

# thrive

Living Well  
with Limb Loss

ISSUE # 29

**BETTER  
BALANCE**  
*after*  
**Limb Loss**

**Christa  
Couture**  
**Resilience  
Unimagined**

**Victoria  
Hand  
Project**

**Fraud  
Alert**  
**Scam  
Scenario  
Scrutiny**

**Upper  
Extremity  
Prosthetic  
Options**





GET TO KNOW NAKED PROSTHETICS’  
THIRD GENERATION TECHNOLOGY



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## WELCOME

### Time to Celebrate

**April is Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month**, a national initiative for Canadian “amputees” as most of us call ourselves. It’s a month dedicated to more than 225,000 Canadians living with limb loss or limb difference, a number that is expected to nearly double by 2050. It’s an important month for us to tell our stories and celebrate.



thrive founder and publisher, Jeff Tiessen

It’s a time for sharing our lived-experiences around recovery and resilience, and about those spaces in our lives that need more attention too, like accessibility, healthcare and prosthetic funding. And, it’s a really good time to talk about our physical and mental health.

Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month is also a time to focus on supporting our peers and advocating for those who need it. It’s a time to remember that despite our commonalities, we are all very different and at varying stages in our journey, with unique stories of success and struggle to tell.

Your unique story has the power to support other amputees in our community, particularly those feeling disconnected, isolated and alone. Your story can provide hope, or a reminder that there is plenty of life to live after limb loss, for someone who may need it.

Share your story with us here at *thrive* so that we can share it with others. Or use your platforms and networks to share your experiences to raise visibility for our community.

Appreciating what Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month represents, advocating and educating shouldn’t be relegated to just one month. *Thrive magazine* is here to facilitate that all year long.

Let’s celebrate together.

Jeff Tiessen, *publisher* • [jeff@thrivemag.ca](mailto:jeff@thrivemag.ca)

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# A L P S



# BLACK

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# FINISH IT FOR FOX

In 1980, Terry Fox started a marathon against cancer. Today, a new campaign wants to end it. The Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network is uniting the country to unlock the next frontier in cancer research: precision oncology. For the first time, researchers and clinicians will have the tools – including AI and genomic technologies – to study vast stores of data and unlock the secrets of the 200+ diseases we call “cancer”.

Inspired by Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope, the Network represents a powerful collaborative platform that aims to close the gap between research in the lab and patient care in the clinic.

Just as Terry Fox united Canadians with his run and dream to end cancer, the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network aims to unite cancer researchers to pursue that same goal. The Network harnesses the talent, passion and energy of Canada’s best researchers and clinicians to innovate and implement the world’s most advanced and effective precision medicine.

The initiative is led by the Terry Fox Research Institute and the Terry Fox Foundation, in collaboration with dozens of fundraising and research partners

across the country, including the Federal Government of Canada. The goal is to link the country’s top cancer hospitals and research centres to accelerate precision medicine for cancer and position Canada as a global leader in the field.

Precision medicine for cancer means ensuring that patients receive the right treatment at the right time for their unique cancer, no matter where they live. The Network unites patients, clinicians, researchers, administrators and donors from institutions across the country. In an unprecedented collaboration, it includes more than 40 member institutions and 800 individuals who are working together under a single vision – better outcomes and quality of life for cancer patients everywhere in Canada.



# IRONMAN *Cycling Arm*

An above-elbow amputee, triathlete Willie Stewart used a modified prosthetic arm to compete in the grueling Ironman World Championships in 2024! Boise-based Coyote Prosthetics and Orthotics designed and built a custom prosthetic bicycle racing arm for the elite adaptive athlete. The cutting-edge arm played a key role in Stewart’s completion of the Ironman’s 180-kilometre cycling course.

The project was a team effort, bringing together Coyote engineers, 3D technicians, lab technicians, and practitioners to create the innovative device – a durable, high-performance arm tailored for extreme endurance racing.



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## Beating Limb Cramps for BETTER SLEEP

If your residual limb tends to cramp up at night, try to combat it by drinking plenty of water during the day and eating high-potassium food such as citrus fruit, potatoes, red meat and fish. This diet encourages strained muscles to relax for a more comfortable sleep. Giving your residual limb a quick massage before bed can also help to avoid cramps while you are sleeping. Thanks to Winnipeg P&O for these suggestions. Also, as suggested in a socials post by Nicki Domino, she finds taking magnesium glycinate before bed to help too. It’s a natural muscle relaxant that helps with muscle cramps and better sleep.

# SHOWER SCENE SOLUTIONS

Katy is a below-knee amputee and social media influencer who shared her top five essential shower items for amputees. “Like I said before,” says Katy, “showering as an amputee is honestly one of the scariest things for me to do still. Especially in the basic daily tasks arena.” Her rehab team helped her figure it out with some tools and items that make Katy’s daily life safer, and better overall! Here are a few helpful hacks from Katy.

- 1) Shower chair or bench to get in and out with – roller or folding, or wheelchair.
- 2) A shower bench in the shower. Stable sides and open on bottom.
- 3) Grab bars. And put up a lot.
- 4) Removable shower head with an extra long hose (two metres).
- 5) A luxury item. A long loofah or shower towel.



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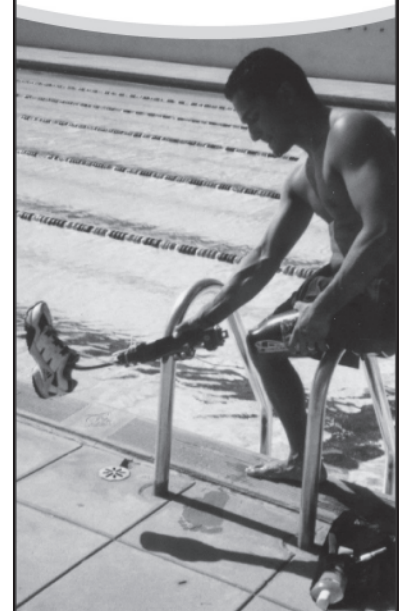
Crafted from 100 percent composite materials, Meracus sets a new standard in prosthetic design, a foot free from metal joints and extraneous components. The pure composite design, combined with a rocker sole, ensures a smooth, natural transition from heel strike to toe-off. Learn more at [allardusa.com](http://allardusa.com).

## Sourcing War Amps Resources

The War Amps provides amputees and their families with invaluable resources for living with amputation, covering topics like prosthetic limbs, technical terms, counselling, healthy living, and daily living aids. Explore a library of resources at [waramps.ca/ways-we-help/living-with-amputation](http://waramps.ca/ways-we-help/living-with-amputation).



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# 10 Ways to Lift Your Spirit after a Tough Week



By Corina Semph

*“True happiness is born of letting go of what is unnecessary.” ~Sharon Salzberg*

**You are exhausted. Every force in the universe seems to be conspiring against you. You pick yourself up just to be knocked down again by more bad news. You want to crawl into bed and wait for the week to be over. But you know you can't hide.**

**Sometimes our lives get tough. It happens to all of us. You know things will eventually get better, but it's hard to get through a ruthless week in one piece. When you are having a horrible week, do you succumb to pressure, or have you learned how to keep your spirits up?**

After college I took a job as a project manager. It was a lot of fun in the beginning, until it became intense. My team and I had an ever-growing amount of projects. Soon, I was working sixty to eighty hours a week. I'd put out a fire and fifty more were waiting for me. I was barely able to keep my head above water.

My fuses were extremely short during those days. When something at home didn't go as I expected, I'd blow up. I'd get angry, yell, and end with a dagger-to-the-heart kind of comment. It was the grown-up version of a toddler's temper tantrum.

Letting off my steam in an unhealthy way would later come back to haunt me. I felt ashamed of my behaviour. Eventually, I realized that this was extremely damaging to me and my loved ones. I had to make dramatic changes.

It took a few months to make the changes, but at least I could see the light at the end of the tunnel. I learned a better way to deal with extremely stressful times. Here are ten tricks I learned that might help you stay happy in the middle of a crazy week:



## 1 Picture your life a month from today.

You can overcome problems and life can go back to normal, but it might not happen overnight. It helps to have a long-term perspective to get detached from the overwhelming stress of today. I found that daydreaming about things being normal again would calm me down. Fast forward a month from now. Think about a happy, normal life again. It will lift-up your spirit.

## 2 Create a peaceful space for yourself.

Your environment matters. The last thing you want when you are under stress is to sit at a sad-looking desk with piles of paper and clutter. When you are surrounded by chaos, you add unnecessary stress to your life. Create a peaceful space around you to relax more easily. You won't regret it.







### 3 Remove yourself from negative, draining conversations.

It's impossible to isolate yourself from "negative people" all the time. We all have hard days and get a little negative every now and then too. It's tempting to fall into that self-pitying place. Increase your odds of maintaining a positive mindset by avoiding emotionally-draining conversations. Don't let negativity suck up all of your energy.



### 4 Celebrate your small wins.

In the middle of a storm, it could be a while until you have a big win. But you can celebrate the small things to lift-up your spirit. Find the small things that made you proud of yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note about them. Reflect on your small wins and let them cheer up your weary spirit.



### 5 Make someone delightfully happy.

Something interesting happens when you focus on somebody else's happiness. When you make someone else happy, it comes back to you. So, think about calling a friend to chat, write someone a heartfelt note, or take a break to invite someone for dinner. It might brighten their week as well.



### 6 Selfishly set your limits.

You are ultimately responsible for your own well-being. You know when you are reaching exhaustion better than anybody else. Start saying "no" before you reach your limit. Be selfish about your time. When you see a stormy week on the horizon, it's time to cancel the it'd-be-nice-to-do things that snuck into your calendar (unless it's something that would refresh your soul).



### 7 Wake up twenty minutes earlier.

It may seem counter-intuitive, because you want to sleep as much as you can. But the first hour of a day can set the mood for the whole day. If you start your day having to rush, things can go downhill from there. On weeks when you are already on edge, don't push yourself even more. Don't rush. The peace of the first hour of your day will go a long way.

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## 8 Accept the imperfect.

When your life feels like a sinking boat, it's the wrong time to insist on every detail being perfect. Is dinner slightly overcooked? Well, nobody will get food poisoning. Accept that some things won't be accomplished the way that you'd like them to be. Be kind to yourself and let some high standards slide.



## 9 Lean on an authentic friend.

It's hard to be an objective observer when you are going through tough times. Having a good friend to help you is invaluable. A friend who can listen and sympathize with you can help you get out of the hole.

## 10 Focus on your awesomeness.

It's hard to see ourselves through a positive lens in the middle of a storm. But you haven't changed. If anything, you are growing stronger and more resilient during tough times. Remind yourself about your amazing qualities. List them. Ask a friend to help you. That's the true you, not the overwhelmed, stressed-out version that you see in the mirror.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Corina Semph is on a mission to help people transform their homes from disorganized, cluttered and overwhelming, to peaceful and beautiful.



*It's hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel when you are going through the valleys of life. Tough times are inevitable, even if you put your best foot forward to try to avoid them. But you can learn how to stay happy in the middle of a personal storm. Your heart and mind will thank you.*

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Photos courtesy of Victoria Hand Project

# Victoria Hand Project

## IMPACTING AMPUTEES IN NEED WORLDWIDE

By Jeff Tiessen

**In 2010 a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the country of Haiti bringing with it devastating damage. The Haitian government's official death count was more than 300,000, making the earthquake's aftermath one of the worst natural disasters in recorded history. Thousands more were injured.**

Magdala Lundy was at school when the earthquake struck. Trapped underneath the debris of the building for three days, she was rescued from the rubble, injured but alive. The injury led to gangrene and the amputation of her right forearm. She lived for a year without a prosthetic limb and struggled to take care of her children. Many negative looks were directed her way from fellow Haitians. Magdala needed a prosthetic device that was both functional and cosmetically appealing, and affordable.

Isabel lives in Guatemala. He lost his arm in a work accident 12 years ago. Having a prosthetic hand was vital to Isabel as he needed to continue to work and provide for his family. He was one of the first amputees to work with the Victoria Hand Project. He was the first to be fitted with the Voluntary Open device, and wears it proudly, astounded at its functionality and appearance and how lightweight and versatile it is.

Magdala received a hand from the Victoria Hand Project (VHP) as well. Manufactured in Port-au-Prince by one of four 3D printers donated by the VHP, Magdala was provided with the help she needed with tasks she couldn't do with a cosmetic hand like grabbing objects, dusting, washing clothes, and getting dressed. The appearance of her Victoria Hand also helped to improve her body image and her comfort level in public. Stories like these accompany each hand that the VHP provides.

The Victoria Hand Project is a British Columbia-based charity working with medical clinics in 11 countries around the world, including Canada. Its mission is to produce affordable 3D-printed prosthetic devices for those who otherwise would go without because of cost, lack of government coverage, or lack of infrastructure to produce the devices. The VHP donates the 3D printing equipment and scanning computer software to partner clinics and educates and trains prosthetic practitioners on its use.

Led by Chief Executive Officer Michael Peirone, the VHP started as a research project at the University of Victoria to test the viability of 3D printing for prosthetic hands. Initial trials were done in Guatemala to get feedback from clinics and

amputees. "I was an undergraduate student in bio engineering during those first trials and thought the technology was fascinating," Peirone remembers. "It's amazing how these devices can be made around the world and help people who don't have access. I volunteered with the VHP throughout my undergraduate degree and started full-time as soon as I graduated."

Peirone admits that as a biomedical mechanical engineer he had his sights set on pursuing surgical robotics. But it was those first trials in Guatemala that captured his interest and imagination. As an intern, he also travelled to Nepal to help set up a centre and train staff. "Just seeing the transformation in some who refused to show that they're missing a limb to becoming more confident and outgoing is







*“This project gives people, wounded soldiers, hope that this is not the end. This is a great hope for people who have lost a limb.”*

– Andriy, Ukraine

*“I will use my new hand to write and do other chores. I will use [it] to wash clothes and do so many other activities. The hand feels normal.”*

– Ijabu, Kenya



what instilled the VHP as a career mission for me,” shares Peirone. “I think that’s what draws so many student volunteers to us from around the world,” he adds. “When we ask what makes them want to work with us, the answer is often, ‘Well, I want to do engineering but I want to give back too’.”

Peirone’s first experience as a VHP volunteer is a testament to that. “The participants in the research study in Guatemala, like Isabel, asked to keep their test devices because they never had a prosthetic device,” explains Peirone, “and that’s what led our founder and UVic [University of Victoria] to spin the research project into a nonprofit organization.”

The VHP’s founder is Dr. Nick Dechev, an Associate Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at UVic, and former Biomedical Engineering Program Director. Dechev’s research focuses on developing innovative solutions to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, particularly in the field of prosthetic and orthotic devices.

Driven by advances in rapid prototyping technologies – 3D printing, 3D scanning, and 3D computer-aided design – the VHP uses these technologies to provide

low-cost prostheses to those facing limited access to prosthetic care.

The concept for the device actually originated at the University of Toronto in the early 2000s, where Dechev was a Master’s student. He created an electric, motorized terminal device that was groundbreaking at the time because it employed something called adaptive grasp. The motorized fingers moved semi-independently. When one finger made contact, the others would continue to close for a more natural grasp around an object.

Dechev brought the device to Victoria when he began working as a professor of mechanical engineering. And it wasn’t until years later, when some of his students discovered his abandoned project and suggested desktop 3D printing, that the project was revived.

Dechev was resistant to the idea at first. But a trial with a 3D printer on campus was promising enough to provide grant funding for the redesign of his electric hand.

With the new 3D-printed style, the manufacturing cost went from a projected \$5,000 per device in the early 2000s to only \$100 to \$200 USD today. With that, and in collaboration with the Denver-based Guatemala Range of Motion project, the first testing and trials began.

The VHP’s 3D-printed prosthetic system has itself evolved over the years, with thousands of hours devoted to engineering design and testing. There has been on-going consultation with Canadian, U.S., and international prosthetists, as well as feedback from hand recipients, to inform the design direction. With that input, the VHP has developed a range of prosthetic arm systems. And with the help of its volunteers, the small team continually works to improve fit, appearance and function.

“Research, training and fundraising are all things that push us everyday but the primary driving force behind what we do is the recipients of our devices,” states Peirone. “People like Lewis, a 21-year-old Kenyan film student who lost his arm from an electrical injury. Lewis was really self-conscious about people staring or judging him and would always try to cover his residual limb with a jacket. Receiving a prosthetic arm helped him adjust. It helps him with daily tasks like cleaning, cooking, and washing dishes. And it has helped him succeed in school too, with handling the camera equipment more efficiently. Most importantly, his confidence has been boosted which has helped his

healing journey tremendously. And, he has hand-painted his device to be like tattoos which he’s quick to show off!”

Peirone continues: “The impact on children’s lives is so important too.” Like Ijabu from Kenya who is 15 years old now. When she was eight, a boil developed complications and she had to have her hand amputated. When some people started making fun of her, she didn’t go to school for a year. Receiving the Victoria Hand allowed her to write and do chores more easily and be much more independent.

And Isaiah, who lives in a region where temperatures go up past 40 degrees. Sadly, Isaiah would spend his day wearing a heavy jacket to hide his shame. When he got his arm, it was a really happy moment for him and his dad, and the VHP team too.”

To make those stories happen the VHP provides foreign clinics – although it has partners in Canada and the U.S. too – with 3D equipment and teaches clinicians how to make the devices themselves, rather than shipping products in bulk to under-developed countries. The goal is low-cost, highly functional, durable prosthetic arm systems that can be built on-site in countries worldwide.

3D printing allows for manufacturing of parts in small batches, without the need to inventory hundreds of different parts. Printing on-demand parts means less supply-chain disruption, fewer shipping and import fees, fewer delays, and enables on-site service and repair in hard-to-reach places in the world.

“That’s why we give our partners the equipment, so they can manufacture it in-country,” explains Peirone. “It improves accessibility. It allows for better customization. And then if somebody needs upgrades or minor repairs, that can be done directly in their community.”

On-site, on-demand 3D printing enables the rapid replacement of worn out or broken parts which reduces downtime for individuals. This ensures that people travelling to the clinic receive care and maintenance right away which minimizes wait times without their device.

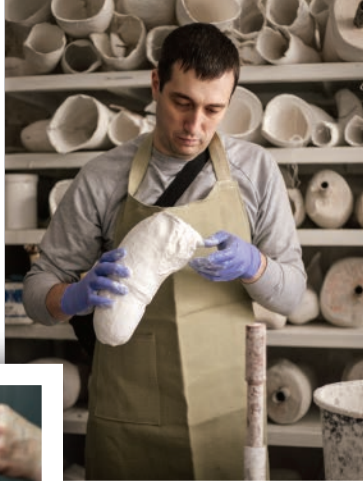
“Isaiah speaks to the significance of this,” Peirone continues. “He’s just 10 and growing, and has to have frequent adjustments made to his socket. But he never wants to send his device back to our clinical partner in Kenya. He doesn’t want to go without it because it helps him at school and with everything he does. That’s very touching to hear.”

VHP-developed software aids prosthetists in the workflow and socket creation too. By partnering with local clinics in this way, the VHP’s approach ensures quality care and builds in-country capacity. To date, the VHP’s support has provided over 400 Victoria Hand prosthetic arms worldwide, while training over 50 clinicians in Cambodia, Canada, Egypt, Guatemala, Haiti, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Uganda, Ukraine, and the United States.

Back at home in Victoria, when international clinical partners share recipient feedback that warrants a design change, the VHP engineers go to work on it in Canada. They build it, test it and then push the new designs (as digital files) via the software to partners. The VHP collaborates with the University of Victoria’s Engineering Faculty to perform extensive testing on all 3D-printed parts before deployment.

Each prosthetic system is customized by selecting from dozens of possible components, including terminal devices (hands), wrists, sockets, and harness pieces, combined and customized to suit the unique needs of each person. Terminal device options are comprised of a voluntary close hand,





*"Since getting the Victoria Hand my life has tremendously improved. I am more confident. I learned how to accept myself. I learned how to do things I would do before." – Lewis, Kenya*



voluntary open hand, cosmetic-passive hand, and a paediatric hand. Amputees pick and choose features that work best for them and their lifestyle.

Presently, the VHP has focused its work primarily in Ukraine, fitting Ukrainian soldiers with prosthetic hands. With many prosthetic facilities destroyed by bombings, thousands of people were left without access to the care they required. Andriy is one such Ukrainian, waiting on a list for six months and counting for a traditional prosthesis.

Andriy's life was profoundly changed by the invasion of Ukraine. When the war struck his country he, like many others, was called to defend his homeland. He had never before picked up a weapon. And during his courageous service he lost his arm in a mine explosion.

Subsequently, Andriy was among the first Ukrainian soldiers to receive an above-elbow Victoria Hand prosthetic arm. "For Andriy," tells Peirone, "this meant more than just functional recovery. It gave him the ability to hold both of his sons' hands again.

He and his wife Ivana have two young boys, and Ivana said that before Andriy got his device, their sons would fight over who got to hold their dad's one hand. After he received the device she reported that, 'Oh, now Andriy can hold both of our sons' hand at once.' It's very touching to hear things like that."

Peirone remembers another Ukrainian man for something very different than Andriy's story. "When our partners were doing the initial casting of his limb and taking measurements, he was very stern, not really talking to anyone. We thought, 'Well, maybe he doesn't want to be here.' But when he was fitted two days later, his demeanor changed completely. He was so happy. After he left the clinic with his new limb he was back in no time with cake and chocolates and a bottle of whisky to say 'thanks'. These devices can be life-changing, and it's so rewarding just to be able to help."

Filled with rewards, the work that the VHP delivers comes with plenty of challenges too, of course. There is still resistance to the technology from some prosthetic traditionalists. "It's difficult when we have someone, as we have had here in Canada, who is very interested in the device but their prosthetist is not," Peirone shares. "For us at the VHP, we don't want to say, 'Okay, well, let's work with another prosthetist who is willing' because of that existing relationship. So, it's difficult in that sense. Whereas, outside of North America and Western Europe there is so much more need for these technolo-

gies because so many people who can't afford a device are turned away."

Another challenge for Peirone, and perhaps the most significant, is ensuring strength and durability in 3D-printed prosthetic applications as compared to traditionally manufactured devices. To optimize strength, the VHP devices are made using the FDM (Fused Deposition Modelling) method which is the successive addition of thin layers (0.4 mm to 0.6 mm) of molten plastic material to build the parts layer-by-layer. Then, various high-stress parts like wrists and elbows are reinforced with small threaded bolts. Additionally, laser-cut stainless-steel components are incorporated into the design to function as internal structural elements, like the bones in our fingers.

But then there are the many pros associated with the Victoria Hand, like decreased manufacturing times for one. "With 3D printing, you can produce a socket or a check socket while focusing on patient/client care elsewhere," Peirone explains. "Mind you, socket builds still begin with the prosthetist taking anatom-

ical measurements and making a traditional plaster limb impression of the residual limb, creating a positive cast, rectifying it, and then 3D scanning the positive impression. The clinician's sense of tactile feedback for incorporating space in the socket is still part of the process for each amputee individually. But, it's 3D-printed overnight and fitted the next day."

Peirone also explains that for the clinician, this process reduces equipment needs since there is no need for oven heaters, vacuum systems, and trimming and grinding equipment for making traditional sockets. And it allows for complex shapes to be manufactured directly into sockets like connection points, cable guides, and wrist connectors. And components can be printed on-demand or ahead of time and kept in stock. "It's feasible," says Peirone, "that a Victoria Hand recipient could visit a clinic, be measured and cast, and receive a custom prosthesis the next day."

And of course, the low cost of these devices is an enormous benefit of 3D printing. Rapid prototyping allows for low-cost produc-

tion. Materials for a complete VHP prosthetic system cost approximately \$150 to \$250 USD. The VHP provides stipends to partner clinicians and technicians, typically \$150 to \$250 USD to support their business and livelihood, bringing the total cost of a VHP system in the \$300-\$450 USD range depending on location and configuration.

The VHP's charitable model ensures that recipients who can not contribute even a little bit to the cost are not denied a device. And clinicians are always reimbursed for their time. But that provides another challenge in and of itself.

"As with any charity," Peirone acknowledges, "fundraising is a challenge. Getting the word out in communities across Canada is the objective but we also want to show donors how they're making a difference around the world. Ukraine has been our largest project so far. We're working in two clinics there and opening another in Kyiv. But it's front of mind for a lot of people and generates the most support. Our donors typically want to support Ukraine, but there still is need in places like Nepal and Kenya too."



**Learn more at [victoriahandproject.com](https://victoriahandproject.com). Donations can be made to the Victoria Hand Project at <https://www.victoriahandproject.com/donate>.**



# Mastering BALANCE After Limb Loss

## Essential Tips for Prosthetic Users and Coaches

By Megan Williamson, BA, NASM CPT



**When we think about exercises to improve balance, standing on one leg might be the first thing that comes to mind. While that's one method, it's not the only way – nor is it always the most effective, especially for prosthesis users. Balance is more than just keeping yourself upright; it's about stability in motion, confidence in movement, and adapting to real-life challenges.**

For those with lower limb loss, balance challenges are common and can impact how effectively a prosthetic device is used in daily life. However, by training the body's key balance systems, prosthesis users and fitness professionals alike can unlock greater mobility, confidence and independence.

## Understanding Balance in Everyday Life

Balance is the even distribution of weight that allows us to stay steady. But from a training perspective, it's much more complex. The body relies on three key neurological systems to maintain balance: proprioception, the vestibular system, and vision. Each system plays a role in movement, stability and coordination, and understanding them is key to effective training.

### 1 Proprioception: The Body's Internal GPS

Proprioception is the body's ability to sense its position in space. It allows you to know where your limbs are without looking. However, for those with limb loss, proprioceptive feedback is altered or reduced due to changes in sensory input. Scar tissue, nerve damage, and the absence of a natural limb can impact how the body perceives movement.

**TRAINING TIP:** Traditional proprioceptive exercises that rely on feeling the floor (such as barefoot balance drills) may not be as effective for individuals with compromised proprioception due to trauma or limb loss. Instead, incorporating visual and vestibular cues can be more beneficial. For example, using mirrors during movement training or focusing on upper body proprioception can enhance overall balance.



### 2 The Vestibular System: The Body's Inner Gyroscope

The vestibular system, located in the inner ear, detects head position and movement. It works closely with vision and is a priority system in the brain for maintaining equilibrium.

**TRAINING TIP:** Challenging the vestibular system can improve overall balance. Closing your eyes while performing an exercise (with safety measures in place) or practicing controlled head movements while balancing, can help strengthen this system.

### 3 The Visual System: Your Eyes as a Balance Tool

The visual system is a significant component of balance, with six of our 12 cranial nerves dedicated to vision. Our visual system interprets our environment and adjusts our movements accordingly.

**TRAINING TIP:** Fixing your gaze on a stationary point can enhance stability. Conversely, challenging vision – such as tracking a moving object while performing an exercise – can improve adaptability and spatial awareness.





## How Trainers Can Support Prosthesis Users

For fitness professionals, understanding these balance systems can transform how they support a client with limb loss. Here's how coaches and instructors can apply this knowledge in practical ways for you:

### Assessing Balance System Strengths

Identify which system is dominant for you. Do you rely more on vision for balance, for example? Do you feel unstable when your head moves? Exercises can be tailored to strengthen your weaker areas.

### Modifying Traditional Balance Drills

Instead of only using one-leg stances, try dynamic drills such as:

- Seated weight shifts (for early-stage prosthesis users)
- Controlled step-ups with vision tracking
- Balance training with soft surfaces or perturbation exercises

### Considering Alternative Cues

Tactile feedback, auditory cues, visual target cues, and verbal reinforcement can help when your proprioceptive input is limited.

### Ensuring Safety and Comfort

Not everyone feels comfortable with removing their prosthesis for certain drills. Adjusting movements to suit your comfort level and functionality is important too.

## Practical Exercises for Balance Training

Here are some simple yet effective ways to challenge and enhance balance:

### Visual System Challenge

Focus on a fixed point while balancing on a stable or unstable surface.



### Vestibular System Challenge

Close your eyes while maintaining a stable stance or add slow, controlled head movements.

### Proprioception Challenge

Use a textured surface to increase feedback from your prosthetic limb or residual limb.

*By targeting these systems, we can enhance stability in functional movements – whether it's walking, wheeling, transferring or navigating everyday obstacles.*

## The Bigger Picture: Balance Beyond the Gym

For prosthesis users, balance training is not just about standing still – it's about confidence in daily life. From stepping from a curb to carrying groceries, every movement relies on an intricate balance between neurological input, muscle activation, and coordination. The more we train balance in relevant, real-world ways, the greater the impact it has on independence and mobility.

As a coach, my mission is to bridge the gap between rehabilitation and fitness, ensuring that all individuals – trainers and clients – have the knowledge to move confidently and efficiently. Whether you're navigating balance after limb loss or coaching clients through their adaptive fitness journey, understanding the body's balance systems is a game-changer.

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

For exercise ideas, workout programs or a consultation, visit [oceanrehabandfitness.com](https://oceanrehabandfitness.com).

Follow Megan's programs with an Ocean Insider Club membership subscription.



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# Christa Couture

## RESILIENCE UNIMAGINED

An interview with Jeff Tiessen, thrive publisher

**Christa Couture refers to herself as a “singer, songwriter, storyteller, cyborg”. She’s an award-winning performing and recording artist, a non-fiction writer, broadcaster and filmmaker, and the host of the AMI travel docu-series “Postcards From” which features a five-senses experience of a different Canadian city each episode.**

Christa is also proudly Indigenous (mixed Cree and Scandinavian), queer and disabled. As a mother, she knows profound heartbreak and has shared her extraordinary journey in her memoir *How to Lose Everything*, a book that intimately shares her most extreme experiences and emotions in and around loss and grief. As a filmmaker, “How to Lose Everything: A Field Guide”, inspired by her book, won Best Animated Short at the Imagine This Women’s International Film Festival in 2021.

An amputation of her left leg at the age of 13 was the cure for her childhood bone cancer. A divorce, born out of grief, stemmed from her first child’s single and only day of life, and the subsequent death of her second child before his second birthday. Then more cancer and a thyroidectomy threatened her musical career and prompted a move across the country to start over. These are the stories that connect Christa’s dots of sorrow, despair and hard-won hope.

Photo by Jen Squires

As a singer-songwriter, her seventh album, “Safe Harbour”, was released in 2020. Christa is a frequent contributor to CBC Radio, now calling Toronto home after living for many years in Vancouver.

**thrive:** *You live in Toronto, born in Peterborough, grew up in the Prairies, and lived in Florida and Vancouver as well. Am I missing anywhere else that you’ve called home?*

**Christa:** Those are most of the places that I’ve lived. When I was a touring musician I drove back and forth across Canada countless times for so many years. I feel really lucky that I’ve seen so much of this country. I don’t know the experience of growing up and living in just one place.

**thrive:** *That wandering spirit, is that something that’s always been part of your personality?*

**Christa:** It’s interesting you ask that because I moved a lot as a kid. My parents were separated. My dad lived in New Jersey and Northern Alberta and Ontario. And he loved a road trip. Summer with my dad was going camping somewhere. I was always an artist too. I was singing all the time, writing stories, documenting our experiences as we went. That was my childhood.

**thrive:** *How old were you when you lost your leg to cancer?*

**Christa:** I was 13, but first diagnosed when I was 11, with Ewing sarcoma, and had chemotherapy. The cancer came back shortly before my 13th birthday. And so, the amputation. I’m very lucky. The amputation was the cure for my cancer.

**thrive:** *Let’s start with life on the road filming “Postcards From”. What’s it like hosting a traveling roadshow and discovering unfamiliar places as a prosthesis-wearing above-knee amputee?*

**Christa:** It’s a blast. A dream job for me. It’s exhausting; it’s demanding. Being on camera, I have to be on all of

the time. But it feels like a remarkable gift. I’m getting paid to go to new places, try new things, and meet cool people.

It’s not a job I was looking for. The show needed a new host and it had to be someone with a disability. That was the first requirement. I’d never done television, but I’ve done a lot of radio and I’ve been a touring musician. I’m a performer. So, at least

I’ve been on stage and on the mic. And the fact that it is an accessible travel show and that it’s for AMI Accessible Media here in Canada and it’s for a primarily blind and partially sighted audience, it’s really meaningful to me. I’m getting to learn a lot about how blind and partially sighted people experience the world.

I’m having conversations with people about what they enjoy doing. Not about how they lost their leg or why they use a wheelchair or whatever, but just who they are and what they love about the place where they live.

I feel like anytime we see a disabled person on camera, on stage, or anytime a disabled person is elevated, it’s so positive as far as representation. Whatever stereotypes someone might have, I get to contribute towards changing that. And then for other disabled people, hopefully there’s some, “if she can do it, I can do it too.”

**thrive:** *Are you finding that there is a commonality or an essence of Canadiana or being Canadian?*

**Christa:** Canada is so big and so diverse. But there is some truth to what is Canadian and many versions of it. This season, Season Six, we’ve been on the west coast of Newfoundland and last year we went to Dawson City in the Yukon. You couldn’t be further apart in







this country, but I'm finding that there's incredible community and creativity in these smaller places. I don't know if that's a Canadian trait, but I've been moved by the way that communities come together to make something possible for someone with a disability.

When you live in a big city, you can feel a bit anonymous surrounded by thousands of people. Everyone just goes about their day and doesn't look up. In these smaller communities, there's more neighbourly collaboration. But Dawson City, my God, has no paved sidewalks. Accessibility was terrible for me. Cities are more accessible. But in smaller towns, accessibility looks more like support from each other. People want to help.

**thrive:** *I'm not going to ask you to pick favourite places. But what have been some of your most memorable experiences on the road?*

**Christa:** So, Season Five, we filmed an episode in Drumheller, Alberta, what's called the Badlands. I mean, this part of Alberta looks like you're on Mars. Sandy and rocky. It's known as "Dino Town" and it's just dinosaur everything. I had been there with my mom when I was a kid. I grew up in Edmonton. I was there right after my chemotherapy had finished. We thought my cancer was gone. Two months later my leg was amputated. Photos of me from that trip are some of the last photos of me with two legs. So going back there with the show, I thought a lot about myself 30 years ago.

And then of course trying local delicacies, like Prairie Oysters. For anyone who doesn't know, Prairie Oysters are not oysters at all. They're actually calf testicles. It's a big part of the culture. The male calves are castrated in the spring. It's a "waste not want not" situation I guess. They deep fry them and eat them. The ranchers cooked them for me on the back of a truck. Kids love them, everyone gets in on it. I don't think I'll ever eat one again.



Photo by Black Rhino Creative

Whistler was a favourite episode because even though I'd lived in Vancouver for 17 years, I'd only been to Whistler once. I tried sit skiing for the first time. An amputee for 30 years, and I'd never tried sit skiing. I loved it.

I "kissed the cod" in Season Six in Newfoundland. In Dawson City, there's an initiation called the Sour Toe Cocktail, where a mummified toe, a real human toe, is put in a shot of whisky and the toe has to touch your lips. It's disgusting. I joked, "If I had known, I could have given them five toes when I was 13."

**thrive:** *Before we talk about more loss in your life and your memoir, in terms of your career, you've done a lot as a musician and a media professional. How does it all connect?*

**Christa:** Yes. My circuitous career. I started as a singer-songwriter in my 20s. I have seven albums and toured for 10 years and loved it. Then I had to take a break because I had thyroid cancer. I had my thyroid removed. In taking that break, I had this idea to write a memoir. And then out of the book came a project to create a short, animated film based on an excerpt from the book which grew into a series of five animated films. I'm so proud of those films. And then the radio work. I've been on radio, off and on, for years, which I feel was an extension of being a touring musician. I would just get gigs to host different things. I love radio. So, it all kind of connects through storytelling. I'm definitely a master of none and never really had a career plan.

**thrive:** *Your leg has a beautiful floral covering on it, and a story too. In your book, you talk about the experience of switching to a very visible prosthesis being transformational for you. How so?*

**Christa:** When I got the flower leg, which looks hand-painted but is actually a laminated floral print fabric, I did it because I thought it would look cool



and I wanted to experiment with visibility and taking ownership of my disability in that way. What I did not expect was how it would change the way other people saw me. In the past, if I told people I only had one leg, they would uncomfortably mutter, "oh... sorry." Now, with this beautiful neon sign of a prosthesis, people come up to me with curiosity to tell me it looks cool or to learn how it was made. It totally transformed the conversations I have about my disability. It helped me change the way I see myself.

**thrive:** *Your memoir, How to Lose Everything, is certainly a testament to how difficult it can be to plan life. I'm going to let you take it from here and share what you'd like to share.*

**Christa:** Thank you for that. Yeah, a lot of my work has been about grief and loss. Definitely my albums, as a singer and songwriter. The short films, which are also called *How to Lose Everything*, came from the book. They're about loss. When I tell people about the book, I share what I call my grief bio which is cancer, amputation, death, death, divorce, and more cancer.

Losing my leg, of course, was a big loss and changed the trajectory of my life. In my late 20s I had a child who died when he was a day old and in my 30s a second child who died when he was 14 months old because of a serious heart condition. After that, my marriage ended. We couldn't survive as a couple through those devastating experiences. That was all in Vancouver. And so, I moved to Toronto to try to pick up the pieces and start over in some way. Then I got thyroid cancer, which put my career as a singer on hold.

All of those stories are in the book but there's nothing that compares to the loss of a child. My sons Emmett and Ford are my biggest losses, which will always be heartbreaking. I can say these things to you because I've had many years to come to terms

**"Resilience sucks. Resilience is born of suffering. You will discover your resilience by enduring hardship. It's something you don't know about yourself until you struggle. So, in that sense, resilience sucks. Who wants to be resilient? It means you've had to survive something."**



with how to say it without crying. It's not that I'm not still heartbroken. I am. But I can talk about these experiences, and I've been driven to create work about them partially as my means for survival. Recording albums and singing songs gave me something to hold on to.

We all experience grief but at the same time it can be so specific and so isolating. In creating work about grief, I've been really helped by others saying, "I know what you mean." But, in recent years, I've been working with grief less, which has felt good. It's now more disability focused or on other parts of my identity.

And I know this for sure: resilience sucks. Resilience is born of suffering. You will discover your resilience by enduring hardship. It's something you don't know about yourself until you struggle. So, in that sense, resilience sucks. Who wants to be resilient? It means you've had to survive something.

**thrive:** *What compelled you to write a book about these painful experiences?*

**Christa:** For years, I've used songwriting as a means to express and understand my experiences. But I felt compelled to create something more in-depth — and something that wasn't confined to rhyming couplets and chorus! It also felt like a chance to give back, in a way. It was through other







people's experiences that I got through my own. So, this was a chance for me to maybe help other people who are experiencing loss. Also, I wanted to offer insight for those who haven't had much grief in their life. Lots of people don't know what to say or how to react around grief and loss. I once did a TV interview where they picked up the camera, stuck a microphone in my face, and said, "So you've had a tragic life. Why don't you tell me about it?" I knew I seemed like a foreign object to them. While I have experienced tragedies, my life is not tragic.

**thrive:** *With all of your different traumatic experiences, what's the big takeaway message for readers?*

**Christa:** The final passage in the book is what I turned into the short film. It's only five minutes if you read it out loud. It's the advice I have for people in the immediate days after a loss of any kind. Whatever that loss is, my advice is to wait. "Time heals" is so trite and I don't think it's true. But the shock will pass and that does just take time. Do whatever is the gentlest way to get through those early days. And then slowly you will rebuild life around you. Unfortunately, there's no way to hurry it up. When people reach out to me in those early days, all I

can suggest is to just wait and do your best to not hurt yourself or others. Time really will take that shock away and then time will allow you to create new things.

**thrive:** *One more question for you. What do you think your amputation has taught others in your personal and professional circles?*

**Christa:** Oh, interesting. I've never been asked that. I have been asked, "What has it taught you?" But, what has it taught others?

I think some of the same things that it's taught me... a greater understanding of our bodies. There's such a pervasive idea about what a body should be and should do. And we've all been affected by that. I feel that for the people close to me, it has helped them undo some of the ideas of what a body should be able to do. The more we understand different experiences, the better. I think people have learned more about disability and maybe accept and love their own body as it is. For amputees, it's so visible. People see how we are "different". Whereas, other people might feel uncomfortable about their body but it's something they can hide. So, I think it's been helpful to people around me to be confronted with their own ideas of disability and what bodies are supposed to be like.



*To learn more about Christa, her book and her music, or to follow her on Instagram, visit [christacouture.com](http://christacouture.com). Check out Season Six, and previous episodes of Postcards From on AMI TV at [amiplus.ca](http://amiplus.ca).*

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# Fraud ALERT

By Max Warfield

**In 2025, frequent headlines warning us of new scams are as loud as air-raid sirens. Computer generated fakes are confusing everybody and eroding confidence in everything.**

“People have to recognize that we are in a war for cyber security,” warns Mark McManus, President/CEO of the ACFE (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners) Greater Toronto Area Chapter. “The dollar amount of fraud is mindboggling, and published numbers represent just a small portion since only about five percent of these incidents are actually reported.”

Amputees can be subjected to scams just like anyone else. Seniors are a favourite target for thieves. As a result, McManus advises, “Unfortunately, we now

have to come from a position of zero trust. This is difficult for a lot of us because we have grown up in a society where we have trust in people. But we have moved into a new era. It is an era of artificial intelligence and the internet and cell phones. Now, you have to carry the mindset of zero trust — or become a victim.”

McManus has a background in banking and as a security regulator with the Ontario Securities Commission. “I saw both sides of the street,” he says. “I am a money laundering specialist and director

of training and development of CFEs [certified fraud examiners].” His Toronto Chapter has 1,400 CFEs.

“It’s busy,” he says. “We train CFEs to detect fraud, reduce fraud, investigate it and act as an expert witness in court — the whole gamut.” According to McManus, the ACFE is the world’s largest

anti-fraud organization with 95,000 members worldwide in 120 countries. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, the organization works to reduce business fraud and other financial crimes.

CFEs cross many professional disciplines. They can be attorneys, accountants, law enforcement officials, retail team members, financial institution employees, insurance staff, and even charity or non-profit organization workers. “Charities are subjected to a lot of fraud,” McManus says. “The thinking... ‘No one would guess. Who would steal from Sick Kids?’ I tell you, there are people who absolutely would, given the opportunity.”

The focus of ACFE is on occupational fraud, yet it helps the public with personal fraud when it can. Our swiftly changing business world creates a challenge to keep up with thieves and their innovative schemes. But scammers soon discover that many smaller thefts add up as well. McManus explains that “the common ordinary citizen is now constantly under attack. It’s not just organizations and businesses and charities. It’s in our homes,” he emphasizes.

“What does zero trust mean?” McManus asks rhetorically. “It means... be aware. Be curious. Be informed. Be skeptical — then verify. I’m not saying that people need to be cynical, but they need to be skeptical. One should delete any and all unsolicited emails. If you get an approach on your phone, in your email, someone at your door — it doesn’t really matter who it is — delete! Do not respond. You need to be aware of your surroundings and be aware that untrustworthy people are out there.”

McManus shares the example of rear-end collisions, which prey on our natural instincts. “Someone

hits you and without thinking you immediately get out of your vehicle to take a look. Then someone jumps into your car and takes it. Our natural reaction is to get out. But you need to pause. You need to assess the situation. Call the police from inside your car. Don’t get out, because you don’t know what is going to be confronting you.

We never had to do that in a civilized society years ago — but today, especially if you are a young woman, or if you’re driving a nice car — zero trust! Be skeptical and verify. A rear and front-viewing dash cam in your vehicle should be a consideration; that’s just where we are today.”

Advice for caution in the present day may sound harsh, but it’s a mindset to help keep you secure. McManus continues, “Don’t engage with unsolicited approaches. Unrecognized calls on your phone should be deleted and you should block the caller. Do not engage and do not take the hook. There are factories that run as call centres, places where employees have targets and quotas to meet for getting money from you. Don’t answer

calls from numbers you don’t know. If it is actually important, the caller will leave a message.”

Many thieves pretend to be in a position of authority or to be phoning from your own bank. If it is supposedly your financial institution that’s calling, McManus suggests hanging up and waiting five minutes before calling back because some scammers have systems where the call does not disconnect right away and if you quickly call back they are waiting for you and you think you have the bank. Better yet, call the number on the back of your card. It is important to be cautious.

We have to do our research. “If someone knocks on the door and says that they have this great product or cause,” McManus cautions, “you have to do your research. If you don’t, the chances of being scammed go up. No matter how sad the story, no matter how profitable the story sounds, keep your empathy and greed in check.”

McManus touches on another scam that taps into common vulnerabilities. “If you feel lonely, visit your neighbour, join a book club, visit the local community centre for an activity or event. There are



## THE DOs AND DON'Ts OF FRAUD

- **DO Prevent – Educate Yourself**
- **DO Recognize Warning Signs**
- **DO Record & Document**
- **DO Resist**
- **DO Verify**
- **DO Pause and Reflect**
- **DO Confirm Information**
- **DO Report**
- **DO NOT Send Cash**
- **DO NOT Give Personal Information**





## Resources

Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (1-888-495-8501)  
antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners  
acfe.com/fraud-resources

Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
cnpea.ca

getcybersafe.gc.ca

peopleslawschool.ca/publicationsscams-avoid

checkfirst.ca/resources/fraudsters-playbook

resources in our communities for people who are lonely. Reach out in person. Go in person. Go for a walk. Meet those in your neighbourhood. Loneliness is a huge factor.”

The most routine transactions can be the most perilous. Be careful how you charge your phone or use public Wi-Fi. It is much better to use your own data. Sure, you have to pay for that, but the cost of someone stealing your information will be a lot more! It costs some money, not much, to be fraud averse. Don't borrow chargers or use hotel Wi-Fi. Taking those steps will keep you safe. Be willing to pay for the prevention measures you need. Get into the routine of zero trust.

“I tell people to use your phone to pay at the gas station because it is safer than a card,” McManus shares. “The number with the tap of your phone can't be replicated. Gas stations are notorious for having employees who are bought off by organized crime.”

McManus also suggests discussing fraud strategies with relatives to be proactive. “Another good idea is to have a secret word for the family. Then, if someone pleads for help, you can ask, ‘What's the word?’ If the person in distress doesn't know, it's a scam.”

What should you do if you've been scammed? McManus sug-

gests, first call the local police and make a complaint. In some circumstances you can do this online. The second thing is to call your bank and put a stop on as much as possible. Lock your phone right away. They will want a police report number. Thirdly, file a complaint with the Canadian Anti-Fraud Center. “On our ACFE website it tells how to report a fraud or scam,” offers McManus. “It is important that people take the time to do that. People hesitate, and that is part



of the problem. Many people aren't comfortable having to relive the trauma as they walk through what happened to them. There is also regret, a sense of ‘how stupid I am.’ ‘I shouldn't have fallen for that.’ ‘Why did I act so rashly.’ No one wants to talk about it. For most, it is horribly embarrassing.”

As communities recoil in mounting horror to the newest versions of fraud and its damage, there is also an up-swell of unity. Local municipalities, police, universities, churches and senior centres are joining forces to fight this issue. They meet online, in tele-townhalls and in-person gatherings to inform the public.

The Vancouver Police Foundation hosts workshops that it calls Scam Prevention for Seniors Seminars.

Sessions are offered in English and other languages such as Punjabi. In Nova Scotia, the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia partners with the RCMP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons and the Nova Scotia Securities Commission for fraud webinars. Check with your local police department to see if information sessions are provided.



In today's digital age, safeguarding personal information is paramount. With the rise of identity theft, ensuring the secure disposal of electronic devices is crucial too.

Be aware. Be skeptical and verify. Remember, the classic red flags of fraud are found in urgent requests for money, or an urgent need for personal information. The seasoned voice of Mr. McManus should caution us all. “The whole thing is to Stop! Be Curious. Be Informed.”

## Reporting a Scam

*Report all scams, regardless of dollar amount and include as many details as possible:*

- Names of the scammer and company they claimed to represent
- Dates contacted
- Method of communication
- Phone numbers, email/ mailing/website addresses used by the perpetrator
- Methods of payment
- Where funds were sent, including wire transfers and prepaid cards
- Financial institution names, account names, and account numbers
- Interactions with the scammer and instructions you were given

## Sample Scam Scenarios

**ROMANCE SCAM:** Criminals pose as interested romantic partners on social media or dating websites to capitalize on victims' desire to find a companion.

**TECH SUPPORT SCAM:** Criminals pose as technology support representatives and offer to fix non-existent computer issues. The scammers gain remote access to devices and sensitive information.

**GRANDPARENT SCAM:** A type of confidence scam where criminals pose as a relative – usually a child or grandchild – claiming to be in immediate financial need.

**GOVERNMENT IMPERSONATION SCAM:** Criminals pose as government employees and threaten to arrest or prosecute victims unless they agree to provide funds or other payments.

**SWEEPSTAKES/CHARITY SCAM:** Criminals claim to work for legitimate charitable organizations to gain victims' trust. Or they claim that their targets have won a sweepstake, which they can collect for a “fee.”

**HOME REPAIR SCAM:** Criminals appear in person and charge homeowners in advance for home improvement services that they never provide.

**BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT FRAUD:** Scammers are always looking to separate you from your money in business transactions. If it sounds too good

to be true, it is. Common scams include advance fee schemes, Nigerian letter or 419 schemes, Ponzi schemes, pyramid schemes, and telemarketing fraud schemes.

**DISASTER FRAUD:** Charity fraud scams can come in many forms: emails, social media posts, crowdfunding platforms, cold calls, etc. They are especially common after high-profile disasters.

**CONSUMER FRAUD SCHEMES:** Identity theft, non-delivery scams, and theft of ATM/debit and credit cards.

**RANSOMWARE:** Blocking access to a computer or system until a sum of money is paid.

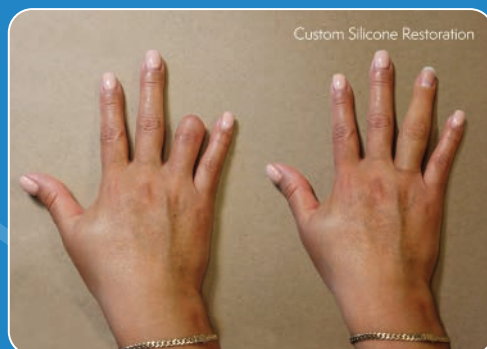
**SKIMMING:** Skimming occurs when devices illegally installed on ATMs, point-of-sale (POS) terminals, or fuel pumps, capture data or record cardholders' PINs.

**SPOOFING AND PHISHING:** Spoofing and phishing are schemes aimed at tricking you into providing sensitive information – like your password or bank PIN – to scammers.

**TIMESHARE FRAUD:** Conning part-time property owners into shelling out hefty sums of cash upfront, all under false pretenses related to their timeshare properties.



**When first entering the world of upper limb prostheses, either because you have a congenital amputation and you're considering a device, or because you've had an amputation and you're learning about your options, the language can be overwhelming. It's something like buying a house: there's new vocabulary to learn. The Arm Dynamics online library has an article that explains common terms, and this article focuses on what makes up the components of an upper extremity prosthetic device.**



Most people who experience an upper limb amputation have never met someone else with an upper extremity amputation. Same for parents of a child with a congenital limb difference or traumatic injury. There's never been any reason to know what parts are necessary to create an upper limb prosthesis.

While the information presented here may be helpful to familiarize yourself with what is available, what you'll really benefit from is an upper limb pros-

thetic specialist. The prosthetists and occupational therapists at Arm Dynamics's Centres of Excellence are all upper limb prosthetic specialists. These clinicians know which parts will not only work best with each other, but work best for the patient or client based on lifestyle, career and goals.

Starting with the smallest upper limb prostheses available are custom silicone restorations for a fingertip. Next up is the PIPDriver, a body-powered product made



## PARTS Department for Upper Limb Prostheses

*By Amber Henson  
Arm Dynamics*

by Naked Prosthetics which can be used side by side with other prosthetic finger devices. A company called Point Designs also makes a passive device for this level of amputation. A passive upper limb prosthesis is a device that is positioned by the wearer's sound hand or by pushing it against a tabletop or other stationary surface.

The next level of partial finger prostheses are MCPDrivers and ThumbDrivers for people with shorter residual fingers, but still enough finger for the band to hold onto.

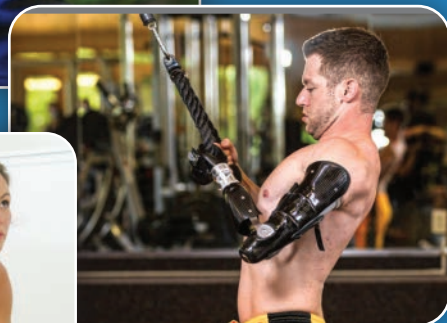
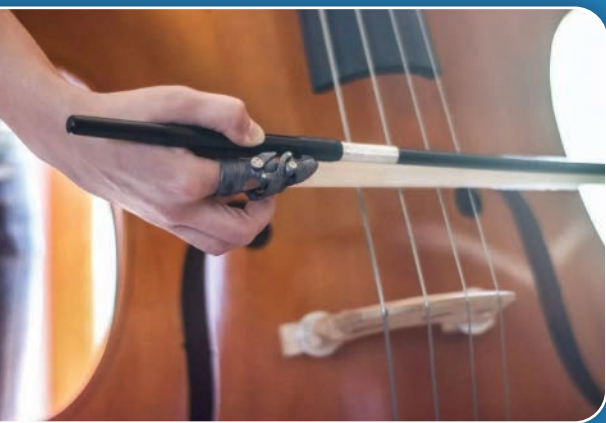
These devices need to be placed on a frame — most upper limb prostheses include a frame or silicone socket to hold the device in place. These devices and frames can also be customized to the wearer's liking. For people missing one or more fingers and/or thumb, there are passive options like custom silicone restorations, and myoelectric devices as well. With custom silicone restorations, wearers often add accessories like rings and bracelets to enhance the realistic look of the prosthesis.

Some people with missing fingers and/or a thumb opt for a myoelectric device. Digits connect to a frame that covers the residual palm. Inside the frame is the silicone socket. The fingers are powered by a battery pack that is part of the wrist strap. Most myoelectric fingers can only open and close — they cannot change grip patterns the way a myoelectric hand can. Some users opt for just a hand protector for a sensitive residual palm.

Let's not forget hybrid devices. A hybrid device can describe any prosthesis that uses two different types of devices, including prostheses that incorporate both passive and body-powered fingers.

Moving up to below-elbow limb differences, the options include custom silicone restorations, body-powered, and myoelectric devices.





A myoelectric prosthesis can offer a multi-articulating hand, or hook, frame and silicone socket. Typically, body-powered terminal devices utilize body-powered hooks, and a harness system for operation of the terminal device (and elbow for above-elbow amputees). Wrist units can be crucial for prepositioning the prosthesis and preventing overuse injuries for both the sound side and the affected side of the body. There are both body-powered and myoelectric wrist options.

For those with limb difference above the elbow, the prosthesis needs to include an elbow as well, of course... body-powered or myoelectric. Additionally, custom silicone restorations are available for an above-

elbow amputee. For limb loss at the shoulder, there are shoulder prostheses.

Last but not least, it's important to mention activity-specific devices. These can vary from devices that assist with swimming, playing pool, bowling, bike riding, paddling and kayaking, ball sports, hunting and many more. Some of the most popular activity-specific devices are built for weightlifting and exercising.

The larger the prosthesis, of course, the more parts required. That's why an upper extremity prosthetic specialist is a valuable partner on your clinical team, especially for matching devices and parts to your goals. It's important to be flexible. You may be quite certain about what you want, but there might be a different type of device that works better for you.

### ABOUT ARM DYNAMICS

For the past 25 years, U.S.-based Arm Dynamics has worked with thousands with upper limb loss or congenital limb difference, seeing hundreds of patients and clients each year at its Centers of Excellence. Its prosthetists are trained and certified by all manufacturers of upper limb prosthetic components and are consistently involved in research projects focusing on new and emerging upper limb technologies. And its occupational therapists teach end-users how to use their devices in their daily lives at home, at work and at play. Arm Dynamics maintains that it is the most experienced upper limb prosthetic care provider in the world. Learn more at [Armdynamics.com](http://Armdynamics.com).

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# Cutting **A** Rug

## Better BALANCE for BODY and MIND

**For most, dancing is thought of as a recreational activity and all too often overlooked for the positive physical, mental and social health qualities.**

It is a well-established fact that exercise is linked to an overall sense of well-being with clear physical and mental benefits. One particularly enjoyable form of exercise that can be adapted for all ability levels is dance.

Evidence suggests that dancing, as a weight-bearing exercise, not only enhances flexibility and balance but also increases aerobic power (and thus, cardiovascular health) and lower body muscle endurance. It is also less stressful on the joints than other forms of exercise.

For older adults in particular, dancing can help prevent the loss of muscle strength and bone density. These effects, combined with improvements in balance, can reduce the risk of falls which is the most common cause of non-fatal injuries and hospital admissions in older adults.

In addition to its physical benefits, dancing also promotes psychological and mental well-being. Performing movements in sync with music requires





cognitive processing which makes this activity stimulating for the mind too. And with dancing generally occurring in group settings, it offers a sense of community and fosters relationships, both old and new. Social ties – our connections to other people – provide emotional support, reducing depression, loneliness and stress levels.

Dancing touches on many factors important to promoting the highest quality of life. The benefits of dancing are evident in studies investigating its impact on Type 2 diabetes, a prominent disease in the senior population. These studies are based on the “dance therapy movement” which has its roots in the post-Second World War setting.

Over the past decade or so, aerobic dance classes have become one of the most popular activities at health clubs and community centres throughout the country. For many people, the term “aerobics” has become synonymous with this form of coordinated exercise set to music.

A typical aerobic dance class begins with a slow warm-up, and then progresses to a level of activity that should maintain a targeted heart rate for a minimum of 20 minutes. A general cool-down period follows.

Cardiovascular conditioning, muscle toning, and stretching are emphasized through coordinated dance steps and body movements. Aerobic dance classes are fun: people jump, kick and sometimes yell or sing, all to the beat of lively music.

The intensity of this activity should not discourage a person with lower limb amputation. Because aerobic dance is so popular, classes for a wide range of skill levels are available at most clubs and community centres. “Low-impact” classes are the least strenuous with regard to jumps and kicks; so, there is less danger of excess pressure on the residual limb.

For people with balance problems, those with high-level bilateral amputations, or those just learning to function with a prosthesis, it may be best to choose a class in which the participants are seated. Seated classes don’t provide the same degree of aerobic strengthening. Nonetheless, they can effectively provide some cardiovascular conditioning through routines that exercise the upper body, shoulders, arms, and legs to a limited degree.

In order for lower limb amputees to get the full benefit of aerobic exercise classes, the prosthesis must allow for stabil-

ity and range of motion. Certain range-of-motion exercises may not be possible, depending upon the design of the prosthesis. In some cases, the limitations can be minimized by making special adaptations to the device. With a good-fitting prosthesis and conscientious practice, most can often work up to “high-impact” aerobic dancing.

The pace and technique of the dance routine can be modified in a way that still achieves a good aerobic workout. For example, you could jump on the sound limb only, or jump every other time on the prosthesis rather than every time, as the routine may require. The dance routines might be more difficult for those with a bilateral amputation, but low-impact aerobics make for a viable alternative.

Another benefit of dancing is that it’s a great cardiovascular workout that can be done anywhere without going to a gym or purchasing any equipment. You don’t need any workout tools. You don’t need any weights or machines. All that you need is yourself.

What’s more, science says that music and happiness are linked. A 2014 study found positive changes in mood for recreational dancers. Not unlike a “runner’s high,” rhyth-

mic movement has been shown to trigger the release of endorphins, which can boost your mood.

And as much of a mental exercise as a physical one, dancing keeps the mind sharp. A 2011 study found that dancing as we age helps improve cognitive flex-

ibility, known to decline even in high-functioning older adults.

In adolescents, a regular dance class can positively impact mental health too. A study by the American Medical Association found that adolescent girls had more positive thoughts and felt more confidence

after dancing. They reported better feelings about their overall health after participating in structured dance classes that focused on enjoying movement rather than perfection and performance.

It goes without saying that movement is good for everyone. A healthy lifestyle is integrating the mind, body and soul relationship, and dance has all of those characteristics. And unlike many forms of exercise, there are no rules when it comes to dancing. Participants range from toddlers to retirees; anyone can join in and enjoy the experience.

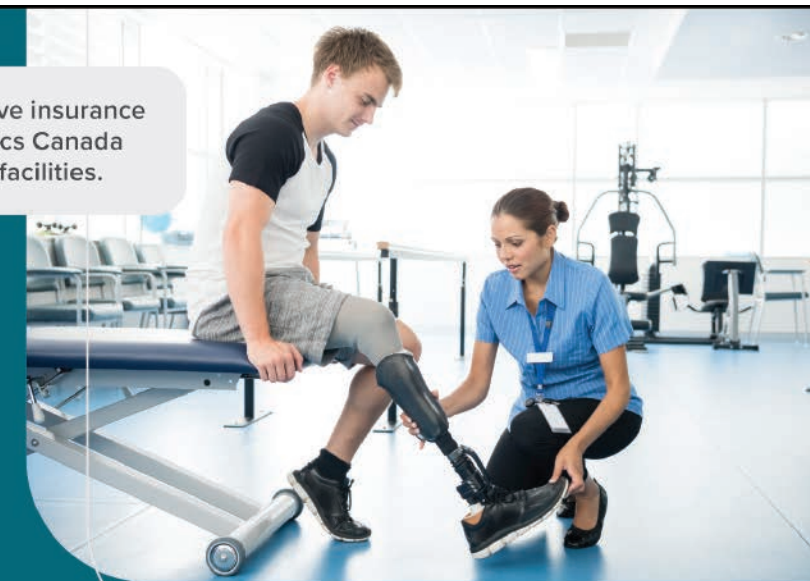
So, whether you like doing the “The Hokey Pokey” at a party or a wedding, or the “running man” challenge in a social media video, everyone has something to gain from dancing. It’s accessible to all with countless benefits beyond better balance and mobility.



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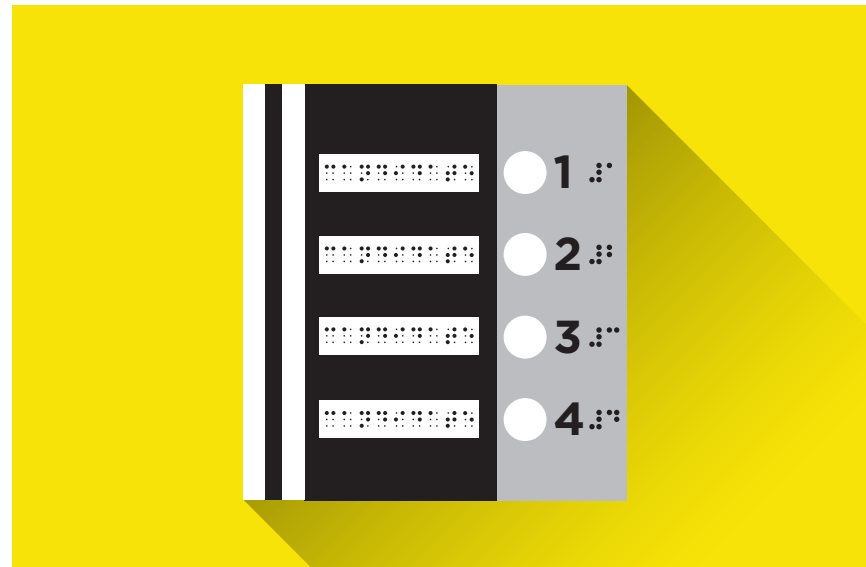
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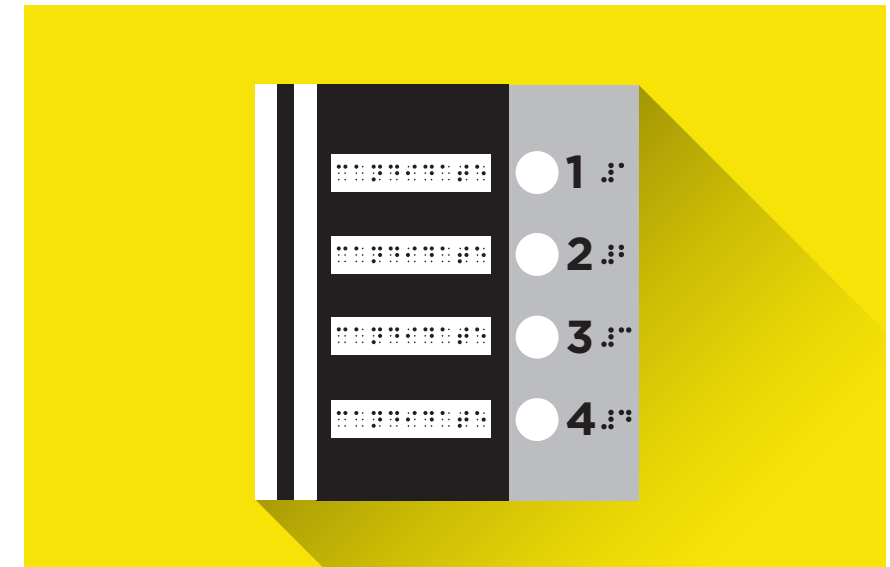


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# SMOOTH SAILING

## Accessible Adventures

By Tanya Rabe

**Travel has always been a part of my life. Growing up, my family spent summers traveling across Canada and the U.S. I was always the one glued to the window, watching where we were going, while my brother was fast asleep. Even then, I loved the journey as much as the destination.**

I became an above-knee amputee at the age of eight after losing my leg to cancer (Ewing sarcoma). On top of that, I live with rheumatoid arthritis, which presents its own set of challenges. But from a young age, I knew that my amputation was not going to define me. I played baseball, basketball and soccer. I also took up downhill skiing, which I don't think I ever would have done if I had two legs!

I grew up as a CHAMP within The War Amps of Canada family, and that experience gave me the confidence in knowing that I can and will do anything to reach my goals. The CHAMP family provided me with lifelong friendships and we continually learn from each other.

From childhood through adulthood, I've never let my amputation stop me from exploring the world. During the COVID pandemic years I decided to turn my passion for travel into something bigger. I founded Right Foot Adventures, a business that allows me to do something I love, and most importantly, make travel easier for people with mobility challenges.

Whether it's finding truly accessible hotels, booking tours that accommodate different abilities, or ensuring that clients aren't left stranded at an airport, I take care of

the details so others can focus on the adventure. My focus is to bring peace of mind to my clients' travels.

Accessible travel isn't as simple as picking up the phone and booking an all-inclusive resort or a tour around Europe. Every destination – even within Canada – has a different interpretation of what “accessible” really means.

Accessible hotel rooms are never “guaranteed” either, which needs to change. Something as basic as requesting a shower chair in a hotel room can turn into an ordeal and it's no fun sitting on the floor of the shower and not being able to get up. I've had situations where I was given a commode chair instead – technically functional, but not exactly what I had in mind! These details matter, and without proper planning, what should be an enjoyable trip can quickly become stressful.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned in my travels is that acces-

sibility starts with planning ahead. Here's a simple but crucial tip for leg amps about proactive planning: If you're flying, always add wheelchair assistance to your ticket – whether you think you'll need it or not. It's much easier to decline the service at the airport than to request it last minute when you're tired and risk not having it available at all. Preparation can make all the difference.

Travel should be about experiences, not obstacles. Through this new Travel Tips department in *thrive magazine*, I'll be sharing tips, accessible destinations, and real stories from a fellow amputee to help make the world more accessible for you – one trip at a time. Until next time, if you have any travel-related questions or suggestions feel free to reach out to me at [Tanya@rightfootadventures.ca](mailto:Tanya@rightfootadventures.ca).

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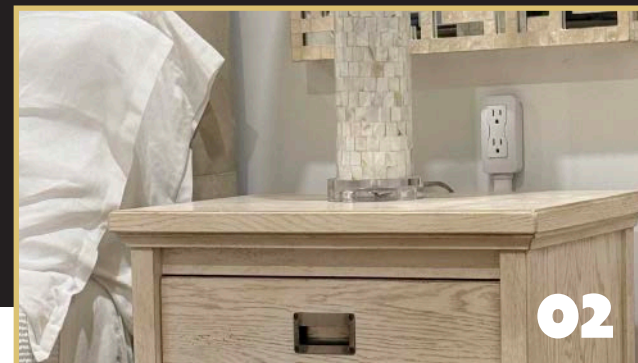


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– Brene Brown



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