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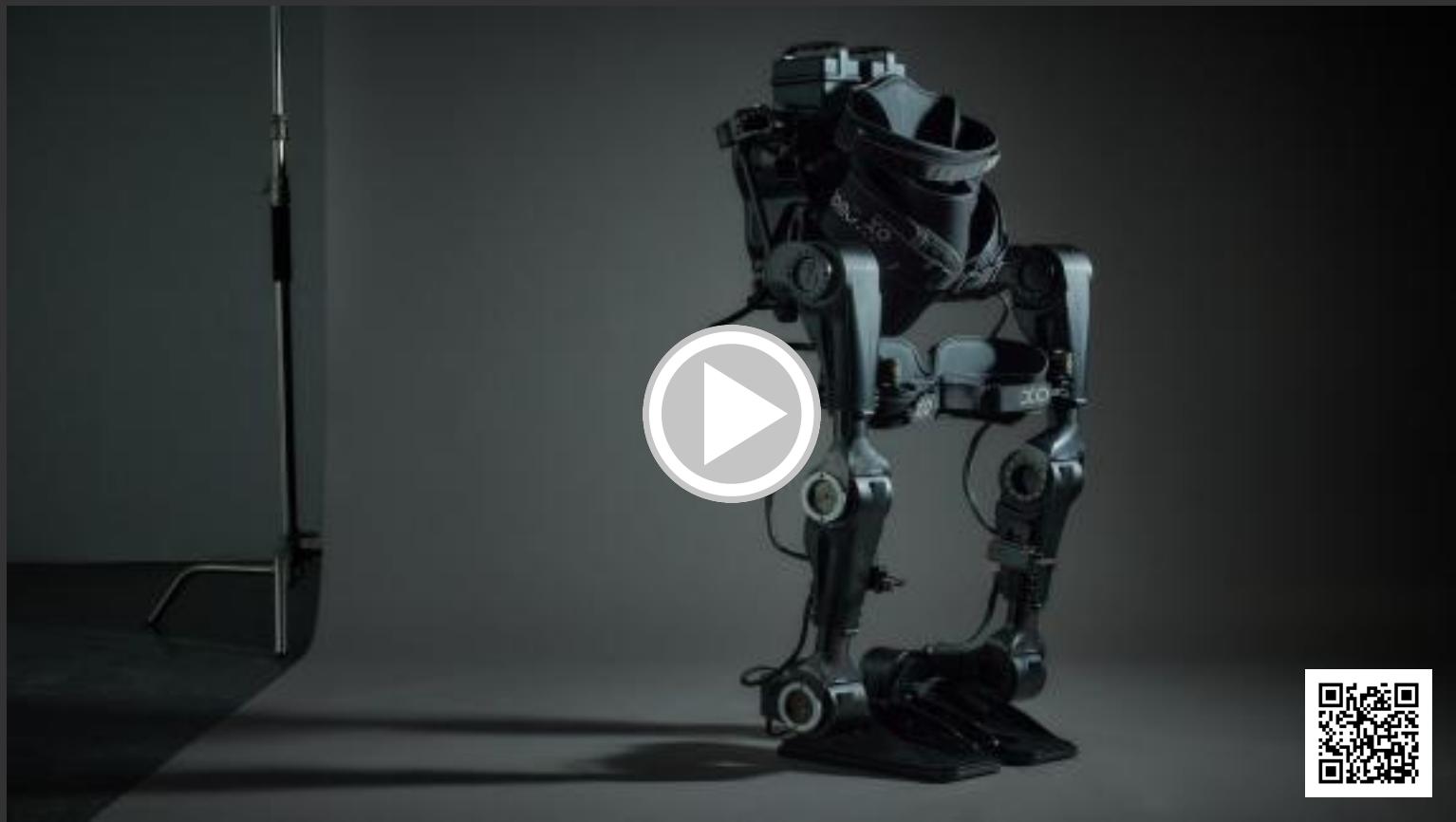
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Chloë Angus wearing her XoMotion



Human in Motion Robotics team



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Editor's Note

Fred J. Maahs, Jr.

Greetings and welcome to a New Year.

I want to take a moment and reflect on this past year and mention that so many positive things happened for all of us, especially those in the disability community. From significant legislation introduced and passed by Congress in the U.S., to more people with disabilities who are speaking out and self-advocating about issues that impact their ability to live independently, to the record number of people travelling – even those with disabilities! These are all positive steps in the right direction and I hope to see more of this in 2024.

I also want to recognize that the disability community lost a friend and champion, Andres Gallegos, in December, 2023. Andres was my friend and mentor who always found time to help anyone needing advice or direction. He was the Chairman of the National Council on Disability here in the United States, a respected attorney focused on disability rights for nearly 30 years, a devoted champion of inclusion and equal opportunities for people with disabilities, and a leader in the independent living movement. In addition, Andrés was a "critical partner in the US Department of Health and Human Services work to end disability discrimination in medical care and to address the health disparities experienced by

people with disabilities. For decades, he provided advice and counsel on the implementation of the most consequential health care and disability rights laws – including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, as well as state and local civil rights laws – to ensure equal access to care and services for disabled people." And for all of his accomplishments, Andres was a humble man who helped so many. He will be missed and we send our condolences to his family and friends.

In this issue of *Melange Accessibility for All*, you'll see some great stories about people like Israeli Paralympian, Pascale Bercovitch, an article about neurodiversity and how to better understand what it is, a story about fashion and technology from Chloe Angus, and a story about Elizabeth Ziemba who created a company for Medical Tourism Training.

As always, in every issue we continue to bring you stories from around the world about people, places, innovative technology, and companies that each make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. And, don't forget our sister magazine, *Accessible Journeys*. In this Melange digital magazine, we share stories from all around the world about accessible travel destinations

written and experienced by people with disabilities. In each issue of *Accessible Journeys*, you will find personal, firsthand accounts of what each traveller experienced during their journey. It's a resource for anyone of any ability who wants to take an accessible journey! We hope you enjoy it!

As always, keep using your voice and sharing your stories with us. We will continue to make it all real, all relevant, and we certainly appreciate your thoughts.

Let us know if you have an assistive technology product you want us to try then write about, or if you want to invite us to visit your city, country, resort, or place of interest so we can write about its accessibility and share it with our audience. You can reach me at fmaahs@readmelange.com.

@FredMaahs - Twitter

Fred J. Maahs, Jr. is an internationally-renown disability and civil rights champion who believes in and advocates for the rights and access for all! A recognized leader and former corporate executive, he's also an International Keynote speaker, collaborator, and an international accessibility travel expert.

Publisher: Mélange Publishing Group

Editor in Chief: Debbie Austin

Editor: Fred Maahs, Jr.

Designer: Trish Palma

Editorial Staff:

Marina Apperley

Mae Fornoles

We try to present information that is current and accurate, but errors can occur. If you've found an error in the magazine, please email Marina Apperley at: marina@readmelange.com

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email: marina@readmelange.com

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In Greater Fort Lauderdale, we're excited about welcoming everyone under the sun and providing access for all, from beach wheelchairs and accessible pathways to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program at FLL airport. Learn more about local resources and plan your trip at VisitLauderdale.com/Accessibility.

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Pascale Bercovitch

the trailblazer: "I'm doing what my soul asks me to"

Pascale Bercovitch has made it her life's mission to blaze her own trail. We live in a world that often pressures us to conform, but in her unapologetically unique way, she has maintained the unwavering pursuit of her dreams, defying the odds.

"I'm a person who likes to do what I like to do," Pascale articulates. These words echo her lifelong commitment of staying true to herself. She refuses to be confined by societal expectations or labelled by her disability.

At the age of 17, a tragic train accident resulted in the loss of both her legs. While many expected her to succumb to a life of limitations—the role society had preassigned to disabled individuals at that

time—she had other plans. In her words, "I'm not trying to do what other people are doing. I'm trying to find my own path." She continued, "Today, it's easier to be disabled because people know what accessibility is and people care. There is less stigma around it. But 40 years ago, when I was growing up in France and had my accident, the concept was, you're disabled, poor thing. And people are really sorry for you but they don't give you any opportunities because what can you do? You are disabled. They believe you cannot do anything. But I pushed against that and decided I'm going to do what I want to do."

Pascale was determined not to let these perceived societal

limitations define her. She embraced her individuality and decided to chart her own course. That journey took her to Israel at the age of 17, a place she believed would offer equality for all. She still faced numerous hurdles but broke through the barriers that sought to keep disabled individuals from settling in Israel and went on to enlist in the army. Back then, the idea of a soldier in a wheelchair was unheard of, but Pascale was undeterred. She became the first soldier in a wheelchair in the Israeli army. Her resilience and commitment to blazing her own path were already evident.

Her trailblazing continued, taking her into the world of swimming where she excelled and even joined the national

team for disabled swimmers. Yet, her dreams didn't stop there. She aspired to compete in the Paralympic Games, but the demands of work intervened. She made the difficult decision to step away from intensive training, but another passion emerged—journalism.

Forty years ago, despite skepticism from others who believed a journalist in a wheelchair was implausible, Pascale remained unwavering. "Everybody told me you cannot be a journalist because you're sitting in a wheelchair. And I said what is the point, I'm sitting in a wheelchair but I can talk, I speak different languages, I am curious, I know history so I will continue. But they said, look at the world. There are no journalists in wheelchairs anywhere in the world. Israel is a very tiny country but even in America you don't have anybody in wheelchairs being a journalist. And I said I don't care. I'll be the first." Pascale pursued her dream of becoming a journalist and became the first woman in a wheelchair to do so, shattering preconceived notions and paving the way for others to follow. "I fought for my rights and began to write and film and I became a reporter for the TV here in Israel and also in France. I also worked a



little for CBS and I met Johnny Hockenbury who happened to be a journalist in wheelchair. I met him in the West Bank doing a report and it was really nice to see I was actually not the first. I was the first woman wheelchair journalist, but not the first wheelchair journalist."

Pascale's spirit of individuality and the relentless pursuit of her passions inspire many. At age 40, she decided to make a comeback to her Paralympic career, unfazed by societal expectations that deemed her too old. She states, "again, everybody thought, you know, you're crazy. But this time, they didn't think I was crazy because I'm a wheelchair user anymore, they now thought I'm crazy because I'm 40 years old and it's too old to begin a career in sports." However, her determination remained unyielding, driven by a firm belief in following her heart. "I said to them, this is not a

beginning of sports for me, I was there before and I'm coming back to it that's all." She added, "there's Dara Torres, an American swimmer, who did an amazing come back at 40. I don't know her but like her, I'm just following my heart and doing what I like." Pascale's journey took her to the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, where she became Israel's first-ever rower in the Paralympics, defying expectations and proving that age should never be a barrier to pursuing one's dreams. "I've already participated in four Olympic Games in three different sports. I was a rower in Beijing in 2008, London in 2012, I was a hand biker and then in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 I was a kayaker. I love to kayak and also represented Israel in Tokyo. Now I'm training for Paris 2024. I don't know if I'll qualify but I'm doing what my soul is asking me to."

Her incredible strength and sense of self extend beyond

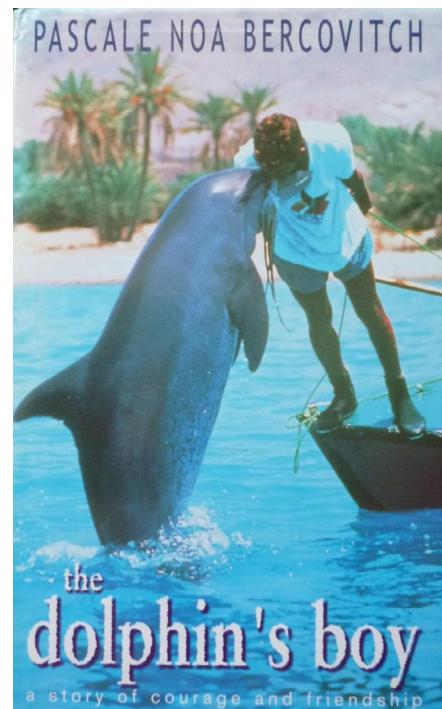
the sports arena. She speaks of a life-altering moment during her accident when she felt an inexplicable strength from above. "I just lost both of my legs and was waiting alone to be rescued for 47 minutes and with each passing minute I felt stronger. My strength came from the cosmos. I think we are very lucky to be here on earth. I love humanity and I think we are great creators and have the chance to do something with our lives on this planet. I was blessed to have this accident." As she reflects on her journey, Pascale describes herself as "powerful," a word that encapsulates her refusal to succumb to victimhood or hopelessness. Her resilience and self-belief are evident in her every action, inspiring others to embrace their own unique power. "I never saw myself as a victim or feeling hopeless in any situation in life. I'm now 56 years old and I'm realizing that as you get older your life gets easier. It's really hard when you're young because you don't know anything about life. You don't know the world. You don't know who you are and it's so great when you begin to understand. And for me, I don't want to be pretty. I don't want to be nice. I don't want to be polite. I want to be powerful."

Being powerful for Pascale goes beyond medals and competition, instead, she

relishes pushing her own limits each day. Her enthusiasm for self-improvement and her zest for life are a reminder of the sheer joy that comes from challenging oneself—this is power.

Beyond her sports career and journalism, Pascale is an accomplished author. Her first book, *The Dolphin's Boy*, tells the heartwarming story of a Deaf Bedouin boy and his dolphin friend, Olin. The book became a bestseller in Europe and inspired a documentary. She is currently writing her autobiography. When asked about her proudest achievement, Pascale does not mention her Olympic accomplishments or journalistic career. Instead, she beams with pride as she talks about her two daughters. Motherhood, she believes, is the most challenging yet rewarding job, requiring constant introspection and dedication but it's a role she embraces with the same determination and commitment that define her life.

As for inclusivity and the power of sports to unite people, Pascale offers a powerful message. She believes inclusivity begins with recognizing and celebrating our differences. To her, inclusivity is about being brave enough to say, "This is me, this is my way," and embracing the courage to connect with others authentically.



Pascale Bercovitch's life reminds us that we should not allow ourselves to be defined by our circumstances. We all have extraordinary potential and regardless of the world's proclivity to categorize and label, we should embrace our individuality and explore the extraordinary potential within us. She encourages us to "celebrate your uniqueness no matter the obstacles you face and strive for greatness, whatever this may look like for you." ■



"I never saw myself as a victim or feeling hopeless in any situation in life." ~ Pascale



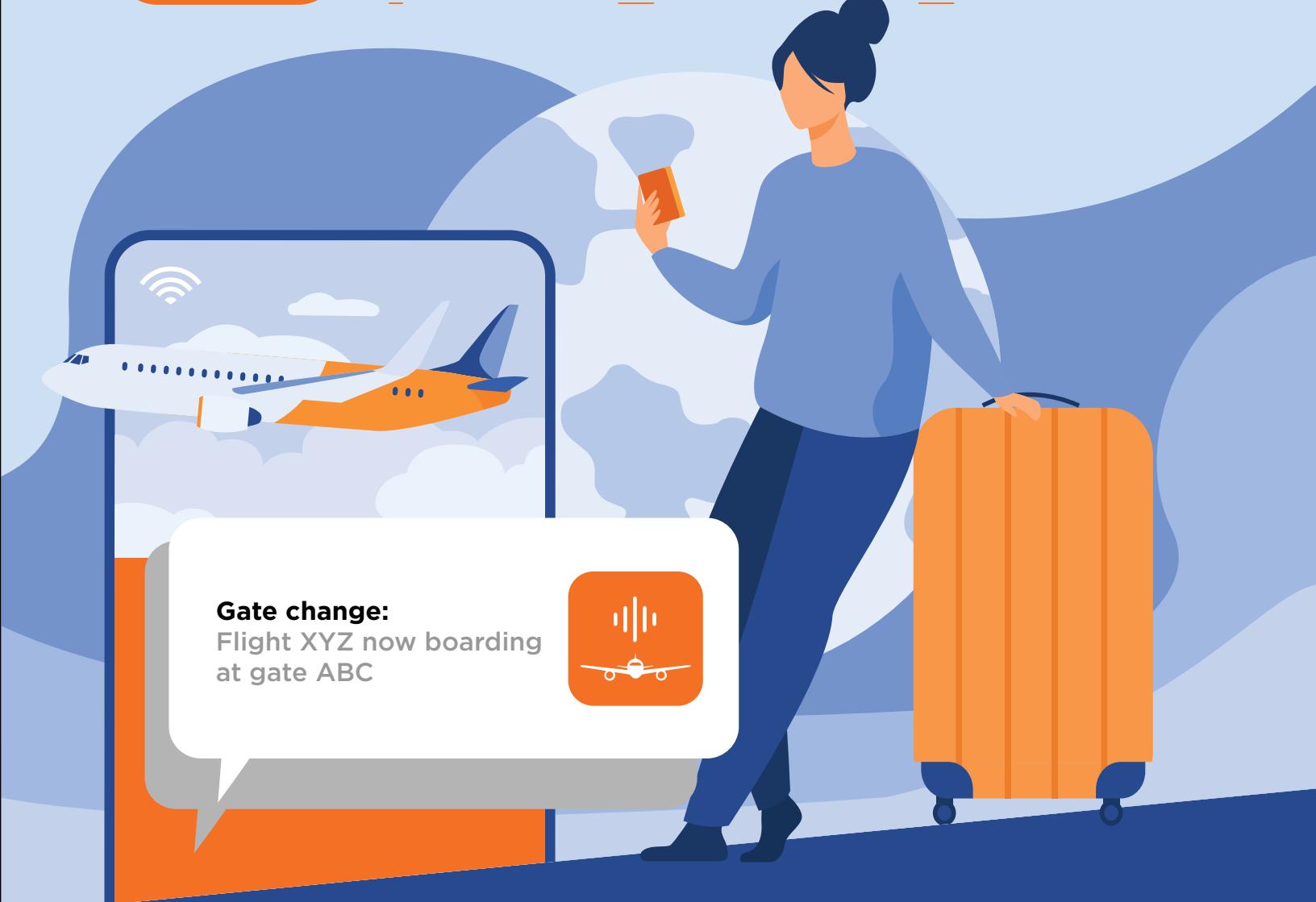
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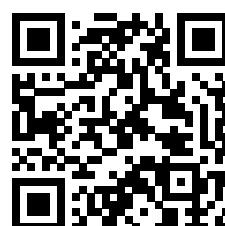
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Zinzee Noel

“The journey has just begun, and I am committed to making a positive impact.”

I'm Zinzee Noel, a 24-year-old from the Caribbean Island of

Grenada, also known as the Isle of Spice. I live with a physical disability called arthrogryposis multiplex congenita (AMC). Arthrogryposis is a condition characterized by joint contractures at birth, affecting the flexibility and range of motion in various parts of the body. In my case, arthrogryposis has impacted my left elbow, wrists, fingers, hips, legs, and feet. At the age of 13, I began

developing scoliosis, and in 2018, I underwent surgery to correct it.

Zinzee's accomplishments

I'm an undergraduate psychology student, a mother, poet, and self-published author of four books: *Can't Fall Apart*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Falling Petals*, and *Sounds I Like*. Additionally, I'm an advocate and serve as the president of the Writers Association of Grenada, fostering a supportive community for local writers. I also hold the position

of president at the Rainbow City Toastmasters Club, focusing on leadership and public speaking.

In a significant voluntary role, I am the PRO of Advocacy Grenada Inc, where I advocate for disability rights in my country and share information through our social media pages. As a youth parliamentarian, I represent the voice of the youth and crucially, individuals with disabilities. On the professional front, I freelance in editing, graphic design, book reviews,

and assist others in their self-publishing journeys.

Proudest achievements

Some of my proudest achievements include receiving the Prime Minister's Award for Community Initiative. Another significant moment was the day my daughter was born on January 24, 2022—undeniably a highlight. In 2023, I took great pride in stepping out of my comfort zone, sharing my journey with the world, and highlighting the capabilities of individuals with disabilities. It was a year of personal growth and empowerment.

Zinzee's books

My first book was *Can't Fall Apart*, marking my venture into self-publishing. The motivation behind my writing journey

stemmed from the challenge of expressing myself verbally as an introvert. Writing became a medium for me to convey my deepest feelings. I've authored a total of four books. After *Can't Fall Apart*, I collaborated on *Kaleidoscope* with two friends. Following that, I published the intense poetry collection *Falling Petals*, and most recently, *Sounds I Like*, an illustrated poem.

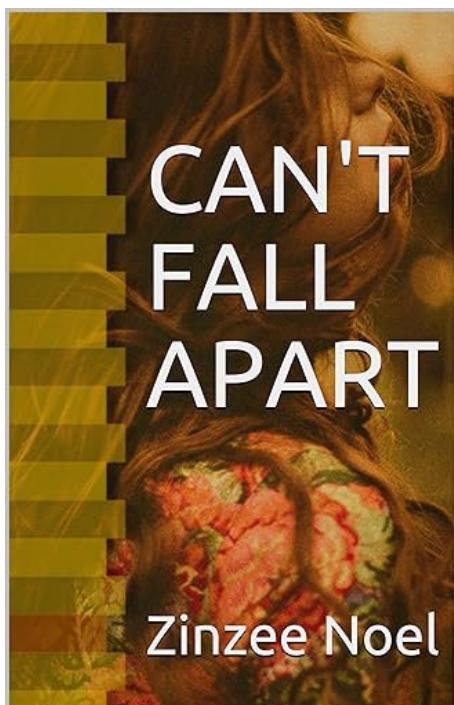
What she hopes people will gain from her books

I hope that readers find comfort in knowing they are not alone in their struggles when they engage with my books. Delving into darker themes such as depression and suicidal thoughts, my aim is for individuals to relate to these

experiences and ultimately, find a path towards healing.

Some of the biggest challenges people with disabilities face on her island

People with disabilities in Grenada encounter numerous challenges due to societal attitudes and lack of accessibility. Employment opportunities can be limited, as misconceptions about capabilities persist. Independence is hindered by the insufficient accessibility features in the country, highlighting the need for infrastructure improvements. Education is crucial to combat closed-minded perspectives surrounding disabilities and foster a more inclusive and understanding community.





Personal experiences living with a disability in Grenada and how these experiences have shaped her advocacy work

My personal experiences, starting from childhood, have profoundly shaped my advocacy work. My parents advocated for my rights, pushing for necessary aids like ramps in schools. A significant influence has been within the healthcare system, where I often felt isolated and unheard. Nurses sometimes hesitated to provide basic care, making me feel different. I don't want others with disabilities to face such challenges, and that fuels my passion for advocacy,

striving to create a more inclusive and understanding environment.

My latest encounter with a nurse occurred during the birth of my child, which involved a C-section. I was quite sore and when she had to give me a bath, her demeanor was unkind. My limited mobility post-surgery seemed to upset her, leading to a painful experience. I felt the urge to cry and leave the hospital, but I knew it wasn't feasible. Even now, I vividly recall her name and face.

Projects she is involved with

I've actively participated in several projects by the UN Women Spotlight Initiative for Disability and Inclusion. Additionally, I'm involved in the early stages of Advocacy Grenada Inc, which was recently registered in October. As we gear up, our aim is to launch initiatives next year that focus

on promoting inclusivity and accessibility for people with disabilities in Grenada.

Her vision for the future

I envision a future in Grenada where more individuals and organizations actively advocate for disability rights, leading to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Personally, I aspire to be a strong voice for individuals like myself. Through this advocacy role, I aim to raise awareness among those in authority and the general public, emphasizing the capabilities of people with disabilities and the importance of their inclusion in every facet of society.

Role models and mentors who have had a significant influence on her journey

While I've been my own biggest role model, my determination and stubbornness stem from the influence of my parents, Annie Noel and Victor Philip, who



Zinzee and some of the people in her inner circle

instilled these qualities in me. Additionally, my big sister, Nakitta Noel, a medical doctor, has always been a significant supporter in my journey. Also, my best friends and grandmother. Their guidance and support have played a crucial role in shaping my path.

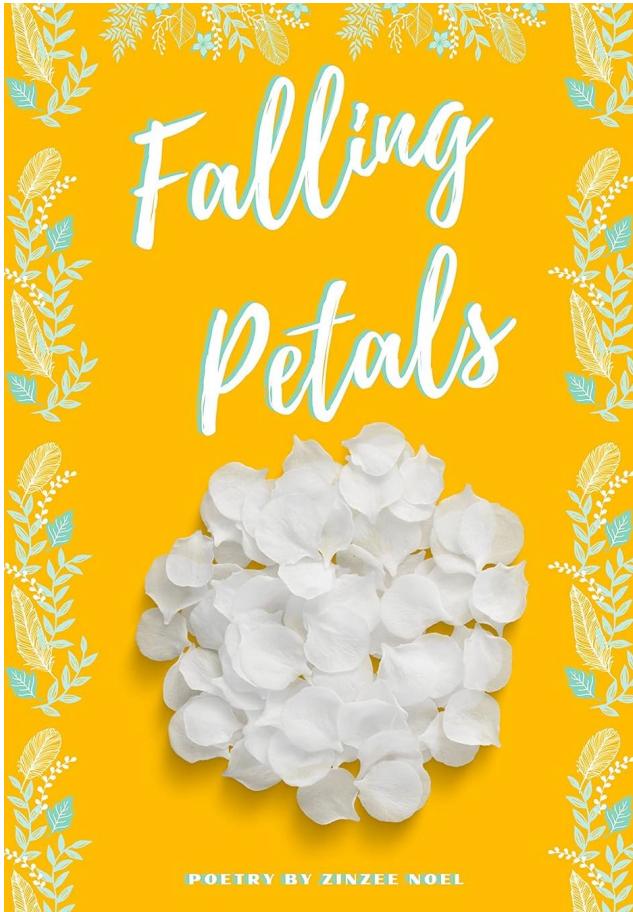
Future goals and aspirations

Looking ahead, my personal goals include pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology, with potential interests in forensics, organizational or educational psychology. In terms of advocacy for disability rights in Grenada, I plan to continue using my voice and contributing in any way possible to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities in my country. The journey has just begun, and I am committed to making a positive impact. ■



“

I envision a future in Grenada where more individuals and organizations actively advocate for disability rights, leading to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. ~ Zinzee Noel



ZINZEE'S BOOKS CAN BE FOUND ON [AMAZON](#)

Excerpts from a reader review:

"A great film can usually be recognized by its opening scene. As soon as I opened *Falling Petals* by Zinzee I was captured . . . This is a book that gathers the layers of human emotion . . . Go ahead and take a read, smell the flower, see the beauty and let go of the pain."



The term 'neurodiversity' comes from autistic communities and means that all brains and 'bodyminds' work in diverse ways. (Shutterstock)

What exactly is 'neurodiversity'? Using accurate language about disability matters in schools

By Michael Baker

The connection between language and meaning has been well established. The language we use is directly related to the way we view and treat others. Inclusive language is imperative to achieve equitable change, grounded in human rights and social justice.

Many countries today have laws protecting against the use of any language that incites or wilfully promotes hatred against an identifiable group.

Many municipalities, organizations and school boards have established inclusive language guides.

Although the scope of these laws vary, what they have in common is recognizing the gravity of language.

And yet, who decides on the right words? My research has considered this question with regards to disability in

kindergarten to Grade 12 education.

A community's own expertise

Preferences regarding disability-related language are established by the disability community.

These preferences are distilled over time through an ebb and flow of factors including advocacy and allyship, grassroots activism, legal and legislative proceedings and empirical research.

In Canada, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights of individuals by enshrining those rights, and certain limits on them, in the highest law of the land. The Charter protects against discrimination, including disability hate speech.

Internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), of which Canada is a primary signatory, aims to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the UNCRPD are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights for people with disabilities, including full equality under the law.

Terminology about any community must reflect their autonomy, preference and ideals.

The disabled community has been subjected not only to paternalism but also eugenics. Policymakers across society have ignored their inherent expertise.

Systemic ableism in schools

In a recent study involving adults with disabilities

reflecting on their experiences in kindergarten to Grade 12 education in the United States, researcher Carlyn O. Mueller found schools continue to lag behind in terms of:

- a lack of disability representation in K-12 curriculum
- a lack of disability community in K-12 schools
- a lack of school staff with disabilities.

These findings remain consistent today with what I have observed about systemic

ableism in Canadian schools and in current research in the field of inclusive education and disability studies.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 schooling is often stigmatizing for students with disabilities. Ableist slurs continue, and segregationist practices abound while disability representation in staff, programming and curriculum remains limited at best.

A community

The disability community is the largest diversity-equity group



globally. It's also one that many of us will join throughout our lifetime.

It is important to remember disability is not synonymous with notions of lacking, charity or pity.

Nor do disabled people need to be fixed through interventions. Rather, disability is part of the human experience.

Moving away from derogatory terms, such as "special" and "exceptional" is important. This promotes positive

representation for people within the disability community, and respects their human rights.

Human rights perspectives stress that our society recognizes and names disability as the consequence of a person interacting with an environment that does not accommodate their differences.

This lack of accommodation impedes participation in society. Inequality is due to the inability of society to eliminate barriers challenging persons with disabilities.

Some terminology

The following is some terminology that schools and communities can use to promote inclusivity:

Neurodiversity and neurodivergence:

NEURODIVERSITY, originating in the autism community, reflects the notion that all "bodyminds" work in diverse ways. As noted by the Critical Disability Studies Collective at University of Minnesota, the terms neurodiversity and neurodivergence "come from



autistic communities, who have welcomed folks with other marginalized brain/bodyminds to use them, including but not limited to people with cognitive, brain injury, epilepsy, learning and mental health disabilities."

ABLEISM advances the belief that "typical" abilities are normal and superior. Ableism assumes disabled people need to be fixed and an ableist attitude defines people as lesser while including harmful stereotypes about disabilities. Ableism often leads to discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and actions often resulting in segregationist and exclusionary measures.

THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY says people are disabled by their impairments or differences. Under the medical model, impairment is equated with being broken and in need of a fix. Even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness, the individual is considered lesser. The medical model lens



can lead to stigma and may be considered a prelude to ableism.

for equitable approaches for inclusion.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY: Created by disabled people, the social model argues humans naturally come in a variety of bodyminds, which are changed and shaped by our environment. Disability is part of the human experience. The social model argues that nothing is wrong with the disabled bodymind but that inaccessible structures, systems and attitudes of society are the issue that need fixing. The social model sets the foundation

WHEELCHAIR USER/RIDER: Those who use a wheelchair.

Educators, scholars, and allies must demand disability-appropriate terminology and representation in all K-12 schools. ■

This article was originally published in The Conversation. Read the original article [here](#).

It is important to remember disability is not synonymous with notions of lacking, charity or pity. Nor do disabled people need to be fixed through interventions. Rather, disability is part of the human experience.

~ Michael Baker

A roadmap to improved self-esteem

Dealing with low self-esteem can be challenging for anyone, and it can be even more so for individuals with disabilities who may face additional societal and personal challenges. Here are some strategies that can be adopted to help improve self-esteem, but be mindful that this is a gradual process and setbacks may occur. Be patient with yourself and continue to work on building a positive self-image. It can also be helpful to seek professional guidance from therapists or counsellors who specialize in self-esteem and disability-related issues for personalized support and strategies.

1. Seek Support



Reach out to friends, family members, or support groups

who can provide emotional support and understanding. Sharing your feelings and experiences with others who have similar challenges can be very empowering.

2. Professional Help



Consider seeking the assistance of a therapist, counsellor, or support groups specifically tailored to people with disabilities. They can offer strategies and coping mechanisms to address self-esteem issues.

3. Self-Acceptance

Accepting your disability as a part of who you are is an essential step. Understand that your worth is not defined solely

by your abilities or limitations, but by your character, achievements and the way you contribute to the world.

4. Positive Self-Talk

Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with positive affirmations. Instead of focusing on what you can't do, remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. Write these affirmations down and repeat them daily.

5. Set Realistic Goals

Set achievable goals that are aligned with your abilities and interests. Accomplishing these goals, no matter how small they may seem, can boost self-esteem.



6. Focus on Strengths



Identify and focus on your strengths and talents. Celebrate your achievements, no matter how minor they may seem. Recognizing your capabilities can improve self-esteem.

7. Self-Care

Prioritize self-care activities such as exercise, a balanced diet, adequate sleep and relaxation techniques. Physical well-being can positively impact emotional well-being.



8. Develop Skills

Engage in activities or hobbies that you enjoy and that help you develop new skills. Building competence in various areas can boost self-esteem.

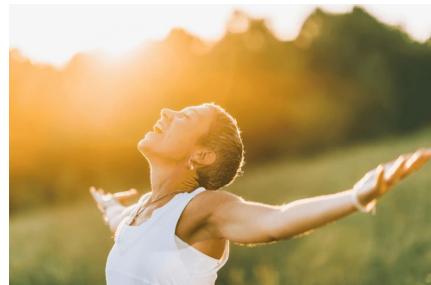
9. Challenge Stereotypes

Educate yourself and others about disabilities to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions. Promoting awareness and understanding can help reduce societal barriers.

10. Advocate for Yourself



Stand up for your rights and needs. Advocate for accommodations or support when necessary, whether it's at work, school, or in daily life. Assertiveness can boost self-esteem.



11. Surround Yourself with Positivity

Limit your exposure to negative or unsupportive people and environments. Spend time with those who uplift and encourage you.

12. Seek Role Models



Find individuals with disabilities who have achieved success in various fields. Their stories can serve as inspiration and remind you of the potential for personal growth and achievement. ■

**Confidence
is not
'they will like
me.'**

**Confidence
is
'I'll be fine if
they don't.'**

~ Unknown



Everyone with MS is different and what works for one person may not work for another. The goal is to maintain and improve your physical function, manage symptoms and enhance your overall well-being.

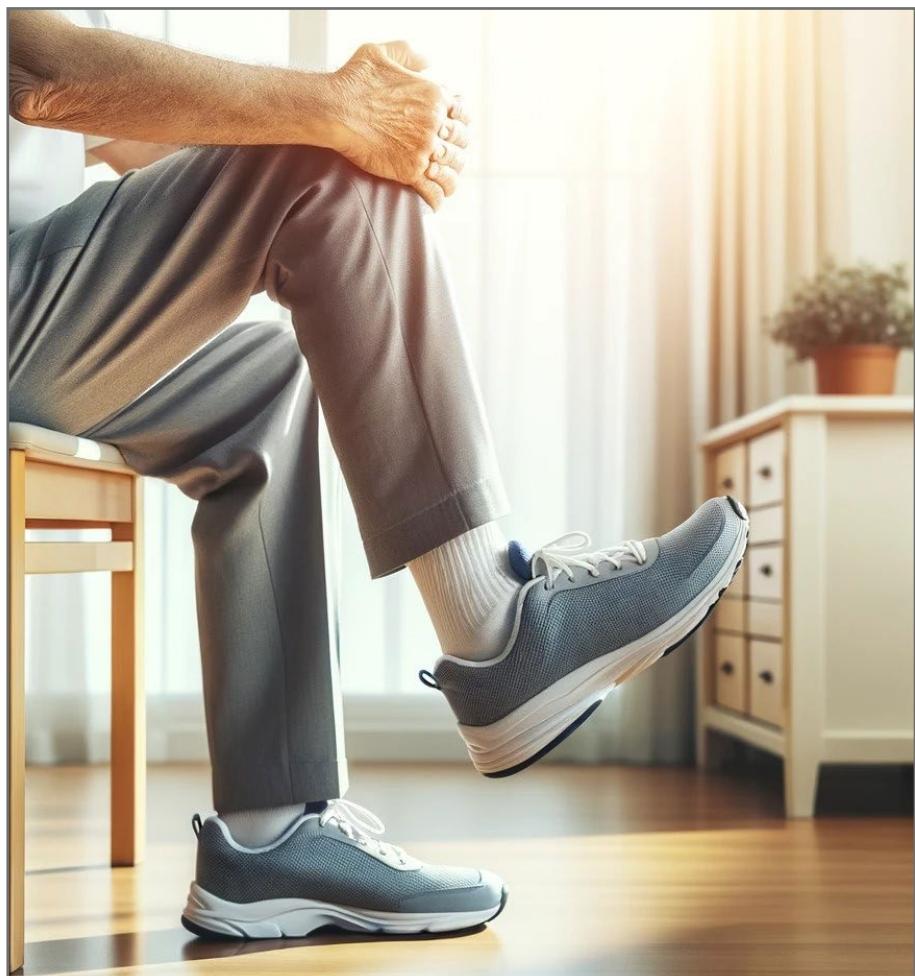
Your healthcare provider can help you tailor an exercise plan that suits your specific needs and abilities. If mobility is an issue, consider these seated aerobic exercises but always listen to your body and exercise within your comfort zone. Start with a few repetitions and gradually increase the number of sets or repetitions as your strength and endurance improve. If you have any specific concerns or limitations related to your MS, consult with your healthcare provider or a physical therapist for guidance.

For these basic suggested exercises, choose a stable chair with a backrest and armrests for added support. Ensure that your back is well-supported and your posture is upright.

SEATED EXERCISES for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Seated Marching

- Sit on a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor
- Lift one knee as high as you comfortably can while keeping the other foot on the floor
- Alternate between lifting each knee in a marching motion
- Aim for 2-3 sets of 10-15 marches per leg



Seated Leg Extensions

- Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor
- Extend one leg straight out in front of you, lifting your foot a few inches off the floor
- Hold for a few seconds, then lower your leg back down
- Alternate between legs and aim for 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions per leg



Seated Twists

- Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor
- Hold a light object (like a water bottle) in both hands
- Twist your upper body to one side, then return to the center, and twist to the other side
- Repeat for 2-3 sets of 10-15 twists per side

Seated Upper Body Exercises

- Seated rows - attach resistance bands to a sturdy anchor and hold the ends in each hand. Sit up straight and pull the bands toward your chest, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Release slowly.
- Seated bicep curls - hold a light dumbbell in each hand and perform bicep curls while seated
- Seated shoulder press - hold dumbbells in each hand and lift them overhead while seated



Seated Neck Stretches

- Sit comfortably in a chair
- Tilt your head to one side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder
- Hold the stretch for a few seconds, then switch to the other side
- Repeat for 2-3 stretches per side



Seated Toe Taps

- Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor
- Lift your toes off the floor while keeping your heels on the ground
- Tap your toes lightly on the floor and then lift them back up
- Aim for 2-3 sets of 10-15 repetitions

Live your best life with confidence

Individuals with disabilities can live full lives. With the perfect blend of mindset, support, and lifestyle choices, you can elevate your life beyond expectations. Here are a few things to consider:

1. Your Mindset

Your mind is your most powerful tool. Cultivate a mindset that thrives on challenges, turning them into stepping stones rather than obstacles. Reframe your thoughts, focus on your strengths and let a positive attitude be your constant companion.



3. Move it, shake it

Physical activity isn't just for the able-bodied. Discover adaptive sports and activities that resonate with you. Whether it's wheelchair basketball, adaptive yoga, or swimming, find your groove and revel in the exhilaration of movement. Maintaining good physical and mental health is essential. This includes regular



exercise, a balanced diet and getting enough sleep. Consult with healthcare professionals to develop a personalized wellness plan that addresses your specific needs and abilities. Prioritize health and wellness!

2. Find Your Dream Team

Choose to be in the company of people who empower you. Build a supportive network of friends, family, and healthcare professionals. They can provide emotional support, practical assistance, and encouragement during difficult times. Joining disability-specific support groups can also connect you with others who share similar experiences and provide valuable insights.





4. Travel

Don't let your disability limit your wanderlust. Explore travel options designed with accessibility in mind, from wheelchair-friendly destinations to adaptive adventure tours. Who says you can't explore the world with a disability? Pack your bags, embrace the unknown, and embark on a journey that will redefine what's possible. Your disability is not a limitation, it's a unique perspective that adds richness to your travel experiences. So, go out there, defy expectations, and show the world that nothing can stop you from living life to the fullest!



5. Pursue your dreams

Do not allow your disability to hinder the pursuit of your dreams. Identify your passions and set achievable goals. Having goals to work toward can provide a sense of purpose and motivation to overcome challenges.



6. Tech Magic

Embrace the digital age and the power of technology to make your daily life more enjoyable. Equip your home with assistive technology specific to your needs, stay informed about new developments and explore options that can improve your quality of life. Screen readers, voice-activated devices, mobility aids or specialized software—the path to a fuller life with a disability isn't just possible, it's within your reach. All it takes is a sprinkle of determination, a dash of support, and a pinch of lifestyle adjustments. ■





More than a 'disability person.' What finishing school is like for youth with intellectual disability

By Lise Ludwig Mogensen

Associate professor, Medical Education, Research and Evaluation, School of Medicine, Western Sydney University

Leaving school and figuring out what's next is challenging for young people. For those with disability, it is even harder. It is often a time when supports are withdrawn as they leave the heavily structured school environment.

We asked young people with intellectual disability

about their experiences of transitioning from school and starting adult life. Our newly published research suggests pre-transition planning for school leavers with disability is inconsistent or lacking. Most participants felt excluded from making decisions for life after school and needed support to access and navigate the

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

After school, most participants longed to find a paid job, friends and a life partner but felt they were missing out on these typical adult milestones. They told us it was difficult to find service providers to help them reach their goals. Many

felt isolated and in a perpetual state of transition.

The promise of 'choice and control'

Transition-from-school policies and guidelines exist in all states of Australia.

Shared characteristics between these guidelines include early planning, being person-centred, and ensuring collaboration between the family, school and services.

A decade ago, Australia changed from a social welfare model of disability support to a consumer-focused, market-based system. The NDIS promised to be the cornerstone of this, offering participants increased "choice and control" over new skills, jobs, greater independence, quality of life and improved social participation.

We wanted to understand the lived experiences of today's young Australians with intellectual disability in planning to leave school and transition into adult life.

Through individual and group interviews, 27 young people with intellectual disability (15 female and 12 male participants, aged 19 to 33) told us their views and experiences of leaving school in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Their stories highlight how much more work should be done to empower young people with intellectual disability.

What they told us

Firstly, many young people told us they felt left out of transition planning at school, with most decisions being made for them. There were limited, if any, opportunities for them to explore post-school options. As one participant said,

I don't want people that are, like, like, you know, just making choices for me.

Secondly, all participants found accessing NDIS funding complicated. They relied on parents or other advocates to navigate the process, to ask the right questions, and help with difficult jargon – or, as stated

by one young person, knowing how to "bark the right way". After leaving school, many felt lonely, lost and uncertain about their adult role and identity. Some felt "left behind" by friends and siblings without disability who had jobs and life partners, intimate relationships and were raising families of their own.

It's hard to find a partner [...] or to know someone and be with someone.

There was a shared sense among participants that most disability services did not prioritise activities to support reaching their goals. A young woman explained how finding a service with a good fit had been very difficult. She talked about how her first service provider had "tried to like take us for money" without providing a service.





Young people with and without disability share the same goals when they finish school.

Other participants felt “stuck” with a life in disability services locked into the role of “disability person”, while wanting to do and be more.

You know [...] I want to do some more in life and [...] I want to be out there. Know what I mean?

Participants felt they needed better support with finding and keeping employment, even from agencies that had been contracted to do so. Getting help with finding a paid job seemed especially frustrating and out of reach. One young man called it a “total nightmare” explaining,

So they’re basically, you know, not very well, um, structured [...] you’re just waiting here for that lottery ticket to draw your name out.

The same goals as young people without disability

This study shows transition planning processes remain inconsistent and there is insufficient collaboration between school systems, adult disability services and the workforce.

Participants in our study had the same goals as young people without disability for meaningful work, independence and social connection—but need better support to contributing meaningfully to their communities.

The sense of “feeling stuck” with life in disability services or in “perpetual transition” may be caused by conflicting beliefs and

values between service providers and consumers.

Young people expect to take on adult roles after leaving school. But disability service providers often see these young people merely as service receivers. Standardised processes and procedures may create “institutionalised identities”.

The highly standardised nature of the NDIS leaves it inaccessible for people with intellectual disability, so the promise of choice and control in adult life is far from reality.

How it should be

Australia needs nationally consistent policies backed by systematic actions and oversight that truly supports the transition

from school into meaningful adult lives for young people with intellectual disability.

People with disability must be actively involved in developing transition and service plans, with goals for growth and for moving between or beyond disability services once milestones are met.

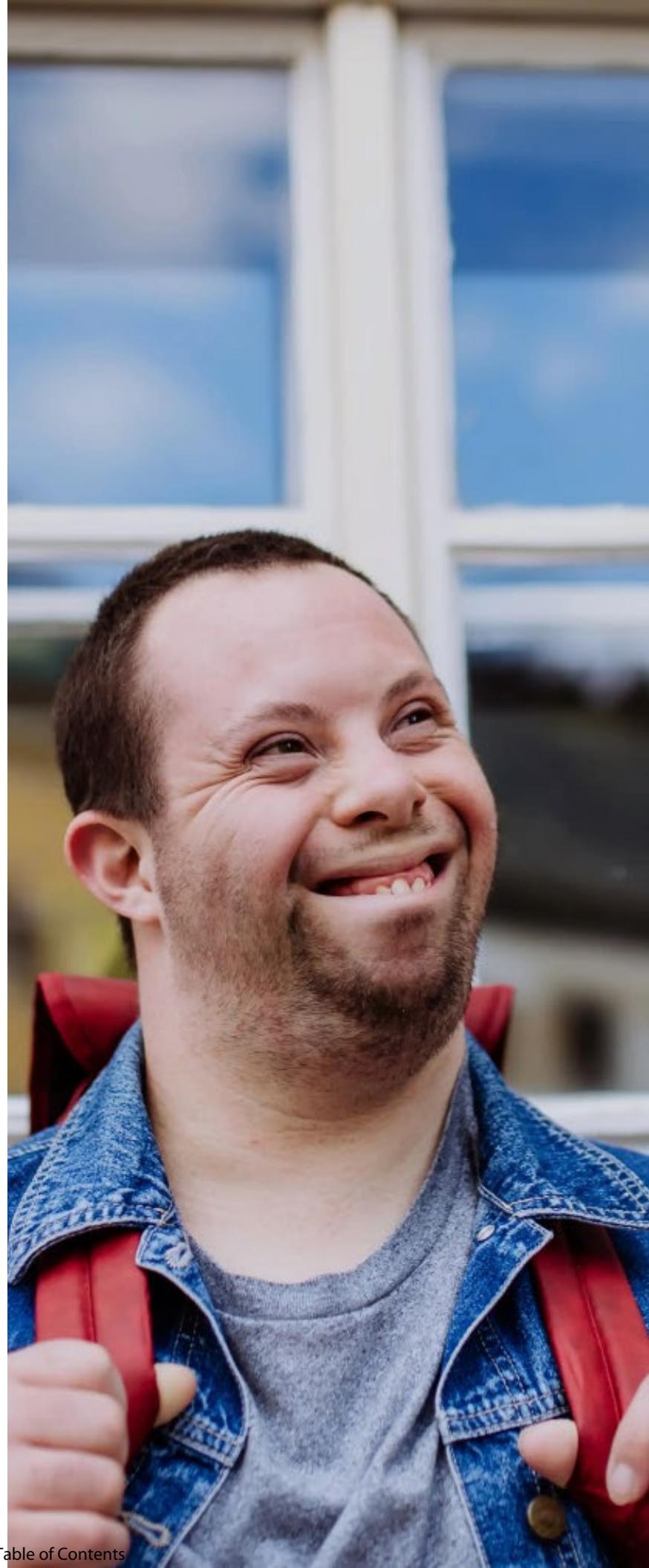
Strategies must include steps for fostering social identities through friendships, casual to ongoing employment, intimate relationships, parenting or caring for others.

Further shifts in the NDIS model are also needed to foster individualised and supported planning for people with intellectual disability. ■

This article was originally published in The Conversation. Read the original article [here](#).

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After leaving school, many felt lonely, lost and uncertain about their adult role and identity. Some felt “left behind” by friends and siblings without disability who had jobs and life partners, intimate relationships and were raising families of their own.

~ Lise Ludwig Mogensen







Jules Sherred

Disability Advocate & Culinary Innovator

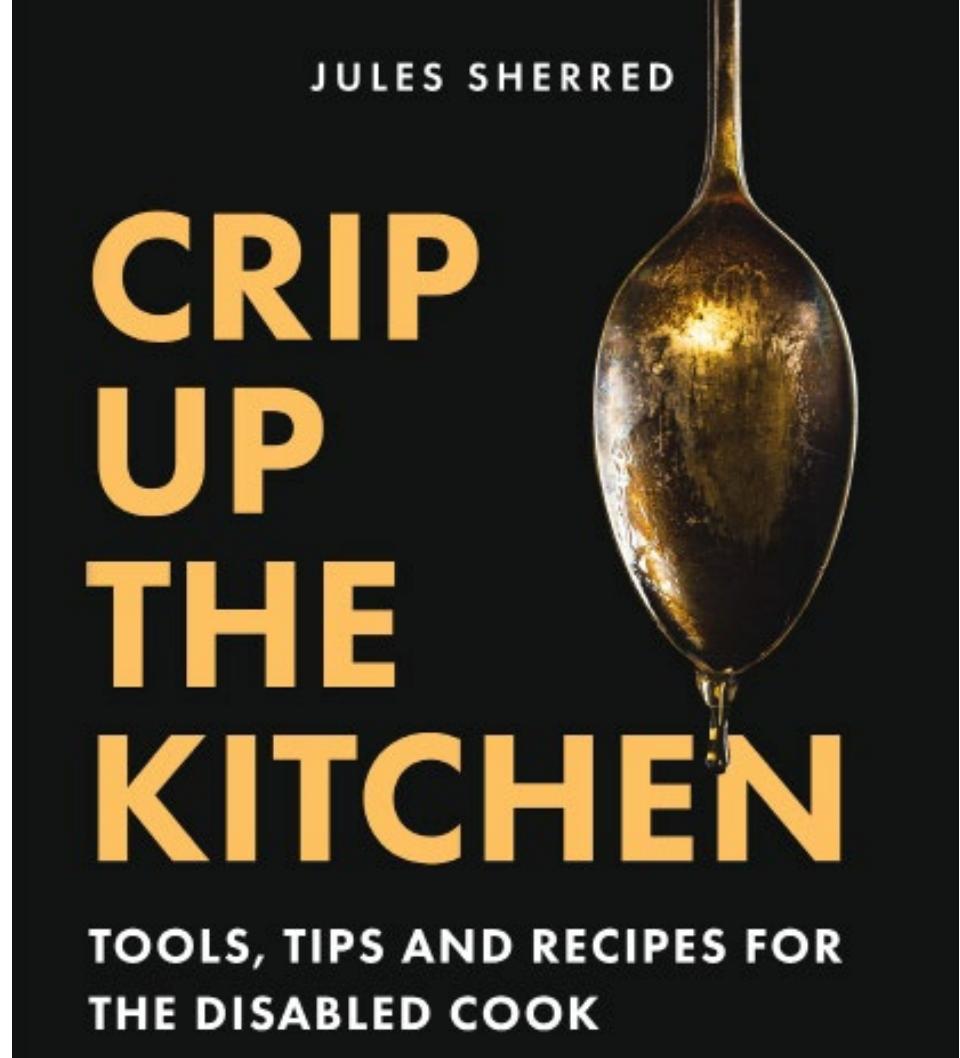
Introduction

Based in Duncan, B.C., Canada, Jules is an award-winning commercial food photographer and stylist, writer and recipe developer, journalist and outspoken advocate for disability and trans rights. His website, Disabled Kitchen and Garden, and his award-nominated cookbook, Crip Up the Kitchen (CUTK), were born out of the need to include disabled people in the conversation around food. Learn more and sign up for updates at julessherred.com.

*Crip Up the Kitchen:
Tools, Tips and Recipes
for The Disabled Cook.*

Why did you decide to write a cookbook?

There was a time in my life when I'd easily spend over five hours cooking. I grew up immersed in strong food cultures. Then my disabilities progressed to the point where I



couldn't cook for over five years. The inability to cook—one of the things that is central to my sense of self—cast a shadow over my mental wellbeing. I had

not realised how detrimental it was to my happiness until I created strategies for myself that allowed me to reclaim the kitchen and regain access

to my food culture. I knew I was not alone in this. I tried to find cooking resources for disabled people that were written by disabled people and would come up empty. Everything I found tried to shove disabled people into an abled person's world. That is when I decided to create Disabled Kitchen and Garden. Then, the pandemic hit. As their lives were upended, many people were coming to realise they were neurodivergent. I also knew that

it would be a mass disabling event. That is when I decided that *Crip Up the Kitchen* needed to be a thing.

Will there be a follow-up to *Crip Up the Kitchen*?

In the new year, I will begin development of a second cookbook. It centres a different theme. However, it will make use of one of the accessibility devices in *Crip Up the Kitchen*. It is my hope that if a publisher buys it, they will allow me to

write the recipes in the same way they are written in CUTK. I was incredibly lucky that the publisher of CUTK, TouchWood Editions, allowed me to create a style guide specific for this book.

I also just finished writing a contemporary Young adult (YA) novel that I hope I can talk about soon.

How representative is the media industry of people with disabilities? What more needs to be done? As a



photographer and writer, how has this affected you?

Not very represented. When there are disabled people in the media, a lot of the time, it is for inspiration porn. My story isn't about overcoming my disabilities. My story is about figuring out what I can do within the limits imposed by my body and living a fulfilled life with those boundaries. That isn't sexy. It doesn't make able-bodied people feel good about themselves and their lives, though it does make disabled people happy.

And therein lies the problem. Currently, most stories exist to serve able-bodied people, instead of centering the feelings and needs of disabled people. It makes it incredibly difficult to move in the world, never mind move within my profession, because people don't have an accurate idea of what it means to be disabled. Plus, they don't understand that being disabled isn't a sad thing to overcome. They don't understand that it isn't something to pity.

This is one of the main reasons that I use identity-first language. You must see my disabilities. I will make you see it. Because you can't accommodate, understand, or embrace something that you don't want to see or refuse to see.

I also have difficulties getting jobs. People see my chair, or other aspects of my disabilities, and immediately assume I'm not capable. Or they will infantilise me by not giving me an opportunity while saying something like, "We don't want to put too much on your plate," as if I'm not the best judge of what I'm capable in that moment. Then there is the issue of, "We already have one book/article/essay on this topic. We don't need another."

Until these intentional limits on representational media are lifted, these issues will continue.

Book publishing industry and people with disabilities—what are your thoughts about that relationship?

In book publishing, progress is being made. Like most things in publishing, it is slow. The good news for disabled authors is many people want their stories. A lot of agents and editors are prioritizing underrepresented communities for the authors they sign. In the United States, there is Disability in Publishing which is a professional group working to make traditional publishing more inclusive. Hopefully something like that will be created in Canada. There have been a couple bad steps by Scholastic recently, but they appear to be learning from their mistakes. Time will tell. I



do believe that the demand for more diverse voices will only increase and that this isn't a fad.

In your work as a photographer, stylist, author, and advocate, are there any significant moments or achievements that stand out for you?

I've had many. Here are a handful from the last couple of years.

As a survivor, I worked with the Minister of Justice/Attorney General's office to ensure transgender people were included in the federal

conversion "therapy" ban. I worked with Community Based Research Centre to create the resources on StopConversionPractices.ca. My image From Farm to Table won an excellence during the 2023 Professional Photographers of Canada National Image Competition and is part of the national loan collection. As part of a task force, I helped with research on food insecurity in the Cowichan region, and the creation of a draft food policy for the City of Duncan. And I'm a finalist for the Pacific Northwest Book Prize for Crip Up the Kitchen.



Award-winning *From Farm to Table* Photography

What advice would you give to other inspiring photographers and writers living with disabilities?

Create in a way that suits your circumstances. Don't push through. It is a recipe for fatigue, injury, and exacerbating a variety of disabilities. Listen to what your body is telling you in any given moment and work within those boundaries. We all have limits and that is okay! Embrace them. As soon as I embraced my limits as my default way of living, I became

100% more productive and 1000% more injury-free.

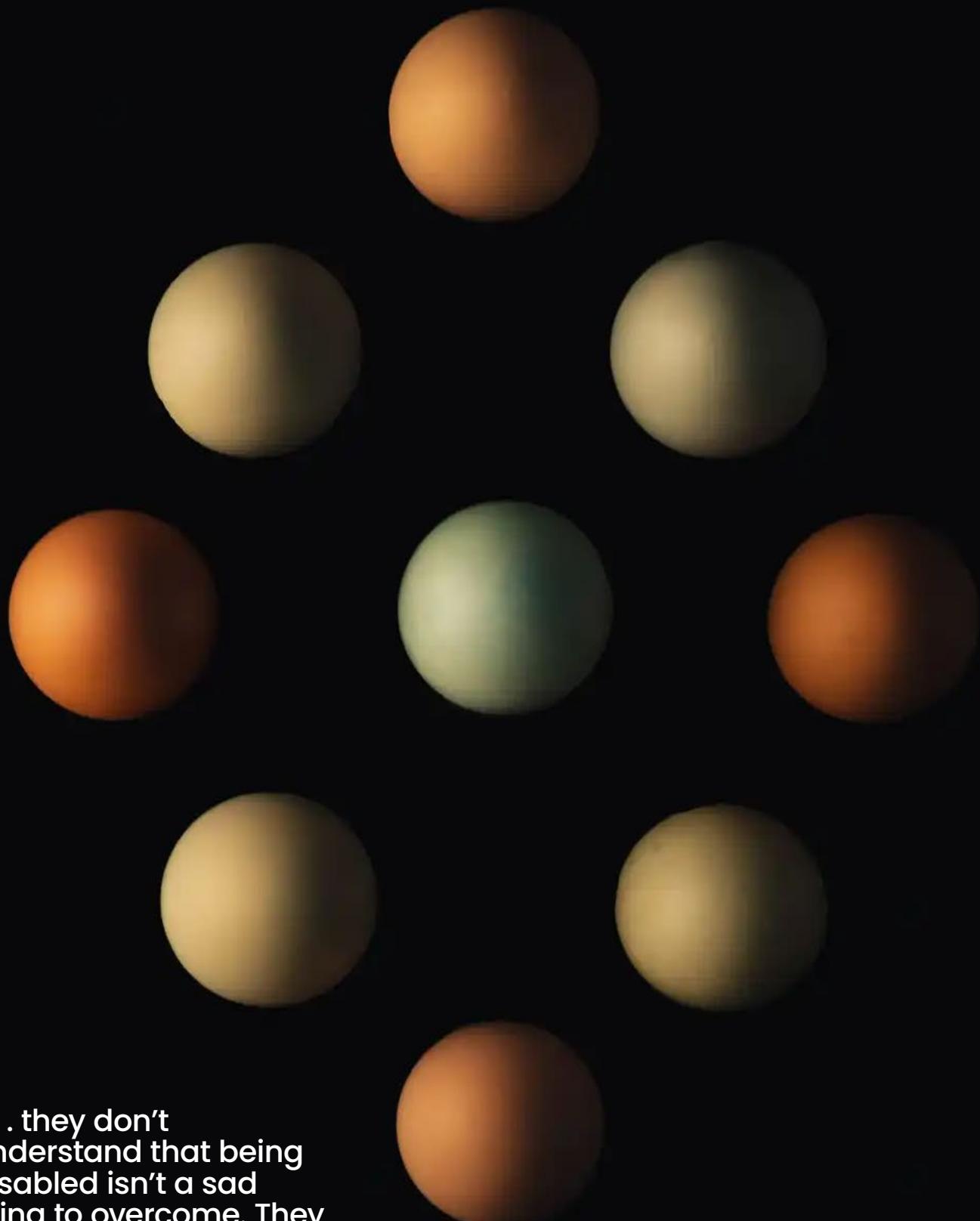
What can we expect from you next?

My hope is that in the early spring, new recipes will begin to trickle in on *Disabled Kitchen and Garden*. And I hope I can announce my YA novel sooner rather than later. These things can take years – remember I said publishing is slow.

What message would you like to share with the world about the importance of inclusivity

and the power of the media to unite people?

I'm not the first to say this: You can't be it if you can't see it. To add to that truism, people will feel shame for being disabled unless they see people who are happy and whole and not trying to overcome something that doesn't need to be overcome. People fear what they don't know. People fear disability when they shouldn't. So, while it isn't sexy, the media needs to step up and show disabled people thriving on their terms instead of according to the rules of ableism and an ableist society. ■



"...they don't understand that being disabled isn't a sad thing to overcome. They don't understand that it isn't something to pity."

~ Jules Sherred



Despite the increasing representation of persons with hearing loss in the workplace, discrimination, a lack of accessibility and isolation still prevent equity and inclusion. (Shutterstock)

How workplaces can create more inclusive environments for employees with deafness and hearing loss

By [David C Baldridge](#), [Brent John Lyons](#), [Camellia Bryan](#), [Liu-Qin Yang](#)

Hearing loss is a critical diversity, equity and inclusion issue for managers and employers. Persons with hearing loss are a growing population around the world. According to the World Health Organization, over five per cent of the world's population—or 430 million people—have disabling hearing loss. This number is

expected to rise to over 700 million by 2050.

Despite the increasing number of persons with hearing loss in the workplace, only 20.6 per cent of Canadians with hearing loss are employed full-time. Discrimination, a lack of accessibility and isolation still prevent equity and inclusion at

work. Persons with hearing loss also experience higher levels of stress and fatigue and earn lower incomes.

Persons with hearing loss have diverse preferences and skills that can affect their career outcomes. Knowledge of disability, reasonable workplace accommodations,

effective communication skills and support from mentors and peer networks all contribute to positive career outcomes.

However, experiences can vary greatly by hearing loss type and job demands. For example, sign language users may have more access to Deaf communities and resources, but less access to mainstream opportunities. Spoken language users may have more access to mainstream opportunities, but less access to Deaf communities and resources.

How do persons with hearing loss cope with isolation at work?

Our new study examines how employees with hearing loss cope with feeling isolated at work. We found that how employees cope depends on both the severity of hearing loss and the quality of their relationship with their supervisors.

Specifically, our results suggest the severity of an employee's hearing loss influences the degree to which they rely on professional connections for their sense of self. This, in turn, has consequences for their career outcomes, especially for those with less supportive supervisors.

Surprisingly, we found that employees with more severe

hearing loss tend to fare better in terms of the impact of isolation on career outcomes. This is because employees with more severe hearing loss were more likely to experience awkward, anxious and frustrating interactions with co-workers and have a harder time building and maintaining professional connections.

As a result, employees with more severe hearing loss usually placed less importance on professional connections and more importance on connections with other persons with hearing loss, making them less sensitive to isolation from professional connections.

What can persons with hearing loss do to support themselves?

Our research found that persons

with hearing loss use a number of strategies to help themselves thrive in their careers. One thing persons with hearing loss do is accepting and embracing hearing loss as part of their identity. This positively changes how they view themselves and their relationship to work.

Many persons with hearing loss also redefine their personal definitions of career success. They shift from material achievements to social contributions, personal growth and well-being. Some end up moving to new roles or occupations that better match their changing skills, interests and values.

Some even turn their hearing loss into an asset. For instance, attorneys, doctors or therapists with hearing loss can focus on



About 430 million people have hearing loss — a number expected to rise to over 700 million by 2050. (Shutterstock)

serving clients and patients who share their condition.

Persons with hearing loss often expanded their professional networks to include others in the community. This may involve affiliations with organizations like the Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Canadian Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America and the National Association of the Deaf.

Our research underscores the resilience and adaptability of persons with hearing loss in the workplace. By redefining success, shifting their perspectives and expanding their networks to include supportive communities, persons with hearing loss are

able to lead rich and fulfilling professional lives.

What can co-workers and supervisors do to help make workplaces more inclusive?

There are a number of practices supervisors can adopt to support employees with hearing loss effectively. These practices include: avoid assuming an employee with a disability is less able, ask persons with hearing loss about their preferred communication methods and provide reasonable accommodations for them, such as interpreters, captioning, assistive devices and flexible work arrangements.

These can help persons with hearing loss to communicate

effectively, participate in meetings and training sessions, access information and resources and perform their jobs effectively. Supervisors should create a sense of openness and flexibility so employees feel comfortable requesting accommodations as needed.

In addition, supervisors and co-workers should learn more inclusive communication skills. For example, they can learn basic sign language, use clear and articulate language, speak more slowly and clearly and avoid covering their mouths when speaking as this can hinder lip-reading. Many persons with hearing loss also find it easier to communicate one-on-one in well-lit, quiet locations.

Regular check-ins with employees to see how things are going, what challenges they are facing and if they need any support are also essential. Supervisors and co-workers should raise awareness, educate others, challenge stereotypes and promote accessibility at work. They should advocate for a more inclusive and respectful work environment for all employees, especially those with hearing loss. ■



Supervisors and co-workers should learn more inclusive communication skills, like basic sign language, to help persons with hearing loss to communicate effectively at work. (Shutterstock)

This article was originally published in The Conversation. Read the original article [here](#).



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**Deaf people can do
anything hearing people
can do except hear.**

~ I. King Jordan

COVER STORY



Chloë Angus

Fashion meets exoskeleton technology

By Mel Padmore

A life of glitz and glamour, strutting down runways, gracing red carpets, and jet-setting across the globe. That was Chloë Angus' world. She is the founder of Vancouver-based Chloë Angus Design, a fashion company that celebrates Indigenous art and culture in Canada through its sustainable, collaborative collections. But in June 2015, her life took a drastic turn. On that fateful day, after what she thought was just a minor ache from a pinched nerve, she found herself unable to use her legs. "I had gone out for a run one afternoon and limped home because my back ached," she said. She drove herself to the hospital and within a 24-hour period, doctors gave her the grim news: she would never walk again. A rare benign tumor caused bleeding into her spinal cord and she became a T10 paraplegic. "It blew me away, that was a pretty



Chloë wearing the exoskeleton

shocking moment and I just remember thinking, oh no, this isn't conducive to my lifestyle, this isn't going to fit with what I do."

Learning about the secondary health complications of living with a spinal cord injury and in particular living in a wheelchair

was frightening. "Being seated and sedentary comes with a long list of health complications that is likely to shorten my life," Chloë said. "Pressure sores, muscle atrophy, bone density loss, complications with bladder functions, circulation, nerve pain, mental health. I mean, the list just goes on and on and that's what scared me the most about what I was facing." However, she firmly believed there was a solution somewhere. Chloë turned to Google and searches led her to an article in Popular Science Magazine about exoskeleton technology, which promised to help paralyzed individuals walk again. She excitedly told her distraught family to stop worrying and order one for her from Amazon, thinking she would be able to get back to her glamorous life in no time "and I'll start to walk again next week," she chuckled. "Little did I know that this technology



Chloë's XoMotion

was still in its infancy and only available in research centers—I definitely could not get one from Amazon!"

Undeterred, however, Chloë's research into exoskeleton technology continued and so did her rehab journey. It was during her time at GF Strong Rehabilitation Center in Vancouver that she discovered they used a basic exoskeleton for research. "It took much advocating for me to be granted eight sessions to use it," she said. "I just remember that

day, getting into this somewhat clunky, somewhat heavy oversized device that took 2 people to get me into it. And I had to use arm crutches and a walker to even get up and get moving, but the day that I stood up and I walked across the gymnasium floor, it didn't matter. I was back up and this was huge. That really opened my eyes to what was possible with technology."

Chloë was now more determined than ever to find a way to improve exoskeletons

and make them accessible to those who needed it. "My journey led me to Simon Fraser University in Surrey, where I met two visionary professors, Dr. Siamak Arzanpour and Dr. Edward Park, who had a concept for an advanced exoskeleton. It was a eureka moment for me—a chance to contribute my skills in fashion and design to a groundbreaking project." Since then, Chloë has been working tirelessly as Director of Lived Experience with the professors and their team at

Human in Motion Robotics, infusing creativity and lived experience into the world of exoskeletons. "Together, we're creating a device that is not only independent but self-balancing, highly articulate and capable of handling various terrains and tasks," she expressed.

"We're redefining mobility for wheelchair users and paving the way for a future where exoskeletons are an everyday sight."

One of the most rewarding moments for Chloë was receiving the Courage to Come Back award in 2022 and walking in her exoskeleton to accept it. "That moment of being able to stand up in my exoskeleton and walk to accept that award—it still brings tears to my eyes, not only for me but also for my team who worked so hard to make that happen—what a moment! Here I am. I'm back and I'm walking!" This marked a powerful milestone in her journey to push the boundaries of what's possible.



Chloë, the designer

But what really sets this team's exoskeleton apart from others? According to Chloë, unlike conventional models that lack natural gait and balance, her team's creation is self-balancing, eliminating the need for crutches or walkers. It boasts articulate motion, allowing users to turn, adjust their step, climb and descend stairs and

navigate obstacles seamlessly. It's a game-changer and "the device will only get lighter and faster," she says confidently.

Chloë is utilizing her fashion design background to make the exoskeleton esthetically pleasing, incredibly comfortable and easy to wear. She states, "I can wear it for hours at a time without a hint of discomfort or skin damage, unlike other exoskeletons I can move freely, independently, and comfortably."

With her fashion designer eyes, Chloë is seeing a future where her team's exoskeleton comes in different colors with custom and Indigenous art prints. But it's not just about fashion, it's about transforming lives and inspiring people. Chloë was told to accept her injury and



Human In Motion Robotics Team



Chloe— Leo Gallery 2015



Chloe at the 2015 Leo Awards

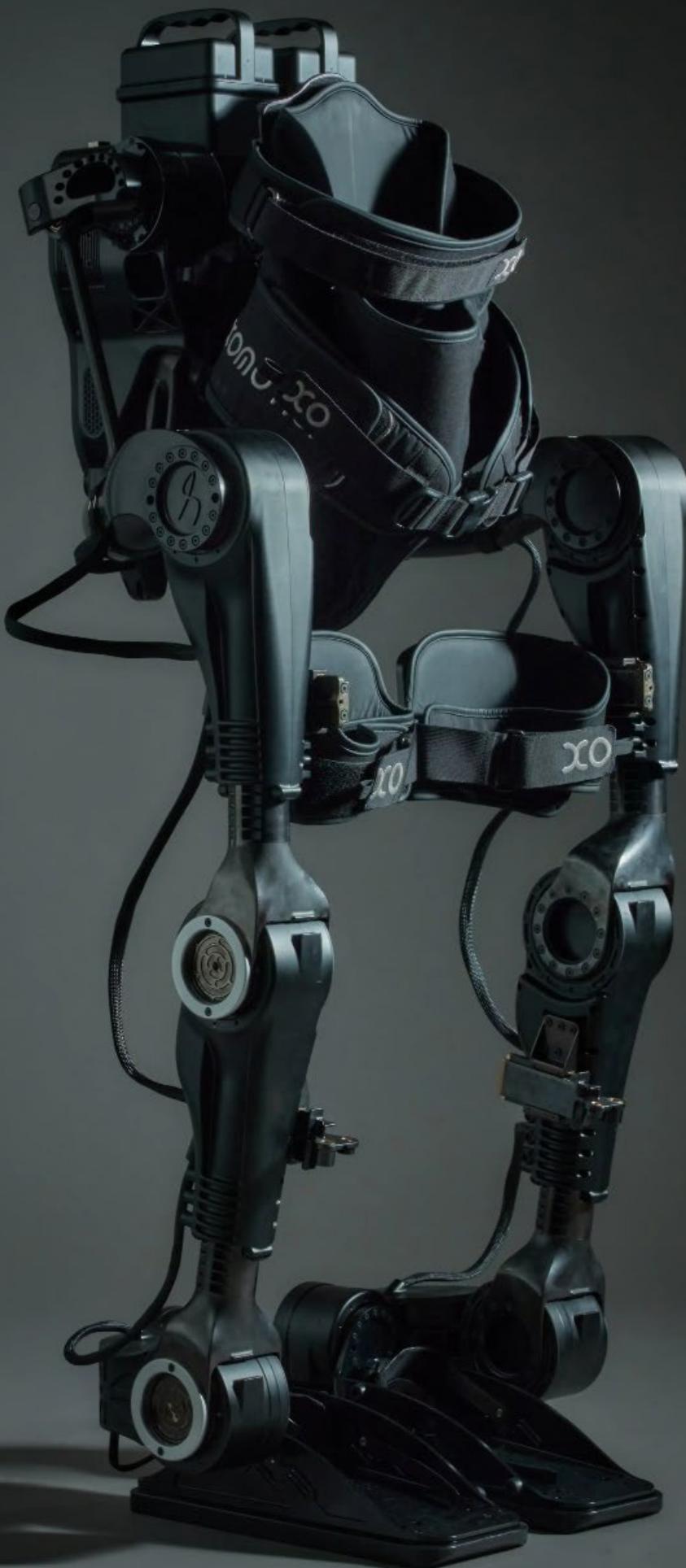
learn to live her life in a wheelchair and whenever she tried to push back, it was felt that she was not accepting her injury. "I was told that they didn't want to give me too much hope but I don't know anybody who's ever overdosed on too much hope. Hope gives you energy and inspiration. I have learned to accept my life. I know how to use my wheelchair. I'm back in my work life. I drive a car; I can travel independently. I've accepted and adapted

to all of these things. But it's not enough for me" Chloe said. Knowing that there's something better that could be built to change the lives of wheelchair users is worth the pursuit and she believes the future of exoskeleton technology looks bright.

Chloe envisions that wearable robotics will become the norm, benefitting both those with mobility challenges and those seeking assistance with physically demanding tasks. ■

"I look forward to the day and I'm planning it already, where I will have a runway show and all of the models will be wearing exoskeletons. I am confident that this technology is coming and it's not very far away. I want them to have hope and be inspired to stay fit and active because we're all going to be up and walking again, one day. I am telling you this technology is coming." ~ Chloe Angus

[CLICK HERE TO READ OUR FULL INTERVIEW WITH CHLOË.](#)





Medical Tourism Training

Interview with Elizabeth Ziembra

Founder and President of [Medical Tourism Training](#)

Introduction

Medical Tourism Training is a consulting and training private company. We focus on improving every aspect of the patient journey by working with governments, public and private healthcare providers and hospitality services, whether large or small, to integrate their services for people travelling for healthcare. Our mission is to expand access to quality wellness, health, dental and medical services for individuals around the world.

Meet Elizabeth Ziembra, Founder and President

My first career was as an attorney with many hospitals and clinics as my clients. Then I continued my education and earned a master's degree in international public health. In 2007, through some wonderful twists of fate, I learned about this consumer driven trend called medical tourism and began to create opportunities to position

health travel as a way to expand access to healthcare services.

What is medical tourism and how does it differ from accessible tourism?

Medical tourism is when individuals travel outside the usual geographic location where they would receive healthcare for the specific purpose of accessing healthcare in another destination. It is usually thought of as travel from one country to another and it may also be travelling within a country such as going from Maine to Florida for treatment. Contrary to the label, there is little or no "tourism" involved in "medical tourism". Travelling for healthcare is serious business.

Accessible tourism focuses on the tourism part of the term to define why people are travelling – to sightsee, vacation, relax, recharge and so on. The important part of the term is accessible – making the world, especially

tourist destinations, available to all people with or without disabilities. It is about equal access to as much of the world as possible.

Who benefits from your services?

Our clients are hospitals, clinics and governments that are looking to improve their services to attract more wellness, health, dental and medical travelers to their destinations to consume those health-related services. Typical consulting assignments are to develop strategic or marketing plans, find solutions to specific business problems, improve the quality of the patient journey or reach new markets for their services. The individuals who benefit the most are the people who visit the destinations or use the health and hospitality services offered to the world by our clients. We are able to help our clients expand access to healthcare for many people.

Are there financing options available for students to take your course?

Medical Tourism Training offers very affordable online courses, financing is not needed. Other more intensive programs are offered through sponsorships by governments, healthcare providers and associations. Those programs are usually offered to their employees or, if offered to the general public, are free or the registration fee is low.

What sets your service apart from your competitors?

Our team of experts! My colleagues are well-respected professionals from hospitality, tourism, wellness, health,

medical and accessible travel who approach each assignment with integrity, knowledge, experience and a commitment to excellence second to none. The company was established in 2009, the first of its kind to focus on medical tourism. We have grown and learned together, sharing our skills, dedication and leadership with our clients. There are many newbies who claim to be experts in medical travel. They cannot compare to the depth and breadth of knowledge that we offer.

What are you most proud of about what your organization offers?

In one word, reputation. The colleagues with whom I work are trusted and valued for their honesty and integrity. The world of medical tourism is often described as the wild, wild west because there is no governing body to set international standards of professional ethics. We believe that treating people fairly and respectfully is the true success in business and instill those values into the work we do for our clients.

In the last 15+ years that I have worked in the sector, many pretenders have come and gone. More are emerging post-pandemic. People who want to become medical tourists must do their research because there

are few protections if something goes wrong.

How do you see the industry of medical tourism evolving over the next 5-10 years?

I do expect medical tourism to grow and expand for three main reasons for increasing worldwide demand: A growing global population; growing middle classes in countries like India and China; and wealthy countries with aging populations.

With an expanding global population, there is more demand worldwide for healthcare services. The growing middle classes, especially in countries with large populations like India and China, means more people have more money to spend on wellness, health, dental and medical travel. The wealthiest countries in the world have aging populations. The older people get the more healthcare services they consume. These and other factors result in increased demand worldwide.

The shortages of healthcare workers, especially in wealthy countries, means people are waiting for services. Many prospective patients do not want or cannot wait for access to healthcare so they will look for services away from home. People of all ages want to look



and feel better, younger, so they will consume more wellness, dental and healthcare services. The overall supply of healthcare services cannot meet the current and growing demand for those services. Consumers will look for other options including medical travel.

The impact of technology and trends like Artificial Intelligence (AI) are just beginning to be felt in medical travel. The opportunities to improve access and services delivery are immense. Many governments and healthcare providers are planning to leverage these innovations to drive increases in medical travel.

What advice do you have for others hoping to become champions for people with disabilities?

Don't just talk about it. Do it! As an ally, I have a platform and voice that I use to actively network with accessible businesses and individuals to support their efforts. I am on social media regularly adding my help and encouragement to improve accessibility for everyone especially those who want to travel for any reason including medical travel. I include accessibility topics, issues, solutions to all my medical tourism assignments and programs not only because



In Dubai, 2022

many medical tourists need improved accessibility when they travel but also because I believe that everyone should have access to as much of the world as possible. If enough of us join our voices together, we can create the change we want.

What message would you like to share with the world about the importance of inclusivity and the power of the medical travel industry to unite people?

Accessible travel and medical tourism both serve clients who need some level of

assistance when they travel. The organizations that provide their services should make the experience safe and enjoyable. Making the world more accessible is not simply the right thing to do, it makes great business sense. The accessible tourism market is much bigger than the medical tourism market yet there is so much untapped potential. Governments and businesses should take a closer look at the opportunities, create accessible places and activities, and enjoy the many benefits that more people could experience. It is not a pipe dream. It is a worthy, achievable goal. ■



Morson Group PLC Adamson House Breakout Area

Diamond Interiors

The ideal accessible office, from entry to exit.

By Zoe Snelling

Office design experts, Diamond Interiors, commenced their journey in 1996, establishing themselves as a respected office furniture provider in Wigan, Greater Manchester, within the northern region of England. With over two decades of experience, they have remained steadfast in their commitment to serving a diverse clientele, catering to both large corporations and small enterprises alike. Their team embodies a

dynamic and imaginative spirit, taking immense pride in their ability to execute top-tier projects that consistently meet clients' expectations. Diamond Interiors specialize in delivering innovative, functional and harmonious office environments, ensuring their clients experience an optimal workspace.

They have identified that accessibility in the workplace

is crucial and when employees feel comfortable in their place of work there are positive outcomes. They have therefore prepared a Walk-through Guide From Entry to Exit to help employers experience navigating an accessible workplace while considering the different needs of each employee. When creating an office space, not only do designers need to cooperate with the Building Access

Regulations and Equality Legislation, they should also prioritize making modern offices vibrant and welcoming spaces for everyone.

The origin of the concept for the walk-through guide from entry to exit

Diamond Interiors is aware that when it comes to everyday participation in life, those with disabilities face huge obstacles, especially in the workplace, preventing a large proportion of talented individuals from obtaining employment. They believe it is important for all workplaces to meet the different needs and requirements of all people. As office design specialists, this is something they prioritise whenever working on a new project—to make sure it is fit for everyone!

The guide provides support for persons with disabilities

The guide helps those with

disabilities to become aware of the provisions that should be applied into their workplace for them. Some people may be accustomed to adapting to challenging workplaces and may be made to feel that it is up to them to surpass these barriers, however, the guide may give them insight into what adaptations should be made, and how their workspaces can be adjusted.

The guide can help businesses

The guide was designed to put readers in the position of someone who lives with a disability, so they can better understand the challenges this demographic faces from entry, all the way through to the exit. Many individuals aren't sure of what accessibility means and beyond this, senior leadership may not be convinced of the benefits of adopting accessibility. Therefore, the main goal of this guide is to get decision makers

to identify then understand the urgency for significant changes to be made to workplaces.

Success stories

Diamond Interiors are proud to have worked with The Hollinwood Medical Centre in Oldham which is a community GP run by Hope Citadel Healthcare, a not-for-profit, and community interest company. The layout and functional aspect of the design was really important especially where accessibility in healthcare is crucial. From the layout to the seating areas, furniture, wayfinding, wide pathways and ramps, a lot went into it to make sure everyone was accounted for.

Accessibility in the workplace is crucial



"Diamond Interiors is committed to working with communities to create an accessible-friendly environment and promote understanding and acceptance.

We do believe that in terms of accessibility, there is still a long way to go especially within the U.K. There are still numerous reasons as to why accessibility within the workplace is inadequate — such as a lack of laws and regulations and a lack of enforcement, but most importantly public perception. We hope to help in this small way by putting accessible design at the forefront of our strategies and help drive meaningful change in accomplishing inclusivity.

Although each of our projects are important to us, we do particularly love serving our local community and conduct a lot of local projects, especially in the health care sector such as our refurbishment for the Hollinwood Medical Practice mentioned above."

~ Zoe Snelling

WALK-THROUGH GUIDE FROM ENTRY TO EXIT

Consider Hidden Disabilities

When creating a more inclusive office space, it is important to understand everyone's needs. Certain disabilities may not always be obvious but are just as important. The kind of support required for each condition will vary, but listening to and aiming to understand the needs of each disability can help you provide support for individuals every step of the way.

Parking and Building Accessibility

The first step to making any office more accessible should be its exterior. Free disabled parking close to building entries and exits is crucial, allowing members of staff to comfortably navigate their commute to and from work. Disabled car parking spaces need wider and level space to ensure that individuals can easily and safely get in and out of their car.



MSVHousing Office Interior

At First Glance

Disability should never be a disadvantage. Ensuring that your office building is accessible to all users is vital. Ramps and handrails are important to wheelchair users and individuals with physical disabilities along with wide corridors, electric doors, accessible toilets and communal areas. For people with visual impairments, bright lighting and colour-coded, easy-to-follow wayfinding signs including easy-to-locate braille text are a must.



The Office Door

The first point of entry to an office should offer easy access. Automatic doors are a great starting point as they offer individuals access without the need for physical effort to open the door. The width of the door also needs to be considered so that it can allow for easy wheelchair access.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding is the usage of information, signage, and other design elements aiming to guide occupants through a physical environment. Starting at the front door, some people may need visual cues such as maps, directions, and symbols to aid them to get to their destination when in complex spaces. Whether making your way to your desk or the snack bar, enhancing wayfinding with bright colours, large fonts, braille writing and graphical cues can help staff members navigate an environment safely and securely.

Whichever way you decide to create wayfinding for staff, consistency is key to ensuring that it is most effective.

Navigating Hallways

Once directions to a destination are established, the next step is ensuring that the spaces reflect the environment you are trying

to create. Doors, hallways, and walking spaces should be wide enough to allow you to pass through comfortably. In addition, offices should avoid unnecessary furnishings and features such as rugs, lighting, or other clutter that could cause blockages and trip hazards. If floor levels are uneven, ramps and handrails should be installed to make sure that individuals who struggle with mobility are able to move around safely and freely.

Flexible Workstations

Desks are where you spend the majority of your time in the office, and should be adjustable to accommodate individual needs. After making your way over to your workstation, the next step to accessible work is the equipment and workstations provided. Desks and tables should be height adjustable so that wheelchair users and people looking to stand at their desk can work comfortably. Sit-stand desks work perfectly here, as their height adjustable properties means that users can comfortably adjust their working environment to suit their needs.

Wider screens and digital displays can also be beneficial. Larger monitors, voice recognition technology, and bigger designs can help visually impaired individuals as well as people



with reduced mobility. Another sometimes overlooked factor is desk accessories and extensions. These can include easy-to-reach plug sockets and flexible monitor arms, which should be added to each workstation to allow for increased ease of usage.

Accessible Communal Areas

When at work, equal access to communal areas and amenities is important. It goes without saying that toilet and washroom facilities should be accessible to everyone. But when needing time away from their desk, easy access should include a kitchen space, quiet areas, drink and snack stations and breakout areas among others. Ensuring easy movement, signage and lighting to and from these areas will ensure a positive work environment for all.

In addition, allowing for flexible working spaces for employees

with different areas and ways to work can help boost morale. Quiet spaces are also great for people with sensory issues, allowing them to take a moment away from what could be, at times, an over-stimulating environment.

Accessible Exits

When you are done for the day and making your way out of the building, everyone has the right to safe escape routes and exits in the case of an emergency. Those with disabilities and especially wheelchair users are most at risk. It is important to review the exit points and have a PEEP - Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan - in place. The PEEP should ensure all members of staff are properly trained, identify all exit points and name anyone appointed to assist a disabled individual in the case of an emergency. This should also include evacuation aids such as an evacuation chair, ramps for people with reduced

mobility and audible and visual alarms for individuals with hearing and visual impairments.

Final Thoughts

Promoting a flexible and inclusive work culture is an essential part of long-term success for any business. Gaining employee feedback through honest communication and/or surveys can be a great way to instill trust and create positive employee engagement, and a more harmonious work environment. If you don't know, ask, but above all, it is important to put others' needs before your own, and adapt to each individual's different ways of navigating the modern workplace. ■

[**Click here for Customer Experience reviews.**](#)



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Enchroma unlocks a world of colour



For most of us, experiencing the vibrant spectrum of colors is an integral part of our lives that we scarcely pause to contemplate. But what if the world appeared differently to you? What if the colors you saw were muted, faded or even absent altogether? For millions worldwide, this is their reality, but there is a solution. EnChroma, the company behind innovative glasses for color blindness, is changing the way millions of individuals perceive the world around them.

In 2010, Dr. Don McPherson, the co-founder and inventor of the glasses was manufacturing

eyewear for surgeons to protect their eyes from lasers in the operating room. Outside the operating room, some often wore them as sunglasses. Surprisingly, it was discovered that these glasses not only provided eye protection but also enhanced the vibrancy of colors. The pivotal moment occurred during an ultimate frisbee tournament in Santa Cruz, California, when a teammate borrowed Dr. McPherson's glasses and immediately exclaimed, "Dude, I can see the cones." He went on to explain that he can see orange cones marking the boundaries of the field and that the grass is green.

Without the glasses, everything looked gray and yellowish to him and he was never able to tell the cones apart from the color of the field. This revelation led to the realization that these glasses could help color-blind individuals perceive colors more accurately. Extensive research, grants, clinical trials and experimentation followed, giving birth to EnChroma. Since then, the company has continuously improved its glasses' formula, effectiveness, and affordability.

EnChroma's solution to colour blindness

"EnChroma glasses specifically address red-green color

blindness, which accounts for 98% of all cases of color blindness," said Kent Streeb, Vice President, Communications & Partnerships, EnChroma. "About 1% of people are blue-yellow color blind. A smaller percent has achromatopsia and they see in shades of gray and black."

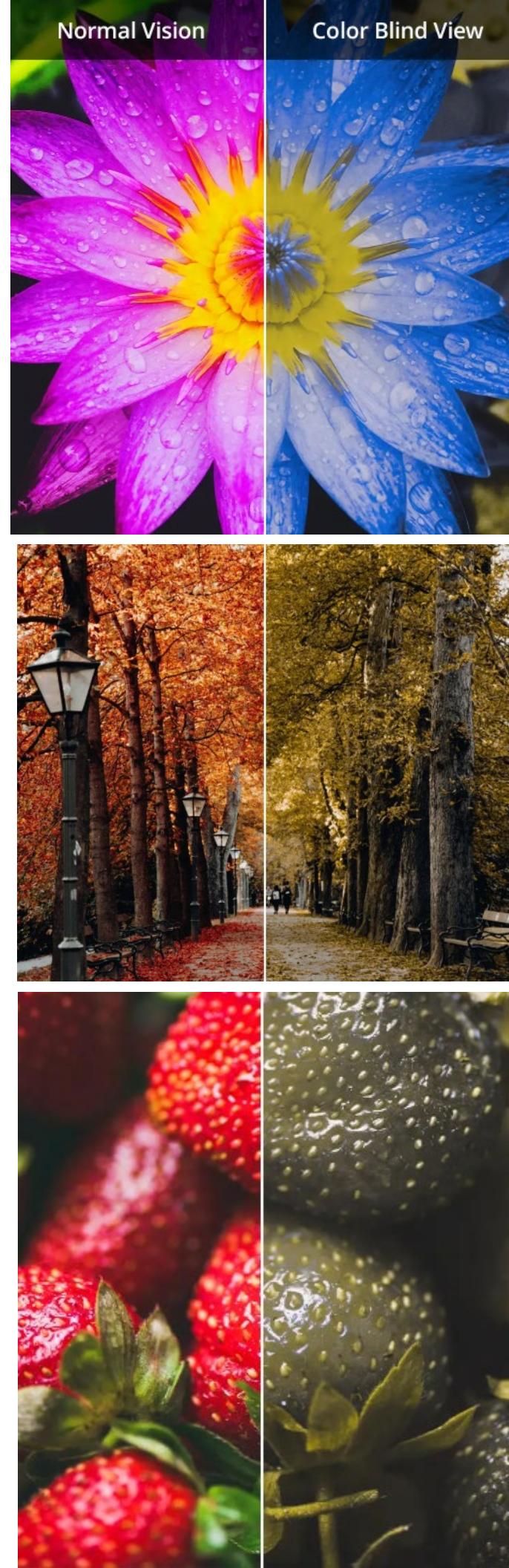
Color blindness is a bit of a misnomer because the color blind do see color. Individuals with this condition struggle to distinguish between red and green hues, often perceiving them as shades of gray, brown or yellowish. People with colour blindness see about 10% of the 1 million hues and shades that the rest of us see so they do see color, but the world is just duller and more muted—it can all blend together for them, especially anything with red or green, like red berries on a green bush, or a strawberry with the green leaf attached. It's difficult for them to see differences in those colors. EnChroma glasses can provide some of the missing red and green information, enabling color-blind individuals to see more of these colors and variations without distorting the ones they already perceive correctly.

Distinguishing features of EnChroma glasses

EnChroma's glasses stand out from other color-blindness solutions on the market. Unlike broad-spectrum filters that simply enhance contrast but add a red tint to everything, EnChroma employs notch filters that selectively filter the wavelengths where red and green cones overlap excessively in the human eye. As long as the wearer has three fully functioning "color cones" in their eye this technology preserves existing colors visible and help color-blind individuals perceive a fuller spectrum without distortion. Importantly, they do not work for everyone who is color blind, including those who have a missing or malfunctioning color cone in the eye, and reaction times and result vary. They are not a cure and do not deliver 100% color vision.

Prescription glasses and EnChroma

EnChroma advises against wearing their standard glasses over prescription eyewear, as this can distort the intended color-enhancing effect. Instead, individuals with prescription





needs can either choose EnChroma's fit-over glasses or have their prescription added to EnChroma's lenses.

- Fit Over Glasses:** These comfortably fit over existing prescription eyeglasses allowing users to enjoy both their prescription lenses and the color-enhancing benefits of EnChroma technology.
- Custom Prescription Lenses:** EnChroma can create custom prescription lenses with the color blindness-correcting features integrated into

the lens itself. This option ensures that individuals with prescription eyewear can benefit from both clear vision and improved color perception.

"We have hundreds of retail partners around the world," said Kent Streeb. "Optometry, vision practices and eye care professionals sell our glasses just like they would any other pair of glasses."

EnChroma's Color Accessibility Program

Through this program, EnChroma aims to generate awareness about the prevalence

and effects of color blindness, supporting individuals in overcoming challenges in their daily lives and providing access to colorful experiences. The program includes:

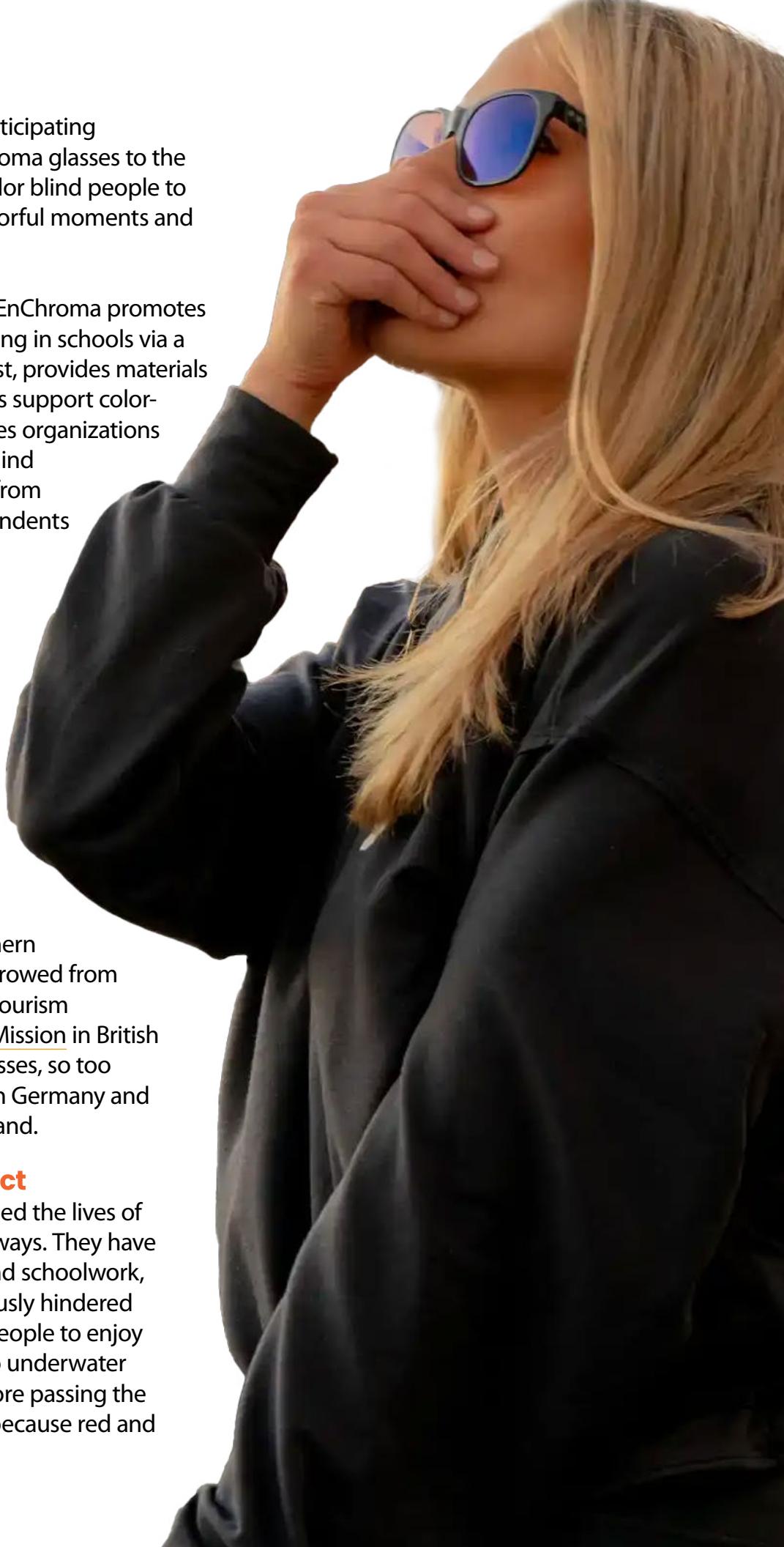
- Discounts for organizations:** EnChroma donates a pair of glasses for every pair purchased by public organizations participating in the program and offers discounts to organizations. These organizations include public libraries, state and national parks, museums, universities, K-12 schools, and tourism departments.

- **Public access to glasses:** Participating organizations can loan EnChroma glasses to the public. This initiative helps color blind people to conveniently access more colorful moments and experiences.
- **Awareness and education:** EnChroma promotes universal color blindness testing in schools via a free online color blindness test, provides materials to help educators and parents support color-blind students and encourages organizations to adapt materials for color-blind individuals. Read comments from EnChroma's color blind respondents about their educational experiences [here](#).

Over 400 organizations currently participate from around the world. This includes over 200 libraries, over a hundred museums, 15 universities, 20 state national parks, 7 tourism departments and 25 K-12 schools. In Canada, Travel Yukon partnered with EnChroma to make the glasses available in the Yukon for visitors to see the Northern Lights in color. Glasses can be borrowed from their visitor center and also from tourism operators in the area. The city of Mission in British Columbia are also using these glasses, so too does the University of Hamburg in Germany and University College Cork in the Ireland.

Success stories and impact

EnChroma glasses have transformed the lives of color-blind individuals in various ways. They have helped students better understand schoolwork, enabled job opportunities previously hindered by color blindness, and allowed people to enjoy vibrant moments, from sunsets to underwater adventures. Even in sports! No more passing the puck or ball to the wrong player because red and



green jersey colours can't be distinguished.

- **Children in School:** Some parents and teachers report that children who were previously struggling in school, especially with color-related assignments, have gained confidence in their academic performance after using EnChroma glasses.
- **Occupational Challenges:** Individuals with color blindness who faced job-related challenges, such as difficulty in mixing paint colors or distinguishing between team members in sports like hockey, have overcome these obstacles and achieved their career goals.
- **Aesthetic Enjoyment:** Color blind individuals have discovered the beauty of the world around them, from witnessing colorful sunsets for the first time to realizing the truer versions of the colors of everyday objects like cars and flowers.
- **Enhanced Perception:** EnChroma glasses have allowed wearers to notice finer details in paintings, such as brush strokes and texture, contributing to a deeper appreciation of art.

Looking ahead—EnChroma's innovations

EnChroma continues to push boundaries with innovations like a color blindness test that assesses individual color cone performance and the latest lens technology delivering even more vibrant colors. They also now offer specialized lenses for diving masks, expanding the possibilities for scuba divers to experience the vibrant colors of the underwater world.

Collaboration with organizations and influencers

EnChroma empowers color-blind individuals to live more vibrant and fulfilling lives by addressing workplace and educational challenges and enabling them to experience the colorful moments they may have missed. Their commitment to accessibility, education, and innovation ensures that the world becomes more inclusive for those with color blindness.

Every year during International Color Blindness Awareness month in September, EnChroma collaborates with organizations and influencers to raise awareness of color blindness. They provide glasses for giveaways, encourage activities that promote awareness, and work with philanthropic organizations and major

brands to support color-blind individuals.

Awareness-building efforts are bearing fruit. The ADA's latest iteration, released July 2023, now includes provisions that emphasize the importance of providing "reasonable accommodations" for individuals with color blindness within the workplace and other organizations. Assistive optical devices are specifically mentioned as being a "reasonable accommodation." EnChroma glasses falls into that category.

"We are confident that all the work we've done over the last 10 years to generate awareness got their attention," said Kent Streeb. "We're pleased that color blindness is finally mentioned under the ADA."

Some parents and teachers report that children who were previously struggling in school, especially with color-related assignments, have gained confidence in their academic performance after using EnChroma glasses.



enchroma.com





Eyra Abraham and Lisenen break new ground in assistive tech for the hearing impaired

It is a fact that the world is becoming increasing reliant on technology. And it is heartening when individuals use their personal experiences to drive innovation and create solutions that address pressing challenges for everyone. Eyra Abraham, the founder of Lisenen, is one of those persons. She created a revolutionary smart hearing assistant that is changing the way individuals with hearing loss experience the world.

The inspiration behind Lisenen

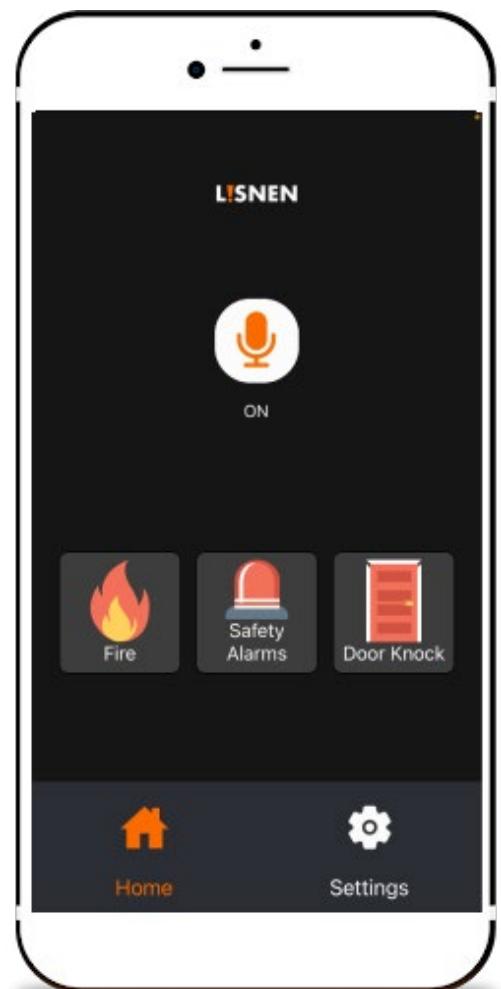
Eyra's personal experience with hearing loss played a pivotal role in the creation of Lisenen. She vividly recalls a late-night fire drill in her condo building that she slept through. She removes her uncomfortable hearing aids before going to bed at night and was not aware of what was taking place as she slept. This incident left her pondering on what could be done about the absence of efficient alerting devices for individuals like herself. This incident magnified

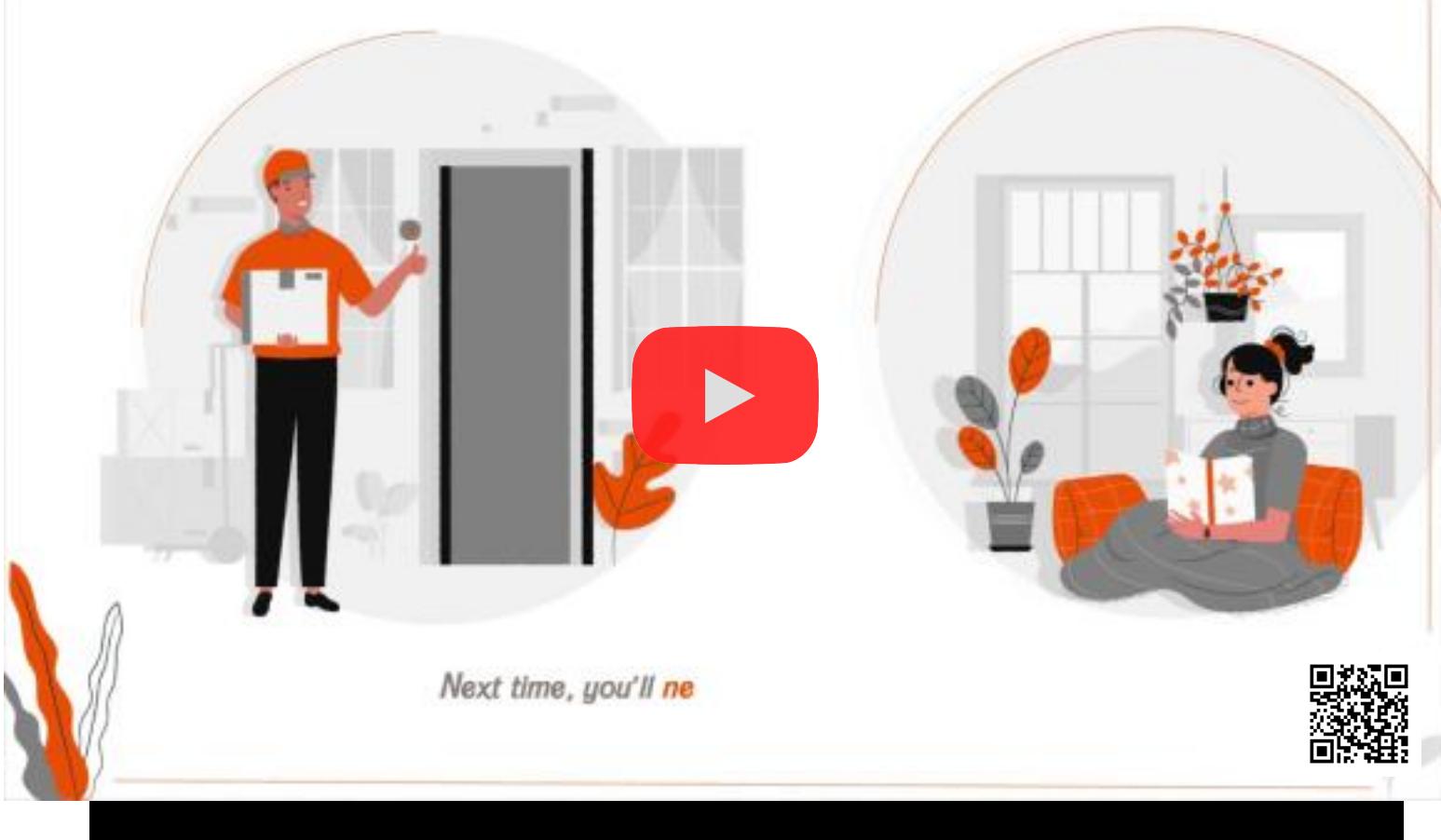
the fact that challenges faced by people with hearing loss in apartment and condo buildings are real and often overlooked. They rely on landlords, property management and condo boards for these amenities, which are often not provided, and they are therefore left at a disadvantage during emergencies. Eyra shared the story of a Deaf person who, thankfully, was rescued in time by firefighters because the person was unaware that their building was burning. This underscores the pressing need for better accessibility and safety measures for the hard of hearing.

What is Lisenen?

Welcome Lisenen—which is more than just an app. It is a companion and lifeline for those with hearing loss. The app detects crucial environmental sounds in real-time and alerts users through their phone's vibration and flashing light. This innovative technology not only benefits individuals

with hearing loss but also has broader applications. It can be used by building management after hours, auto mechanics and anyone who needs audio information when they are not physically present in a space.





Next time, you'll **ne**

QR code

Addressing privacy concerns

Eyra ensures that Lisnen takes privacy seriously. People are understandably concerned about data privacy therefore the app does not record sound unless the user consents and actively presses the record button. Furthermore, the technology is designed to process audio locally on the device without transmitting data to the cloud, ensuring user privacy.

Community-centric approach

One of the fundamental beliefs of the Lisnen team is

the importance of community collaboration. Eyra is committed to co-creating solutions with the disability community to ensure that the technology meets their specific needs. Information sharing and awareness training are integral components of Lisnen's mission, which seeks to bridge the gap between hearing loss and assistive technology.

A voice for inclusivity

Eyra's passion for inclusivity drove her to become certified to assess AI systems for inclusivity. She emphasizes the need for organizations to actively incorporate disability

inclusion into AI technologies, rather than waiting for laws to be put in place. Lisnen effectively addresses the needs of deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals but Eyra's dream is expansive. She envisions utilizing the expertise within her organization and AI to explore other assistive technologies to determine how they can be manipulated to address challenges in the future.

Reducing stigma and fostering connection

Lisnen plays a significant role in reducing the stigma surrounding hearing loss.

Eyra's own personal experience of hiding her hearing loss for various reasons has taught her the importance of empathy and the power of sharing one's story. Lisnen aspires to be a community-based brand that fosters connection and support, creating a safe space for individuals with hearing loss to come together. Eyra explained, "Lisnen initiates conversations in our private newsletter that give people with hearing loss a chance to reflect on recent events as they affect us, crowdsource tech, provide related news that is useful for the community, share day-to-day life nuances and insider experiences (understood by people with hearing loss)—to help people feel understood and accepted, reassuring them that they are not experiencing life alone."

A Call for allies and partnerships

Eyra believes it is important for individuals with disabilities to have strong voices. She also believes that advocates have a role to play in creating inclusive spaces. She encourages everyone to shift their perspectives and actively participate in disability inclusion, whether through partnerships or providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The future of Lisnen

Looking ahead, Eyra has ambitious plans for partnerships

with mainstream technologies and complementary products to further enhance accessibility in various spaces, including airports and hotels. Lisnen not only provides much-needed assistance to individuals with hearing loss but also serves as a catalyst for creating a more inclusive world. Eyra's dedication to inclusivity and her vision of a world where technology bridges gaps and fosters understanding makes her a true innovator and an inspiration to future generations. As Lisnen continues to grow and evolve, it is clear that Eyra's impact will be felt far and wide, making the world a better place for everyone. ■



Lisnen is more than an app. It is a companion and lifeline for those with hearing loss.



 www.lisnen.com



A young girl learning how to use a speech-generating device. (Shutterstock)

How to improve your communication with someone with a speech impairment

By Claire Davies

October marked alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) awareness month. AAC includes all means of communication that a person may use besides talking. Low-tech methods include means of interaction like hand gestures, facial movements, or pointing, while more high-tech tools might include a speech generating device accessed through pointing or a joystick, eye-tracking, or even a brain-computer interface.

British physicist Stephen Hawking was long the most famous person associated with AAC, using an advanced computer system to generate sentences and speech. American actor Val Kilmer is another well-known person who has used AAC. Kilmer suffered irreparable damage to his voice due to throat cancer. However, in the latest installment of the *Top Gun* film franchise, artificial intelligence was used to “clone” the actor’s voice.

In 2006, 1.9 per cent of the Canadian population self-identified as having a speech disability. Unfortunately, this was the last time Statistics Canada identified speech disability within the Canadian census. That makes it difficult to gather more recent data of the number of people in Canada with impaired speech.

Need for more acceptance. Speech impairments can occur at a young age with disabilities

such as cerebral palsy or autism spectrum disorder, but can also manifest later in life as a result of progressive disorders such as motor neuron disease, throat cancer, muscular dystrophy or strokes.

Increased acceptance of the use of AAC technologies in general society can enhance the quality of life for people with speech impairment by increasing autonomy, leading to more positive social interactions, better engagement in education and confidence in employment.

The Accessible Canada Act recognizes communication as a priority area, while the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities promotes the rights of autonomy, safety and social participation, and recognizes communication as a human right.

Tackling stigma. However, even if people have access to AAC technology, they can still face stigma and exclusion. Here are some things we can all do to be more inclusive of people with impaired speech:

Start with basic respect. Understand that cognition and lack of verbal speech are not correlated. Many people with speech impairments have no cognitive deficits at all and are just as intelligent as anyone else. They want others to be

more patient and understanding of speech disabilities. In social situations, they might often be underestimated and treated as children even though they are capable and competent. Show them respect, even though they may sound different when they talk.

Pre-programmed sentences on a tablet or speech generating device do not suggest that the person is incapable of developing those ideas. They may have spent 20 minutes typing out those messages in an attempt to meet the fast-paced environment in which we all live.

Take time to listen.

Individuals with speech impairment may need to type out phrases one letter at a time. Some may use a smartphone or iPad with a texting app, while others use an eye-tracking device or brain-computer interface to select letters using an on-screen keyboard. Be patient and wait for the person to speak.

As one occupational therapist noted, “[A problem] I often find some of my clients run into is not being given enough time to get their message written down. They’re composing it and



Alternative and augmentative communication includes all means of communication that a person may use besides talking.

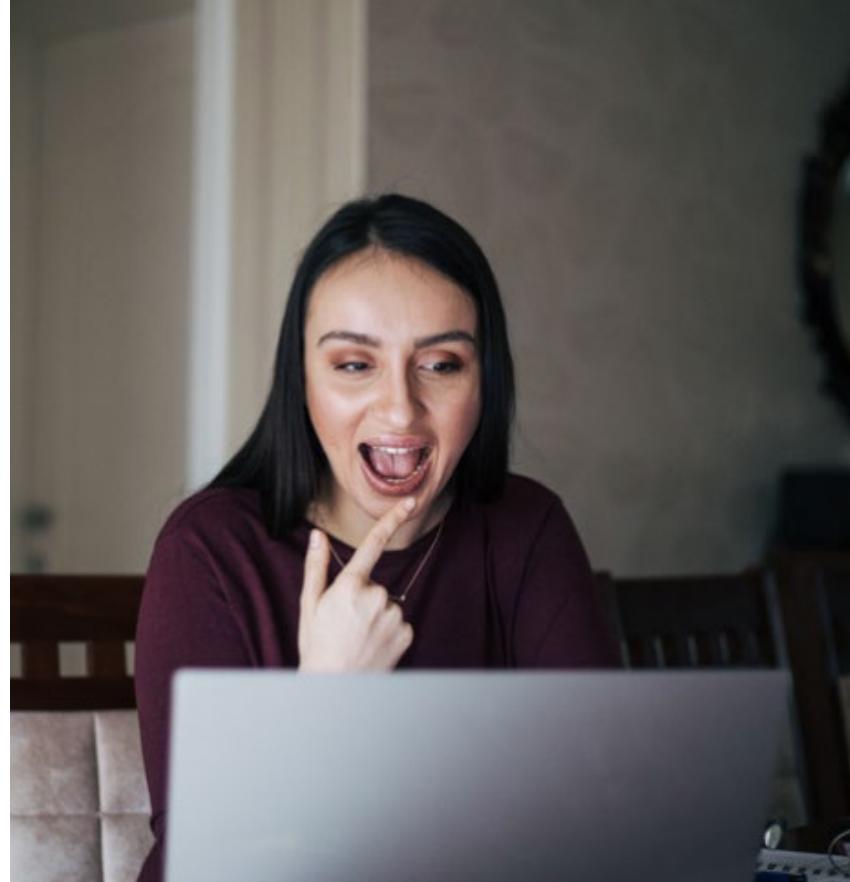
the communication partner might not realize they need to give them a little extra time." A conversation may require you to pause, ask a question and wait for an answer. Stop, think, be patient and understanding.

In addition, it's important to realize that the use of some AAC technologies can be tiring. To use systems that rely on eye movements, for example, an individual must focus and is unable to use other means of communication such as emotional expression at the same time. Recognize that shorter conversations may be better. Perhaps try communicating by email or text. Let the person respond in their own time.

Be an advocate. People with speech impairments must always advocate for themselves. If you are planning a conference or hiring for a position, ask what accommodations might be beneficial rather than relying on the individual to request them. Provide advance notice of conversation topics or questions. Engage people with speech impairments in social events. If you see someone passing judgment, speak up.

Technology is improving, and maybe one day people with impaired speech will be able to communicate with the same ease as those without. But until then, being a friend to people with speech impairments means being patient and listening. ■

This article was originally published in The Conversation. Read the original article [here](#).



Many people with speech impairments have no cognitive deficits at all and are just as intelligent as anyone else. They want others to be more patient and understanding of speech disabilities.

~ Claire Davies



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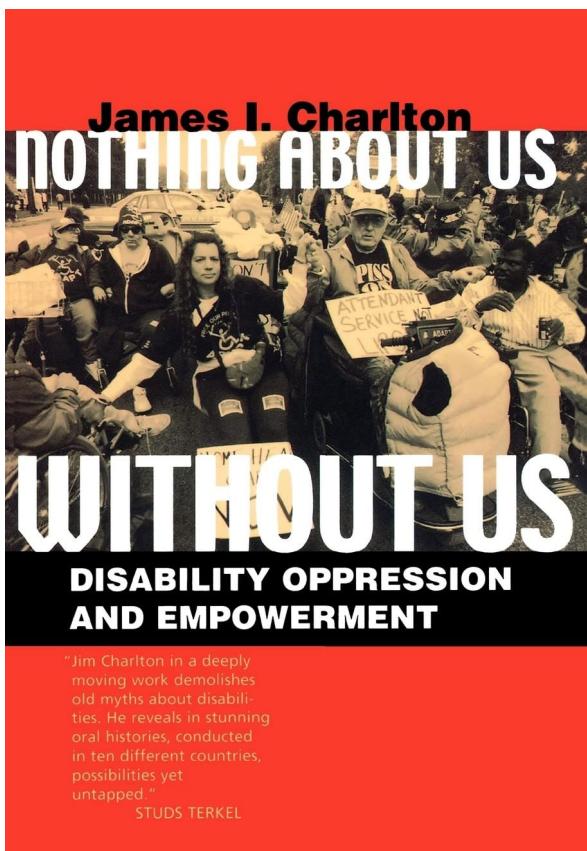
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Nothing About Us Without Us



Nothing About Us Without Us is the slogan used to communicate that no policy should be decided by a representative without the participation of members affected by that policy, be it in politics, employment standards, or otherwise. This means that autistic people should be consulted in the writing process of policies that affect autistic people.

The author of the book *Nothing About Us Without Us*, James Charlton, heard the expression in 1993 in South Africa from speakers who heard it used by Eastern European advocates. The expression is part of a disability liberation movement that is akin to that of the BLM and LGBTQ+ rights movements.

Nothing About Us Without Us is a demand for self-determination and a necessary precedent for the liberation of disabled people. It is the liberation movement for the oppressed disabled populace. The movement requires disabled people to recognize their own need to take control and take responsibility for their own lives. Too many businesses and employers have claimed the title of "inclusive" but still won't change the barriers to employment, like the job interview.

The Accessible Canada Act, passed in 2019, aims to eliminate barriers and ensures greater opportunities for people with disabilities. The

Act hopes to make Canada barrier free by 2040. I have been happy to see more courses and workshops available for employers being made available through various Vancouver-based organizations.

The Canada Disability Benefit Act (Bill C-22), passed in 2023, will take effect in 2025. This act is one of the steps forward in progression by lifting people with disabilities out of poverty and by increasing the financial security for low-income people with disabilities.

What does a neurodivergent inclusive environment look like exactly? Expanding legal protections, like the Accessible Canada Act, along with raising awareness and broadening social norms in the education system and in the public.

Neurodiversity rejects the idea of "bad" brains, "good" brains, and value-based judgments of brains. The movement celebrates the fact that all brains are different. Being excluded because my autism

is perceived as a defect or fundamental flaw has been the most disabling aspect of being autistic, and I know I'm not the only one who thinks this.

Organizations about autism that are run by businessmen have presented autism as a terrible curse, something that can be cured, or something that ruins families. Even before these organizations existed there were doctors who made statements that autistic people were puzzles, or missing pieces.

People with disabilities are the world's largest minority, and the only minority group that any of us can become a member of at any time. Currently, 6 million Canadians have a disability with the employment rate of those aged 16 to 64 with disabilities being just 65.1%.

Nondisabled people have the tendency to create accessibility for disabled people by "meeting them halfway," but when policy makers try to meet disabled people halfway,

it is still inaccessible. For the non-disabled people who are creating the accessibility and accommodation, it's a difficult and impractical process, but to disabled people, not having that accessibility or accommodation is worse than difficult. Without accessibility, disabled people are excluded. ■

RESOURCES

- [About an Accessible Canada](#)
- [Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment](#)
- [Autism advocacy and research misses the mark if autistic people are left out](#)
- [Measuring disability in Canada](#)

For the non-disabled people creating the accessibility and accommodation, it's difficult and impractical, but to disabled people, not having that accessibility or accommodation is worse than difficult. ~ *Bart Vulliamy*



Deaf Insights

with Angela Lynn

Deaf Insights Deaf Insights
Deaf Insights Deaf Insights

Inclusion and Awareness

Participating as the guest editor of *Accessible Journeys* magazine Winter 2023 issue, and being an inclusion advocate during the World Inclusion Day event in Las Vegas on October 10th, 2023, allowed me to deepen my understanding of true inclusion. While many may think they grasp its meaning, genuine inclusion often remains elusive. Those who have the privilege of hearing and speaking sometimes take these abilities for granted. As someone with unique abilities, I've learned the importance of mindfulness in navigating life in general. My thirst for knowledge continues to grow, driven by my awareness of the wealth of information and experiences surrounding me. Although I may miss certain

auditory aspects, I value the gift of sight and the ability to communicate through sign language, providing me with a beautiful way to engage with the world.

Here are 8 things about inclusion you should be aware of:

1. Inclusion is about embracing diversity: Inclusion is not just about tolerating differences; it's about embracing and celebrating them. It involves recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or identities.

2. Creating inclusive environments benefit everyone: Inclusive environments benefit not only

those who are traditionally marginalized but also society as a whole. When everyone feels valued and included, it fosters creativity, innovation and social cohesion.

3. Inclusion is more than accessibility: While accessibility is a critical aspect of inclusion, it goes beyond physical accommodations. It also includes providing equal and equitable opportunities, promoting diverse perspectives, and creating a sense of belonging.

4. Inclusive education benefits students: Inclusive education, where students of all abilities learn together in the same classroom, has been shown to improve academic outcomes, social skills and empathy among students.

5. Inclusive workplaces are more productive:

Businesses that prioritize diversity and inclusion tend to be more innovative and perform better. Inclusive workplaces promote employee well-being, reduce turnover and attract top talent.

6. Inclusion is a human right:

Inclusion is not just a "nice-to-have," it's a fundamental human right. It is enshrined in various international declarations and laws, emphasizing the importance of equal and equitable treatment and opportunities for all.

7. Inclusive music for all: Inclusion in music means finding creative ways to make music accessible to everyone, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. This may involve visual representations, vibrations, captioned lyrics and sign language interpreting, ensuring that music is enjoyable and inclusive for all.

8. Inclusion elevates entertainment: Authentic representation of diverse backgrounds, abilities and identities in the entertainment industry is a driving force for empowerment and inclusivity.

Inclusion is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of society, from education and employment to social interactions and public policy. Embracing inclusion promotes fairness, equity and a more harmonious and prosperous world for everyone. ■

Angela Lynn



http://

Snippets from the



Stepping up efforts to expand outdoor recreation access and improve opportunities for PWDs

New Jersey has launched a new program aimed at improving outdoor recreation opportunities and services for individuals with disabilities. The program seeks to ensure that individuals of all abilities can enjoy and access outdoor recreational areas in the state.

[Read the full article.](#)

MasterCard embraces an inclusive cinematic experience with full length feature film without pictures

The film titled 'TOUCH' is a unique project that aims to challenge traditional film-making by relying solely on sound to tell the story. Pushing boundaries and exploring new possibilities in entertainment and accessibility, 'TOUCH' eliminates visual elements and offers an inclusive experience for those with visual impairments, enabling them to connect with the story and emotions solely through sound. [Read the full article.](#)

Resilience at work: Coffee barista shatters stereotypes of disability

Maimounah Uwase's story is truly inspiring and exemplifies determination, resilience, and the power of pursuing one's dreams regardless of obstacles. Her ability to overcome challenges and become the main provider for her family while working as a barista in Kigali is a testament to her strength and determination. Maimounah Uwase's journey is a reminder that disability should not define a person's capabilities or limit their aspirations.

[Read the full article.](#)

Please touch: Indian art is finally growing sensitive to the needs of the visually impaired

Museums as well as galleries are displaying tactile panels to make art accessible to people with disabilities.

[Read the full article.](#)

Making railways accessible for all

The Department of the People with Disabilities (PwDs) in New Delhi has taken the lead in developing draft guidelines that address the accessibility of railway stations and facilities for people with disabilities. These guidelines not only recognize the need to create a more inclusive and user-friendly environment for individuals with disabilities, they also emphasize the importance of integrating technology-enabled features into these spaces, including text-to-speech functionalities and user-friendly pictograms. [Read the full article.](#)

Inclusion Revolution: How Luxury Hotels Can Include Everyone

People often overlook disability, but hotels are beginning to get wise – just like the arts. In April 2023, Propel Dance, the UK's first all-wheelchair professional dance company, performed its re-imagined version of The Snow Queen at three venues across the Midlands. Olivia Emily investigates the UK hotels putting accessibility first – with luxurious results. [Read the C&TH Guide to Responsible Tourism.](#)

He hits four L.A. raves a night in a wheelchair: 'We need more disabled people going out'

Saptarshi Majumdar, an avid nightlife enthusiast, often finds himself in the best seats during various events in Los Angeles. Whether it's next to the DJ booth at a nightclub, witnessing a music video shoot, or attending sold-out concerts, Majumdar always manages to secure a prime location. However, his experiences also shed light on the obstacles he faces as a wheelchair user in accessing these venues. [Read the full article.](#)

UCLA creates first disability studies major at a California public university

Due to the immense popularity of UCLA's disability studies minor, the campus has taken a significant step forward by introducing a new disability studies interdepartmental major. This groundbreaking initiative makes UCLA the first public university in California to offer such a major. [Read the full article.](#)

Wheel the World Launches Destination Verified Program To Accelerate Accessibility

Recognizing the importance of addressing accessibility at all levels, Wheel the World, a travel company dedicated to making travel more accessible for individuals with disabilities, has launched a new program: Destination Verified. This program aims to accelerate accessibility within destinations and promote these destinations to individuals with disabilities. [Read the full article.](#)

RESOURCES

FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANTS

[Maahs Travels](#), USA

[Massiraa](#), Dubai

[Marco Pasqua](#), Canada

BUSINESSES OWNED BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

[Collettey's Cookies](#), USA

[www.retrophiliac.etsy.com](#), USA

CERTIFICATION COURSES

[Rick Hansen Foundation](#)

[Accessibility Certification](#), Canada

CLOTHING

[Intimately](#), USA

[IZ Adaptive](#), Canada

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

specialising in digital content (PDFs, ePUBs, eJournals, etc.)

[www.jwdigitalinclusion.com](#), Dubai

DISABILITY-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

[Access Israel](#), Israel

[Easter Seals](#), Canada

[Easterseals](#), USA

[FONHARE](#), Haiti

[Friends of Access Israel](#), USA

[The American Association of People with Disabilities](#), USA

[The Arc](#), USA

EMPLOYMENT

[Bender Consulting](#), USA

HOSPITALITY TRAINING

[The Slatin Group](#), USA

INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS

[Gabi & Jules](#), Canada

[Lil E Coffee Cafe](#), Canada

[Project Dignity](#), Singapore

GLOBAL PWD COMMUNITY

[www.yoocanfind.com](#), Israel

LEARNING CENTRES

[Achievement Learning Centre](#), Dominica

MEDIA

[Accessible Media Inc](#), Canada

[The Angela Lynn Show](#), USA

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

[Paratrek](#), Israel

PRODUCTS & ACCESSORIES

[Izzy Wheels](#), Ireland

[The Alinker](#), Canada

TRAVEL

[360Access](#), USA

[AccessNow](#), Canada

[Accessible Indonesia](#), Indonesia

[Japan Accessible Tourism Center](#), Japan

[European Network for Accessible Tourism \(ENAT\)](#), Belgium

[Four Season Travel & Tours](#), Nepal

[Travel-for-All](#), Canada

WEB ACCESSIBILITY

[EqualWeb](#), Israel

Love Lansing LIKE A LOCAL

- Lansing recognized by Accessible Journeys and Travel Ability as one of the top three destinations in the country for those traveling on the autism spectrum.
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ACCESSIBLE VENTURES

St. Maarten



- Passionate about ensuring the transportation needs of people with disabilities are met
- 26 vehicles include ADA cars, vans and tour buses
- Helps with Medivac and non-emergency medical transportation
- Their non-emergency medical transportation services cover St. Maarten and neighboring Saba, St. Eustatius and Anguilla

 www.accessible-ventures.com

 [@accessibleventures](https://www.instagram.com/@accessibleventures)

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or email: accessibleventures@outlook.com

THE LAP Jacket



Discover the Lap Jacket – your ultimate solution for staying dry and stylish in your wheelchair. Lightweight, waterproof, and thoughtfully designed, this jacket is a game-changer for rainy days. Read on to explore its remarkable features.

KEY Features

Tailored Fit:

- Enjoy a sleek and stylish look with the Lap Jacket's tailored fit.
- Secured at the waist with an elastic belt that Velcro's at the hip for a snug fit.

Easy to Use:

- Simple design fits over your lap and wheelchair seat effortlessly.
- Loop at end of belt allows for ease of use with limited hand function.

Durable and Comfortable:

- Crafted from durable waterproof fabric for maximum protection.
- Soft fleece on the underside adds warmth and comfort during use.

Reflective Modern Logo:

- Our reflective Modern logo is strategically placed at the knee for enhanced visibility at night.

Machine Washable:

- Easy to clean and maintain, simply toss it in the washing machine.

Compact Carry Case:

- Comes with a compact waterproof bag for convenient storage.
- Easily slips into any bag or backpack, keeping your Lap Jacket accessible on the go.

Two Sizes Available:

- Regular: Fits individuals approximately 5'8" and below.
- Long: Fits individuals approximately 5'9" and above.

Lightweight, waterproof solution offers a tailored fit, ensuring you not only stay dry but also look great in any weather.

CHLOË ANGUS



"I designed the Lap Jacket for all my wheel friends so we can be dry and stylish together." Chloë Angus

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