

Thrive

NEWS FROM LIMBS 4 KIDS

limbs
4 kids

AMPUTEE
AWARENESS
WEEK

POSITIVE BODY
IMAGE AND
RESILLIENCE

DEB'S STORY

HOPE TOYS

TOUCHED
BY OLIVIA

AUSSIE HANDS

PLAY GOLF

SPRING 2016 EDITION



National Amputee Awareness Week 4-10 October

Limbs 4 Life is the peak charity for amputees in Australia and provides services to tens of thousands of amputees and their care givers who rely on our programs and services for assistance pre and post amputation. Without Limbs 4 Life many amputees and people with congenital limb deficiencies would go through the trauma of limb loss alone.

Every day in Australia there are 28 amputation surgeries performed. Research shows that there has been a 30 per cent increase in diabetic related amputations in the past decade and that, on average, approximately 10,000 Australian lose a limb each year.

Regardless of the cause of amputation, many amputees experience poor psycho-social outcomes which negatively impacts their ability to regain independence and lead fulfilling lives. Through information, Peer Support delivered by trained amputee volunteers and guidance, **Limbs 4 Life** works to assist new amputees to regain confidence, return to work and feel socially included.

The Peer Support Program aims to:

- Support client lead goals
- Share current amputee-specific health literacy resources
- Promote long-term positive health based outcomes

National Amputee Awareness Week was created by **Limbs 4 Life** to build community knowledge of limb loss, minimise the stigma that amputees can face, encourage good quality of life outcomes, educate the wider community of the prevalence of amputation in hope they better manage their healthcare.

Limbs 4 Life thanks you for raising awareness of amputees.

Supporting body image and resilience in children with limb differences

**Dr Gemma Tatangelo (PhD),
Australian Catholic University**

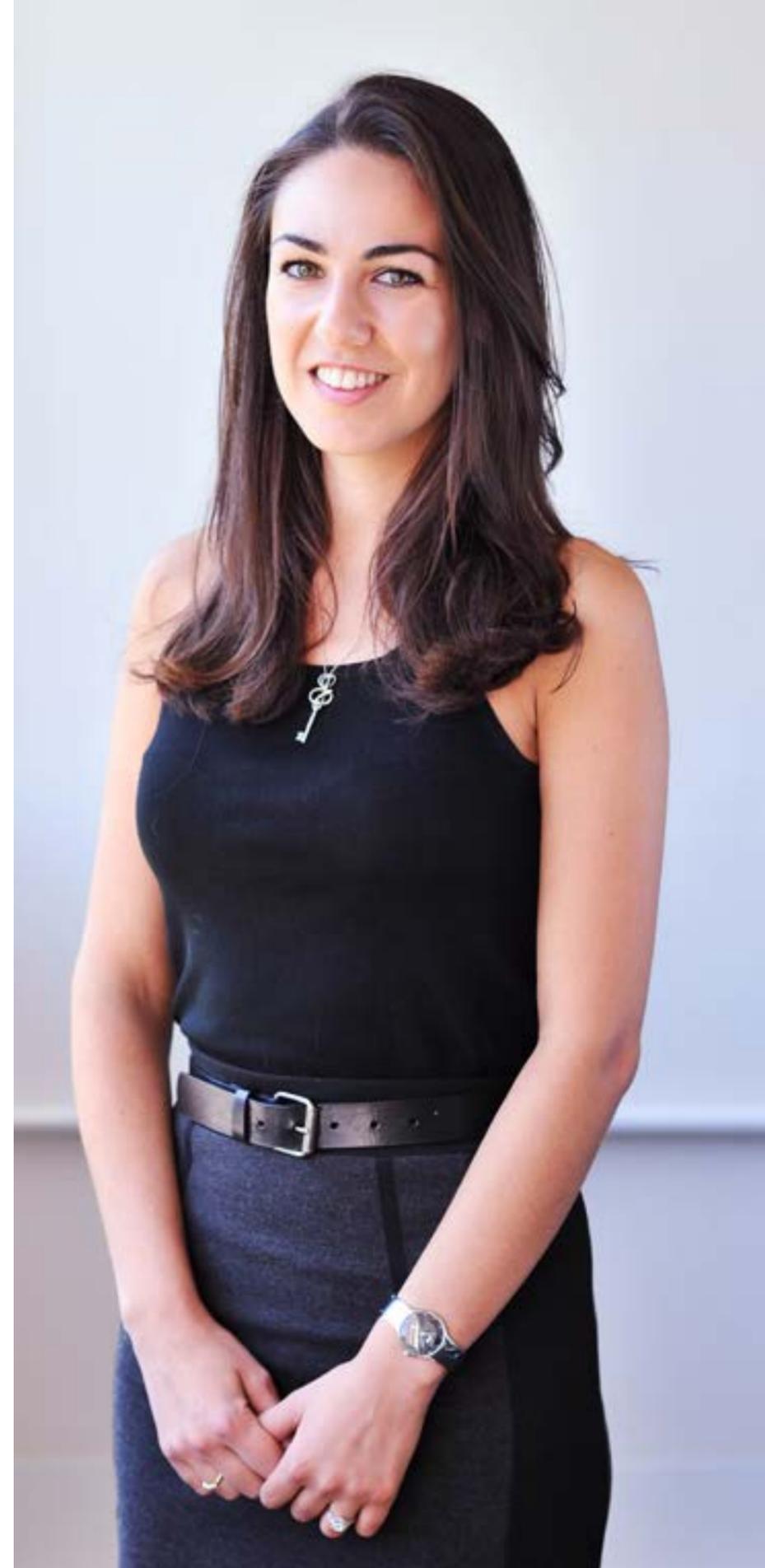
This article, prepared by Dr Gemma Tatangelo, discusses children's body image and ways in which resilience can be built in those who live with limb difference.

What is body image?

Many people assume that body image just refers to the way that a person feels about their appearance. While this is one aspect of body image, another important aspect is how a person feels about the things that they can do with their body. Having a healthy body image means:

- being comfortable with the way you look (most of the time)
- being satisfied with what you can do with your body (most of the time)
- accepting of yourself as you are (most of the time).

It is important to remember that everyone has bad days. Just because you feel frustrated with yourself sometimes, doesn't mean that you have an unhealthy body image! The same is true for children. Children will have bad days where they feel disappointed or unhappy with themselves and their bodies. Unless this is the case most of the time, they probably do not have poor body image.



How does body image develop among children?

Body image begins to develop in children around the age of three. However, it is not until the ages of about 5 to 8 years old that children begin to compare their body to others. Therefore, primary school-aged children become aware of the ways that they are similar and different from others. Research shows that this is also the age at which body image concerns start to develop. For children with limb difference, body-comparisons may relate to their limb difference or other aspects of their appearance. What contributes to the development of body image concerns among children?

There is no simple answer to this question. It is a combination of factors including parents, children's peers and the media.

- **Parents:** Parents can be influential in shaping their child's views about the importance of physical appearance. In addition, research shows that children copy the attitudes that parents have towards their own bodies.
- **Peers:** Teasing from peers can also have an impact on children's feelings towards their body.
- **Media:** Children are inevitably exposed to various types of media such as television shows, movies, advertising, online games etc.

Unfortunately, the media create an impression that only one kind of body shape is 'ideal'.

These days, it is impossible to shield children from all of the factors that may have a negative impact on their body image. Media is pervasive and everywhere. It is also difficult to always protect children from the insensitivity of other children. Furthermore, even the most well-meaning parents will occasionally

be critical of their body in front of their children (Does my bum look big in this?). Therefore, the best way to protect children from these influences is to build-up their self-esteem, resilience and body image, so that they are not as vulnerable to these pressures. Below are some simple strategies for parents to do this.

Strategy 1: Be open to discussion and reinforce the message that "everybody is different and that is ok"

For parents of children with limb differences, it can be difficult to hear their child talk about the things that they feel they can't do. Sometimes, the natural reaction is to change the subject or distract the child. However, it can be stressful for the child if their feelings about their differences aren't validated. So, if your child wants to talk about the ways they are different, use it as an opportunity to discuss the ways that no two bodies are the same and that is okay.

1. Celebrate diversity with your child by discussing ways that everyone has different characteristics and personal qualities (An activity example: with your child, help them to list all characteristics that they have in common with other family members, and then ways that they are unique from other family members, and finally how other family members are unique from each other).

2. It is also important to demonstrate to your child that everyone has something special to offer regardless of their size, shape, appearance and abilities.

Strategy 2: Show your child that people are valuable for who they are, not what they look like or what they can do.

Encouraging children to focus on their strengths in areas other than their

appearance and physical abilities will ensure their self-esteem is not as vulnerable to appearance-related pressure. There are some simple ways that you can encourage your child to value and accept themselves for who they are:

1. Remember that you are a role model. Try to speak respectfully about your own body and appearance and other people's appearances. Children copy the attitudes that parents have towards their own bodies. (Also remember that most of us are very self-critical, so don't worry too much if you slip up now and again!)

2. Praise their personality traits, behaviours and skill development (for example, in addition to saying things like, "you're so strong" or "you look pretty", it is important to also praise their personal qualities, "you are so kind", "you're a fantastic reader").

Strategy 3: Build their self-efficacy

Self-efficacy relates to a person's belief in their ability to succeed in their activities and goals. A person's self-efficacy determines how they approach tasks, challenges and goals in their life. It is important to foster children's confidence in their own abilities, particularly among children with limb difference. There are a few ways that parents can encourage their child's self-efficacy.

1. Help your child find the things they are good at. Every child should feel like they are good at something. Allow your child to try different activities (they can be simple things like drawing, painting, singing, storytelling etc.) until they find some things that they enjoy doing and feel that they are good at.

2. Give them achievable responsibilities. Children need to feel useful and important. You can

encourage this by giving them age-appropriate responsibilities (for example, allowing the child to be responsible for collecting the mail or feeding the dog).

3. Allow the child to make (some) decisions for themselves (where possible). Allowing your child to make some decisions teaches them that their opinion is worthwhile and important, and that they are capable. For very young children, this can be as simple as asking them what they would like to wear or whether they would like apple or orange juice. For older children, this might involve asking them what type of activity they would like to try.

Strategy 4: Prepare your child for their peers

Children are naturally curious and unfortunately they are often very insensitive in the ways they ask each other about their differences. Therefore, it is important to prepare your child for questions about their limb difference. This will enable your child to be able to respond to their peers with confidence and in a way that is comfortable for them.

"I can not run like the other children in my class"

Unhelpful Thoughts

- I am too slow
- The other children won't include me in games

I Feel:

Sad, angry, upset

Helpful Thoughts

- I am good at lots of other things
- My good friends don't care that I can't run.

I Feel:

Happy, good, relieved

1. Help your child to find a way to explain their limb difference that is age-appropriate and comfortable for them.

2. Practice this with your child so that they know what to say if someone asks. This will give your child the ability and the opportunity to teach others about limb difference and this will be empowering for them. This will also encourage a feeling of openness and acceptance of diversity for your child.

3. Also try to be mindful that children will listen and take-on-board the ways in which their parents talk about their limb difference.

Strategy 5: Encourage your children to use 'helpful' thinking strategies

All children will have days when they feel bad about something that has happened, something that someone has said, or something they feel they can't do. While this is unavoidable, there is something you can do to make it easier for the child and improve their outlook. The below technique can help the child to restructure how they think about their

strengths and weaknesses. (Note: This activity is suited to children aged 6 and over. It is best to do this activity with your child in advance so that they already know how to use the strategy when a difficult situation arises).

You can use the scenario below with your child as an initial example of the concept. After that, you can think of other hypothetical scenarios as practice. Initially, you will need to help your child through the process, but after practicing a few times with hypothetical scenarios; the child will then be able to apply the concept to their own situations.

Scenario: "Kate feels like she can't run like the other children in her class".

Step 1: "What are some unhelpful thoughts that Kate might have?" (Help the child to identify unhelpful thoughts).

Step 2: "How would this make Kate feel?" (Help child to identify negative emotions).

Step 3: "What are some more helpful thoughts that Kate could think?" (Help the child to identify helpful thoughts).

Step 4: "How would this make Kate feel?" (Help child to identify positive emotions)".

Step 5: "Do you see how helpful thoughts can make us feel better?"

Limbs 4 Life would like to thank Dr Tatangelo for sharing her knowledge about children's body image and strategies for building resilience in children with limb difference. A video featuring Dr Tatangelo's presentation at Limbs 4 Life's LIMB-itless conference will soon be available on Limbs 4 Life's YouTube Channel... so watch this space.

Kayla's letter to children



Dear Friend,

I hear you are starting school next year and I am just like you. I too have a limb difference, but don't be worried because you are not the only one who has to go through this. Having a limb difference does not make you different to any other person it just means that you were born with a difference, but everyone has their own difference.

Just remember that children will ask about your limb difference, but don't be scared or sad or unsure if they do. All you have to do is give them a simple answer which is not that hard. When I was in prep I used to say, "When I was little I was born a little bit different, but now the doctors fixed me up and now I can do anything", and then I would ask them if they wanted to play.

Don't let your limb difference stop you from doing anything. Never say, "I am incapable of doing that because of my limb difference", always have a go. Remember, who you are is not what you look like but it is the inside that matters.

There is nothing to worry about, school is great and you will have a fantastic time.

From your friend,
Kayla

Planning for education in 2017

limbs 4 kids
Support for children and young people with limb differences and their families

FACT SHEET II
Assisting Students to Understand Limb Difference

It is important to remember that your child's limb difference may be difficult to understand or accepting for some student peers. This is particularly true for children of a young age and can be more challenging if your child is returning to kindergarten, pre-school or school after an amputation.

To ensure that the school is working with you support at the students to learn about your child's limb difference in a positive way. Addressing this matter early will allow positive acceptance of your child's physical difference by their peers and within the school community. Some schools will have a dedicated limb difference policy, which can be a learning experience for you all.

The Fact Sheet provides some tips for ensuring that your child's peers understand your child's limb difference and positively support her or her at school by in- and out-of-school projects.

Discuss disclosure with your child and teachers

It is important that your child's teachers understand her or her limb difference and positive inclusion and diversity in the classroom. You may want to discuss the type of limb difference terminology that the teacher uses often in the classroom and ensure that he or she uses language you are comfortable with. For example, your child's teacher may use the word "amputee" when you would prefer that they use the term "limb difference".

Some children do not want the school to specifically discuss their limb difference, and instead talk about it to their independent adults. That is fine and a approach to some children and young people who may feel that their limb difference is discussed and discussed with student and teachers. The school is a young person's first point of contact if they may want to talk to them.

Conduct a session about difference

You may want to ask the school whether they would like to discuss your child's limb difference with the school staff. Before talking to students, you should be well informed - and everyone difficult to might not - before starting the discussion. Whether it is the teacher, you or your child the session could discuss some points to a discussion your child's limb difference is right or wrong. The session may have a question among younger peers can be "discussing your child's limb difference and how they are coping with it". This may also want to bring along specific questions your child's peers can support. This may also want to bring along specific questions your child's peers can support. This may also want to bring along specific questions your child's peers can support.

limbs 4 kids
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FACT SHEET III
Kindergarten and Pre-School Years

Starting kindergarten and pre-school is an important social and learning milestone in the life of your child. Your child's commencement in kindergarten and pre-school can lead to a mix of emotions for you and your child, emotions that can range from uncertainty to excitement. This period can also be a time when you have many questions and concerns regarding how your child will adapt to this new environment and whether any additional support or adaptations will need to be made to positively accommodate your child's limb difference.

Transitioning your child into kindergarten and pre-school may also be a period of significant change for parents as, for some, this is the first time that their child has entered into coordinated care outside of the home environment. It is also a period of change for your child who will enter a world that is focused on story time, art and imaginative, taking and listening, playtime, exploration, socialisation and making new friends.

The Fact Sheet contains information to assist you when your child is entering the kindergarten and pre-school years, including selecting a kindergarten or pre-school, enrolling your child, preparing your child for kindergarten and pre-school, and enrolling your child.

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Selecting a kindergarten or pre-school

In Australia kindergarten is not compulsory, whereas pre-school is compulsory preparation before your child commences primary school in some states and territories. Parents can select from government, Catholic and independent providers, the choice of whom will determine funding arrangements and costs.

Before enrolling your child in kindergarten or pre-school, access to grounds and facilities, activities and any assistance or accessibility needs your child might require there. In addition, ensure that information about the school's procedures, policies and services is accessible to you.

Enrolling your child in kindergarten or pre-school

When selecting and enrolling your child in kindergarten or pre-school arrange to meet with relevant staff to discuss your child's limb difference and any specific needs or support requirements your child may have.

Ensure that the kindergarten or pre-school is aware of your child's abilities and interests, is inclusive and respectful with regards to your child's needs, is able to provide your child with the appropriate level of support, and that the facilities are accessible (if required). Working with staff early will provide them with time to organise the best plan of action for your child, investigate funding opportunities and make any relevant modifications your child might need.

With the 2017 school-year just around the corner, you may want to review content on the **Limbs 4 Kids** website and/or download related Fact Sheets. These pages provide general information about early childhood learning, primary schooling and secondary schooling; as well as information specifically related to the education needs of children with limb differences. Some specific resources look at enrolment, preparing for school meetings, returning to school after a limb amputation and tips for assisting fellow students to understand limb difference.

For more information visit the 'Education and Employment' pages in the 'Learning Centre' area of the **Limbs 4 Kids** website. You may also want to download specific Fact Sheets (in the publications section of the Limbs4Kids website) that can then be shared with others, or get in touch with **Limbs 4 Life** to request for hard copies to be mailed to you.

Deb's story - why I didn't make my son's limb difference a big deal



Deb's first experience of limb difference came when her son was born 40 years ago. Deb's son was born with part of his left arm missing below the elbow due to Amniotic Band Syndrome.

Deb's story is not dissimilar to many Thrive readers and she has kindly shared her experiences of being a mother, during a time when access to limb difference information and support was not readily available. Deb's approach to her son's limb difference was one of treating it as a "non-issue, but backed up with support" which has led to the development of a man who is "resilient, confident and successful".

Deb is the mother of three grown children, and the proud grandmother of two children with a third expected later this year. Deb also loves knitting, and relishes in the opportunity to craft beautiful personalised blankets for her grandchildren.

Deb has worked with parents, children and healthcare providers throughout her professional careers. Initially Deb trained and worked for many years as a primary school teacher, but had a career change into the field of psychology 20 years ago. "After many years of teaching I decided to go back to University and study for an undergraduate degree and then a Masters in Psychology, something that I did over nine years and while the kids were teenagers," explained Deb. This led to working in the field, and Deb is now a Clinical Practice Counsellor who trains others.

Deb lives just outside of Brisbane on a large property where all of her children, except her son who now lives and works overseas as a software programmer, have houses. "It's wonderful to live so close to my family, be part of their lives and spend time with my grandchildren," enthused Deb.

Deb's son was born in the 1970s, a time when ultrasounds were not conducted during pregnancies. This meant that Deb only became aware of her son's limb difference immediately after his birth.

"He was my first child, but somehow I knew at six weeks that something wasn't quite right," explained Deb. While Deb wanted to have a home birth, because of this 'feeling', she opted to give birth in hospital. When Deb's son was born and he was handed to her she instantly noticed that part of his left arm and hand were missing, and realised that this must have been why she felt that this pregnancy was "different" to what she expected of pregnancy. Deb immediately said to the doctor "he doesn't have a hand" to which he replied "but he has the face of an angel". Deb feels that there couldn't have been a more gentle and supportive approach than what her doctor provided at that time.

Because Deb had felt that something was "not quite right" during her pregnancy, the fact that her son was born with a limb difference gave her a sense of relief that he hadn't been born with a more serious condition. Deb thought "well if he only has a missing hand, then that is something we can deal with". Deb was so calm over the coming days that the medical staff felt that she was not coping and therefore should be seen by a psychiatrist, but as Deb didn't feel that necessary she opted not to receive psychiatric support and headed home with her beautiful new baby son.

Deb doesn't deny that she felt some grief, sadness and worries afterwards. "Will he be able to ride a bike, will he be able to swim and how will he tie shoelaces were some of the concerns I had in the early months," recalled Deb. However, with positive support from family and friends, many of whom were also pregnant or who had recently had their first

babies at the time, enabled Deb to "just get on with it".

"The most important thing for me was to ensure that my son had a really positive home environment, filled with people who would support him and take cues from us to treat his limb difference as a 'non-issue'," explained Deb.

Indeed, it was such a non-issue with Deb that when her daughter was born she felt that the fact her baby daughter had both hands was strange as she was so used to "rolling up my son's clothes to accommodate his missing hand".

Deb doesn't remember ever sitting down with her son and specifically discussing his limb difference with him. "It just wasn't a discussion point, and something that we all just accepted as normal," stated Deb. So much so, her daughter returned home from secondary school after hearing a presentation from a person who used a wheelchair and her daughter was angry with Deb for "doing her a dis-service by not introducing her to amazing people with disabilities". Deb had to remind her that "technically your brother has a disability" to which her daughter said "really, well he doesn't count then".

Deb also found that when someone would ask "what happened to your son's hand" her immediate response was to check as she thought it meant he had just hurt or injured himself. It often took a moment for Deb to realise they were enquiring as to why he only had one hand.

When asked by adults why her son's hand was missing, Deb would usually provide an explanation in medical terms as this was a means of expanding knowledge about limb difference in an appropriate manner. Explanations from her son were completely different and generally humorous; ranging from "a crocodile bit it off" to "I lost a sword fight".

Although he was also well versed in how his hand stopped growing in utero and could reference that where appropriate.

Deb felt that her son was more conscious of his limb difference when he was young, but by the time he was a teenager it was never an issue for him. Deb recalled only a few occasions where someone made inappropriate comments regarding her son's limb difference, and generally any enquiries were inquisitive ones. Deb was keen to build confidence and resilience in her son so she had a policy of giving him three minutes to deal with the issue or respond to the question on his own before she would step in and assist him. "I very much believe that if parents always jump in and fight their child's battles or answer on their behalf it can lead to a child feeling that they can't cope or that their parents don't have confidence in them," explained Deb.

Deb's son was an incredibly active child participating in all manner of activities with his friends and family. He could swim a lap of the pool by the time he was four and received his scuba diving accreditation by the age of 12. He also enjoyed BMX riding and tricks, skateboarding, archery and general fun with his friends during his childhood. However some rules had to be set because her son's limb could be used as a potentially dangerous asset.

"I had a strict rule that he was not allowed to use his left arm if wrestling with friends or family, as the bony end of his limb could be quite a dangerous weapon and potentially hurt his siblings or friends," recounted Deb. In addition, on becoming aware of it, Deb had to put a stop to a prank that her son and his friends used to play on others. "My son and his friends used to hide in the bushes with a bottle of tomato sauce and wait for someone to walk past, upon which they would jump out of the

bushes with sauce dripping over his left arm screaming that he had just had an accident and his hand had been ripped off. As soon as I realised they were doing that I put a stop to it as I was really worried that they would frighten someone or, even worse, cause a heart attack", recalled Deb.

Despite the fact that his limb difference posed no challenges, Deb's son would also try and use it to his advantage, "with a wry smile", to get out of doing his chores around the house. Sometimes when Deb would ask him to vacuum or clean he would say "but Mum, I can't possibly do that as I only have one hand", to which she would laugh and say "nice try, but just get on with it".

Deb's son was fitted with a prosthesis, which he called 'Nippers', but he only wore it occasionally. "Nippers generally lived in my son's toy box and he rarely wore it, finding it more inhibiting than useful, and he has never worn a prosthesis as a grown man," explained Deb. "To this day it absolutely astounds me that he can fill a hot water bottle using only one hand, without injuring himself or losing a drop," extolled Deb.

When growing up there was little in the way of occupational therapy offered to Deb's son. "In most cases when my son needed to participate in a new task we just supported him to find a way to tackle and accomplish it - he always found a way and it helped him to build resilience and have positive self-esteem," recalled Deb.

Deb said that there was no need for special help or treatment whilst her son was at school, and he was just treated like any other student with the freedom to learn manual things his own way. Indeed, the only time Deb had to step in during the school years was when the teacher expected him to learn two-handed typing, something which Deb feels "highlights how much of a non-issue his limb difference was at school, and just the way we wanted it".

While there was very little support offered to Deb after the birth of her son, she is pleased to see that more services are made available to families of children with limb differences today. "Limbs 4 Kids resources and the facebook group are a great way for families to connect, access information, and not feel alone," said Deb.

Deb's lived experience as the parent of a child with a limb difference, coupled with her psychology training and experiences, have led her to hold a few personal philosophies and beliefs.

Firstly, don't make a big deal out of a child's limb difference. In doing so it will then become a big deal and people will see the limb difference before they see the child.

Secondly, don't consider limb difference to be a tragedy. It's not one and the joy is in having a beautiful child in your world.

Thirdly, don't excessively fuss over or provide special privileges. Doing so will reinforce that the child is different and needs special attention because of it.

Limbs 4 Life is grateful to Deb for sharing her story and hopes that her experiences and thoughts might help other families and children on the limb difference journey.



Participate in our Limbs 4 Kids Program Evaluation

Hello everyone

My name is Dr Narelle Warren and I am a researcher from Monash University conducting an evaluation of the Limbs4Kids program on behalf of Limbs4Life. We would like to invite you to participate in this project, and would love your thoughts and comments.

If you are interested in taking part in the evaluation survey, please visit https://monashmhs.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6PcSigRuNluxUJn

Kind regards,
Narelle
(Narelle.Warren@monash.edu)

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To register visit - golfmonth.com.au to find a program in your capital city.

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info@limbs4life.org.au





Maria's
'Hope
Toys'

I'm a stay-at-home Melbourne mum of four young children under 8 and my two youngest boys have Autism. I am also the creator of Hope Toys.

Early last year, I was inspired by a lady in Tasmania, who recycles, repairs and up-cycles second hand dolls, swapping the glitzy high-maintenance look for a down-to-earth style.

I immediately fell in love with this idea, but instead I wanted to make dolls representing children with disabilities, illnesses, limb differences and any other visible or non-visible conditions, because it's something I'm very passionate about. I never thought doing something like this would ever be possible, until I discovered this form of up-cycling. I also make wheelchairs, walkers and other medical accessories to go with the dolls.

I LOVE seeing the children's faces when they receive their dolls for the first time. It's like I'm watching my own children. Knowing these dolls have made a positive difference in their self-esteem, is priceless. It just keeps me focused and motivated to keep doing what I'm doing.

The biggest challenge is finding the time to make these dolls while balancing family life. I am on the go all the time and usually only find time to work on these dolls in the evening when my kids have gone to bed. It can often be overwhelming at times but, every now and then, someone tells me how much these dolls have touched their hearts, and that helps keep me going.

Hope Toys makes absolutely no profit on any of the dolls because it's more of an awareness mission for me rather than a business. I charge less than what they cost to make, because I want them to be as affordable as possible for ALL



children. The money goes straight back into materials. Half of the dolls I make are for seriously ill children and I make those for free. The only catch is the long wait time as I am a one woman/mum show. I don't know how long I can sustain this, but God willing, I will keep doing it for as long as I can.

Hope Toys is also about using these dolls to help raise awareness of various disabilities, rare illnesses, cancer, limb differences and other conditions, to hopefully help remove the stigma of the many often misunderstood conditions people live with.

Once I finish a doll, I share photos of them on social media and often a photo of the child with their doll and include information in the post about the specific disability or condition. I also often put links to fundraising, awareness, support and charity sites connected to the particular condition. It has been such an eye opening experience for me because I have

learnt so much in the past year. As a special needs mum, I know how frustrating it can be when my son's Autism can often be misunderstood and mistaken for bad behaviour. I think public awareness and understanding is very important.

I also hope these dolls can give toy manufacturers a 'bit of a nudge' to shift their thinking and expand on the range of dolls they produce and to see just how important it is for a child to see themselves through dolls and toys.

One mum told me that her daughter (who has Cerebral Palsy) received the doll when she was on her way to the hospital to do a routine medical examination. Her daughter was feeling very anxious about the medical appointment but once she had her doll she was filled with excitement and even pretended to do what the doctors were doing to her on the doll. Her mother was just so relieved and thankful that this doll bought so much

joy to her daughter at a time that she otherwise would have dreaded.

This is what I'd love the big manufacturers to see. Even if they think all inclusive dolls like these attract a smaller market, the most important thing to know is that these dolls make a positive difference in children's lives.

At the moment, I have temporarily put requests on hold until I can complete the backlog of requests, however anyone is free to contact me to put their request on a waiting list.

For more information about Hope Toys visit www.hopetoys.org or email Hopetoys@hotmail.com

Hope Toys can also be found on Facebook www.facebook.com/HopeToysAustralia/



The importance of inclusive play



It seems an ordinary thing for a kid to play—it's how we have fun, meet new friends, and start learning what it is to be part of society. So what happens when they can't?

Our charity Touched by Olivia was established by John and Justine Perkins in 2006, just six weeks after they had lost their baby daughter Olivia. At only eight months old, Olivia Perkins had been tragically taken by a rare disease. In the depth of her sickness, her two parents realised a heart-breaking truth: not all children are lucky enough to be granted a basic human right—the right to play. This realisation led them to found their charity. Despite their circumstances, John and Justine had a new goal. They would create a lasting legacy for their young daughter, and make the world where all children can belong despite difference, where all children can play.

Touched by Olivia has only grown since. Our not-for-profit organisation works mainly to build inclusive play spaces, or Livvi's Places. In under 10 years, nearly 20 Livvi's Places have been established across Australia. These aren't just your ordinary playgrounds: these are places where children can play side-by-side regardless of ability. They revolve around inclusion, encouragement, and belonging.

It seems a simple thing to build a playground accessible to all, but the truth is that many playgrounds around Australia just don't meet the needs of the community. For Touched by Olivia, it's more than a matter of installing a liberty swing and a couple of ramps to the slippery slide. Building an inclusive space means designing and creating accessible and integrational play equipment—play equipment that fits the all of the community, and not just one part.

Our team puts a lot of thought into how we build. Whether it be incorporating accessible pathways and accessible parking and bus drop-off zones, or creating and integrating sensory and tactile play and artworks, graduated challenges, points of recognition and visual clues. No detail is left out!

These play spaces are so important. Nearly 1 in 5 Australians are disabled in some way—a staggering statistic. Unexpected too, as so much of our world is tailored to one part of society. This needs to change. Those with different needs to the majority of the population shouldn't be pushed to the side, especially when this is our children that we're talking about. All kids need to play, and right now not all can. It's through the work of charities such as Touched by Olivia that a real difference is being made in

our world. We've still got a long way to go, but we're well on our way to fulfilling two inspiring parents' dream of a happier, healthier world.

"I love inclusive spaces because it gives all kids the opportunity to play equally. Their abilities are catered for and they are able to play freely without barriers. It becomes less about what they may not be able to do in other playspaces and becomes more about just being a kid and enjoying a fundamental aspect of life." (Leila, Limbs 4 Kids member who is working with Touched by Olivia to create a 'Livvi's Place' in Wagga Wagga)

Limbs 4 Life would like to thank the Touched by Olivia team, and in particular Sarah Coren, for preparing this article. We would also like to congratulate Touched by Olivia on the incredible work the organisation is doing in increasing the number of inclusive play spaces across Australia so that children of all abilities can play.

For more information about **Touched by Olivia** visit www.touchedbyolivia.com.au

Aussie Hands



Aussie Hands provides support, understanding and encouragement to children and adults with congenital and acquired hand disabilities and their families. Aussie Hands provides opportunities for networking and exchange of information. By providing a supportive network, we aim to ensure that children and adults with hand disabilities don't feel alone.

Aussie Hands was started by Elizabeth Serpell in 2000 following the birth of her son David with symbrachydactyly. Aussie Hands organises social gatherings in most states of Australia. This enables children with hand differences to meet other and for their parents to share stories, ask questions and support each other.

Aussie Hands facilitates a Facebook Support Group for people to share information, ask questions and reduce the sense of isolation which can often be experienced by families who have a child with a hand difference. The Facebook Group is particularly beneficial for families who live in rural area of Australia and so unable to attend the events.

The team at **Aussie Hands** can provide guidance and support around difficult issues including decision

making around whether to go ahead with surgical procedures. This can include introductions to families who have and haven't had surgery. Other programs we have held include play therapy for children under the age of 5 years and their parents, and a mentoring program for older children and adults with hand differences.

The Aussie Hands website (www.aussiehands.org) provides a range of information about hand differences, including member's stories, links to further support services such as counselling and useful gadgets and aids. The website has details on how to become a member (a one-off cost of \$30 per individual or family).

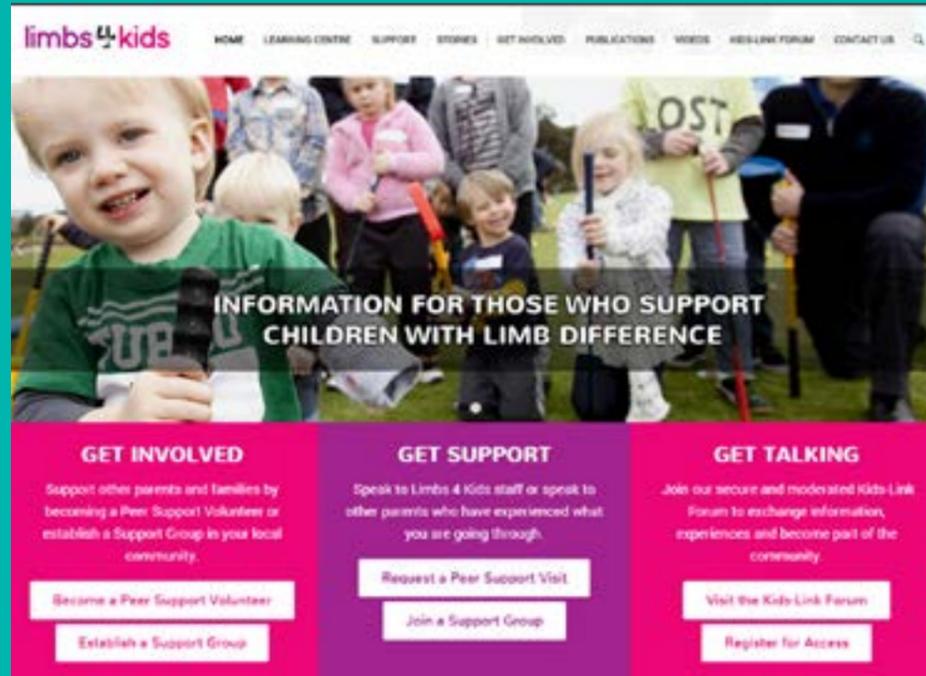
Aussie Hands has close association with several key organisations. Aussie Hands is privileged to have a collaborative working relationship Limbs 4 Life. This close connection has allowed us to better support the needs of our members. In conjunction with The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Aussie Hands is currently conducting a research project to more accurately map how many people are born with hand differences, with the aim of advocating for collecting data about hand differences at birth.



Limbs 4 Kids Website

The Limbs 4 Kids website offers a wide range of information, personal stories, news items, videos and publications that may be of interest to families, healthcare professionals and community members. The 'Learning Centre' section is a library housing information about limb difference, your child, family and friends, education and employment, funding, health and wellbeing, and advocacy and inclusion.

www.limbs4kids.org.au



Limbs 4 Kids Facebook Group



Did you know that Limbs 4 Kids has its own closed and moderated Facebook Group? This group is made up of parents and family members of children with limb difference, young people, adults who grew up with a childhood limb difference and healthcare professionals. It is a safe space to connect with others, share ideas, view articles and stay in touch.

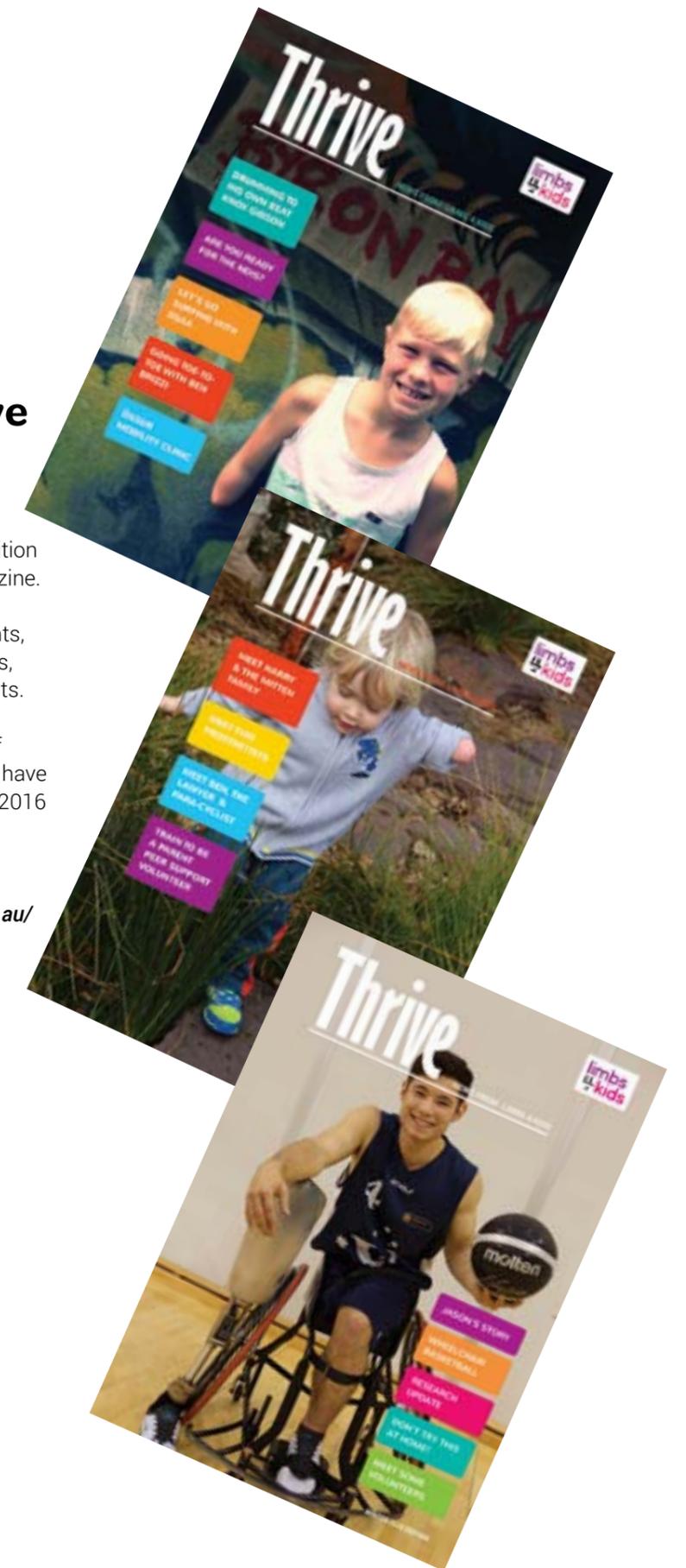
Limbs 4 Kids Facebook Group - www.facebook.com/groups/349205931872070

Have you read previous editions of Thrive magazine?

Thrive (Winter 2016) is the sixth edition of our Limbs 4 Kids program magazine. Previous editions feature stories about children, young people, parents, volunteers, healthcare professionals, community organisations and events.

You might want to read the array of stories, interviews and articles that have been profiled in previous 2015 and 2016 editions.

To access and download previous editions visit - <http://limbs4kids.org.au/thrive-magazine/>





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