that I was still standing. I was so relieved that I almost forgot to even look to see if I had knocked any pins down. When I finally looked, to my amazement I had gotten a strike. I had concentrated so hard on not falling, that I hadn't even thought about aiming the ball. I didn't get another strike for the rest of the game, but I didn't fall either. It turned out to be a really fun time, and I was glad that Carter had encouraged me to give it a try.

— by Belinda Jacobi

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