

My LAP at Home

by Steve McNeice

I am a double above knee amputee, who also has muscles missing in my right forearm, missing tips and fingers on both of my hands, which gives me very poor hand dexterity and whilst also suffering with severe deafness have managed to achieve a level of mobility not often seen at my level of amputation.

I find that when stretching and or exercise is mentioned to most people their eyes seem to glaze over and whilst they may appear enthusiastic it very soon becomes a bit of a chore, possibly boring and as such any regime is allowed to dwindle and eventually forgotten about.

But it is so important to take ownership and responsibility for yourself, both in terms of health and mobility, whether in a wheelchair or walking with prostheses, which is what I have and will continue to do!

I have to say that even as an able bodied person I have never thought of looking after myself in this way as a chore primarily because stretching, exercise and other activities were only component parts of my '*LAP*' or *Lifelong Able-bodied Philosophy*. This LAP basically allowed me to maximise everything I could or wanted to do and treat everything as an opportunity. When I awoke after my multiple amputations in 2003, which I had no knowledge of; I had to create a new LAP and this became my *Lifelong Amputee Programme*!

As all my amputations are for life so my LAP had to encompass my new and ever changing goals and needs!

This started from my hospital bed in ITU where I started to develop a stretching and exercise programme just so I could physically move; this progressed to making myself strong enough to sit up and transfer to and from a wheelchair, then as my needs and abilities changed so did my LAP allowing me to build myself up enough to propel and use a wheelchair, revising my LAP again I then concentrated on my core stability and after 13 months after my amputations I began to learn to walk!

Whilst in the walking school I adapted my LAP to build up my core stability so I could stand, sit and walk with my new prostheses at the same time developing techniques with my clinicians to get on and off the floor and up and down stairs! Eventually I was allowed home after 17 months, this meant further revision to my LAP to allow me to maintain and build on my core stability at home as I now needed increased mobility and independence.

NB: The secret I found to stretching and exercising at home was and is to incorporate any regime into your normal day, like having dinner! I have set 4PM as my exercise time and most days I can still be found stretching and exercising on my bedroom floor at home!

As I have developed my core stability and mobility, I have incorporated external and alternative methods of stretching and exercise into my LAP for example I now attend regular swimming sessions each week not just because it is a form of exercise but because it is fun, keeping my LAP interesting and these swim sessions are also a form of social inclusion as I swim with other amputees and able bodied swimmers alike at the local pool and afterwards we always solve the problems of the world over a cup of tea and a biscuit!

My LAP is not just about stretching and exercise it also allows me to maintain a good diet as I need to control my weight as I believe the heavier I am, the harder it will be for me to walk! So nutrition and food intake is important to me and my LAP. I also built in an education programme to keep me and my mind busy through the OU and a number of other things that I wanted to do, which I don't need to go into at this point.

What I hope you are beginning to appreciate is that by not thinking of anything in isolation and by looking at your goals, needs and wants in this way you can start develop a lifestyle structure that allows you to meet any goals, needs or wants you may have, without the feeling of 'having' to do something!. Another important point worth noting is that the benefits of my LAP type approach to my life has given me a good and positive outlook and attitude to life, whilst allowing me to do most anything I want to do!

I believe that the use of my LAP in this way is probably the main reason why my mobility and my ability to walk is as good as it is. I have managed to achieve, maintain and improve my mobility by the development, constant adaptation and implementation every single day of my LAP.

I feel It is important that individuals take personal responsibility and ownership of their health and mobility, whether with or without prostheses. So that's what I have done!

I hope you find this of interest and of use.

Good Luck and Take it Easy!

Steve McNeice

PLEASE NOTE - IMPORTANT

I have not included any details of the stretches, exercises and other activities I do as you need to look at yourself individually ensuring that where necessary you seek and utilise professional advice from your physiotherapist, doctor or professional trainer before starting any regime.

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