

Translation of the Introduction to the German book: 'Weiter geht's, Schritt für Schritt': "Finding the next Step"

Anything is possible - even for amputees: There are people who live a "normal, inconspicuous live a "normal", inconspicuous life after an amputation. Others can't cope, are barely mobile and suffer. Still others turn to sports and even claim to be able to perform better with the prosthesis than before the amputation. And there is every stage in between, just as with non-amputees. What unites them all: a major adjustment in their lives that requires time, patience and perseverance.

Always, amputation is a traumatic experience that must be processed. When someone loses a leg or an arm, it has very different consequences that fundamentally change their life. Unfortunately, there is often not enough time, because decisions about prosthetic fitting have to be made, even if the patient is not yet ready for it. Fortunately, thanks to the Internet, there are more and more possibilities to get information and be better prepared for the situation. Unfortunately, in the case of an accident, this opportunity to obtain information before the amputation does not exist.

Is an arm or leg amputation "bad"? Quite clearly, most of those affected will answer "yes" to this question. For them, it's a catastrophe. But there are others who say that the amputation has awakened something in them that has been slumbering unnoticed for a long time and what they had not yet ventured out to experience: a fighting spirit, a desire to explore, a gratitude because they no longer take everything for granted. And then there are many gradations between these two extremes.

Some new amputees are not aware that it means real work to come to terms with the prosthesis and to get used to it. It takes time to figure out what works and what doesn't. It takes even more time to figure out that it takes good communication with the person building the prosthesis. Communication flows easier and more clearly with some people than with others. Most of the time, new amputees are simply sent to the nearest medical supply store, or in a large city, to the prosthesisist who is next in line with the new fitting. Most people don't even realize that we are talking about a fitting at the price level of a decent mid-range car. Health insurances pay only for one leg during a certain time frame. Meaning it is not possible to just go get another one. Therefore it is important to find out in advance which workshop they can feel most comfortable with.

What influences how a person can deal with an amputation? Quite obviously, information helps. In addition to knowing what is possible in today's technology, the human side plays a major role in how the individual copes with the trauma and where support can be found. The stories collected here tell the very different paths and feelings of individual affected persons.

All contributions represent the opinions and experiences of the authors, and not necessarily those of the editor. In consideration of the personal style of writing, both genders have not been represented in the texts. The editor's intention is to offer as diverse a bouquet of experiences as possible.

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