

LIVING SITTING DOWN, STANDING UP WITH PURPOSE

BY JEFF ROULSTON



Name: Jeffrey C. Roulston

Primary Diagnosis: Paraplegia T-7

Date of Onset: December 9, 1970

Residence: San Mateo, Florida

Education: Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling

Occupation: Owns business with his wife called Roulston & Roulston Rehabilitation. Also writing a book about spinal cord injury and how to live successfully.

Height: 5'11"

Stander: EasyStand 5000 with mobile option

Standing Since: August 2005

Since my motorcycle accident which happened in December 1970, my life has been the same, but different. As a freshman in college (and an active athlete) I knew that a lot of things would change. I grew up very spiritually and clearly remember saying "OK God, is this my new path? What is your plan for me now?" I also knew that there is always a plan, and it all works the way it should. We are born with destinies and we can then fulfill them or screw them up, our choice. About a year after the accident I enrolled back into college. After getting my AA, I went to the University of South Florida where I got my Master's in Rehab Counseling and then began working. As the Director of two separate transitional living facilities in Florida and the Statewide Director of Independent Living in the state of Georgia, I had the opportunity to have 4 different types of standing devices available for the clients that we served. I used them myself and taught others how to use them as well, but did not own one at that time. The standing devices allowed me to achieve a standing position without tearing my hamstring muscles.



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“I have strengthened my back and neck muscles which has improved my golf game.”

“PRESSURED” TO STAND

I developed a bladder infection and then a significant pressure sore due to the hurricanes of September 2004 and not having power or water for over 7 days. It then developed into osteomyelitis and I was on IV antibiotics for 3 months as well as utilizing a “wound vac” to expedite healing of the infection and sore. I actually had bone fragments come from my tail bone out of the open sore. Once the osteomyelitis was eradicated, I still had to deal with the pressure sore. Due to the severity of my health status, I was assigned a case manager from Unicare. I also did some research and looked at various websites with many types of standers. I saw the EasyStand and decided it was the “easiest”. Then, I talked to my physiatrist and case manager, and they both agreed that the ability to stand would facilitate the final closure of the pressure sore. The staff (LaDonna, Janet and Beth) at Dr. Robert Silvera’s office was fantastic in writing the letter of medical necessity and advocating for me. We finally did get it approved, but not without a lot of effort.

EXTRA EFFORT FOR FUNDING

Connie, the case manager, was relentless in her support of my need for this piece of equipment. My physiatrist and his staff wrote the letter of medical necessity and submitted it to our insurance company and my case manager. Connie submitted it through normal channels to the panel of physicians. The request was denied. At that point, Connie took it on her own to appeal. She revised the letter and submitted it to the panel. They then gave her the opportunity to present my case to them personally. After her presentation to the panel, my insurance (from the State of Georgia, flexible benefits, Beechstreet PPO) approved the purchase and coverage of the entire cost of the EasyStand. So it did take a little time and individual perseverance by my case manager.

EASING INTO STANDING

We ordered the EasyStand from a DME supplier in Jacksonville, FL who set it up and delivered it to Heartland Rehabilitation in Palatka, FL. There my physical therapist, Miles, stretched my legs for 2 months prior to delivery to prepare me to stand up. Once it was delivered, I stood up with absolutely no problems for 10 minutes the first time I used it. The ease of transferring into the EasyStand was amazing as well as the ability to pump it up as slowly as needed for the muscles, blood pressure, and heart rate to adjust to my new position. I then continued the physical therapy for another 2 months where Miles taught me how to use it more effectively not just to stand up, but to play catch, stretch and strengthen not only my leg muscles but also those in my arms, back and neck. After that period I brought the EasyStand home and have been using it 2-4 times a week. It truly is a great piece of equipment which I would recommend to anyone without the ability to stand independently. I think the coolest thing about the EasyStand is the ease with which you can use it. The tray it comes with allows me to do my writing while still having a coke or water sitting there in easy reach. It is also cool to have the Mobile option and roll around the house and see everything from such a different angle.

IMPROVED HEALTH, BETTER GOLF GAME

Besides the obvious improvement with my leg muscles being more stretched out there are a number of other health benefits to mention. One, I have strengthened my back and neck muscles which has improved my golf game. My blood pressure has improved, as well as my general stamina for more rigorous activities. My pressure sore has not even come close to re-opening which is related to removing the pressure from my butt by utilizing the EasyStand and doing more pressure releases while in my chair. The EasyStand has generally also made me more health conscious.

CHALLENGE: BEGIN A SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL STANDING PROGRAM THIRTY-FIVE YEARS POST-INJURY.

SOLUTION: WORK WITH PHYSICIAN AND PHYSICAL THERAPIST TO MAKE SURE IT IS SAFE TO STAND. UTILIZE AN EASYSTAND TO GRADUALLY PUMP UP, ALLOWING THE MUSCLES, BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEART RATE TO ADJUST TO THE NEW POSITION.

CHALLENGE: FACILITATE THE CLOSURE OF PRESSURE SORES.

SOLUTION: REMOVE PRESSURE FROM THE BUTT BY UTILIZING THE EASYSTAND AND DOING MORE PRESSURE RELEASES WHILE IN WHEELCHAIR.

CHALLENGE: MAKE TIME FOR OTHER HOBBIES OR ACTIVITIES, WITHOUT CUTTING BACK ON STANDING TIME.

SOLUTION: CHOOSE ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE DONE WHILE STANDING (I.E. JEFF WRITES HIS BOOK WHILE HE STANDS, ACHIEVING TWO GOALS AT ONCE)



“The absolute best is hugging Peg while standing up and she has to stand on her toes to kiss me back!”



“I set the goal that when I stood I would write. To date, I have finished the initial 10 chapters as I stood up and have kept that promise to myself.”

LEARNING, SPORTS & TALL HUGS

My self esteem has been pretty good ever since I went back to school to obtain my Master’s degree in Rehabilitation and started a number of innovative programs for spinal cord injured folks. I have also found the love of my life and have been with her for 30 years. Additionally the sports activities such as bowling, tennis, pool, golf or parasailing and public speaking has allowed me to re-establish my self confidence. But I have to say when I hug Peg standing up and I am taller than her I feel proud. The same goes for standing next to my dad or sisters (now they remember that I’m taller than they are). It feels good to be in the standing position and looking at the house, dogs or other folks from that position. The most special event using my EasyStand, was standing next to my wife to take a Christmas picture to send out to relatives versus the sitting down version we generally sent out.

INDEPENDENCE & STRENGTH

The EasyStand is easy to transfer into and out of so Peg doesn’t have to help me at all. She doesn’t worry about me if she is going to the store or out of town and knows that I am going to stand for awhile. It gives her peace of mind and she trusts the EasyStand to be safe. I am also stronger in my upper body due to the strengthening program I do standing up versus sitting down. I have always been pretty independent but I feel more able to do certain things because of the upper body strength I’ve developed. My legs are less spastic due to the stretching, making transfers easier. Of course, you got me in a little trouble with my wife because now she wants me to dust the tops of the ceiling fans and other high shelves that I couldn’t reach while sitting down.

ACHIEVING GOALS WHILE STANDING

I have had the goal of writing a book about my experiences as a paraplegic and a professional working with spinal cord injured folks. I set the goal that when I stood I would write. To date, I have finished the initial 10 chapters as I stood up and have kept that promise to myself. It sets aside a specific time for me to write otherwise I just wasn’t getting it done. Standing is my time to write and it is working out well for me. Sometimes I stand for just 30 minutes. Other times, when I am writing and get in “the groove”, 2 hours can go by before I know it. I stand at least twice a week or more depending on the activities planned for that week. If I’m golfing or traveling then of course I stand less often. If I’m just at home writing then it could be 3-4 times in a week.

LIFE-CHANGING

Standing has changed my life by improving my health. Using that standing time to write, has helped me achieve two goals at once. It is just such a great feeling to stand up after so much of my time was spent just sitting down. It has also affected my relationship with Peg. The absolute best is hugging Peg while standing up and she has to stand on her toes to kiss me back!

The EasyStand is a wonderful device and I am so glad to have it in my home. I feel great every time I use it. I would encourage anyone with standing troubles to get one.

STANDING PROGRAM:

10 MINUTES AT FIRST
30-120 MINUTES A DAY
2-4 TIMES A WEEK

HEALTH BENEFITS:

STRETCH LEG MUSCLES
REDUCE BLOOD PRESSURE
RELIEF FROM PRESSURE SORE ISSUES
IMPROVE STAMINA
OVERALL MORE HEALTH CONSCIOUS

FUNCTIONAL BENEFITS:

STRENGTHENING BACK & NECK MUSCLES
HAS IMPROVED GOLF GAME.
STRONGER UPPER BODY DUE TO EXERCISING
WHILE STANDING INSTEAD OF SITTING.
TRANSFERS ARE EASIER BECAUSE OF
REDUCED SPASTICITY.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS:

ABLE TO HUG WIFE WHILE STANDING UP.
PROUD TO BE TALLER THEN WIFE,
DAD, AND SISTERS.

STANDING ACTIVITIES:

WRITE BOOK WHILE STANDING
SPEND QUALITY TIME WITH HIS WIFE, PEG
PLAY CATCH
MOVE AROUND THE HOUSE WHILE STANDING
REACH HIGH SHELVES, CLEAN THE CEILING FAN

