



## *Finding Your Life Following an SCI?*

### **Personal Relationships?**

The thought of having a disability is frightening to most people. When you are the person having to face life with a spinal cord injury you will have many questions that need answering. Not only are there changes in your physical condition but there will be changes to your lifestyle, finances and relationships with family and friends as well as employment needs.

Family and friends also require time to adjust to their new role. The emotional stress impacts on all people who are close to you.

There are no courses that prepare you to go through this experience or move on to a new style of living. Even though there are medical explanations for the physical damage, it is far more difficult to explain the 'invisible' injuries suffered when the inner world is shattered.

The time taken to adjust to your disability and to manage the difficulties that arise differs with each person. However, these adjustments can and will be made, and will likely strengthen relationships with many of your friends and family. Many friends will feel awkward when they see you and vice versa. Many of them 'drift' away over a period of time but others remain unchanged and are there to assist in any way they can.

Being 'comfortable' is being as open and honest as you can and this can have a positive effect and your family and friends with regard to your disability.

### **To be Employed or Not?**

Many people with SCI return to their former workplace if possible and others prefer a change. The type of injury sustained does have a bearing on the ability of a person with SCI to continue employment in the same job. Some people return to higher education to undertake retraining in a completely different area with a view to re-entering the workforce. Other people with SCI choose not to work.

### **Leisure and Sports**

When the time is 'right' for you to undertake some form of recreation, remember there is an activity out there for everyone. How you occupy your free time is limited only by your imagination. A change in life does not mean that you must give up your favorite sports and hobbies.

There are many sports that have been adapted to allow people in wheelchairs to participate and enjoy sport. There are also many recreational activities available to enhance your life and what recreation you choose is entirely up to you.

One way to maintain fitness after your injury is to develop a recreational program. This program can improve your health and the social and mental aspects of your life.

Consider the following activities: swimming, weightlifting, track events, basketball, quadrugby, scuba diving, sailing, fishing, etc. All of these will improve your strength, health, muscle tone, balance, mobility, etc. You can pursue these activities at any level, for competition and training or for purely recreational pursuits.

