

NEVER GIVE UP

DAVE HELMUTH'S STORY



Name: Dave Helmuth

Primary Diagnosis: Paraplegia T5-6

Date of Onset: November 2002

Residence: Atwater, Minnesota

Height: 5'6"

Stander: EasyStand 5000

Standing Since: November 2003

Three years ago, David Helmuth was told he may never be able to walk again. A freak accident with a screwdriver sent a stream of poison to Dave's spinal cord, rendering him a T5-6 paraplegic. When Dave had the work injury, his hand didn't bleed out, instead the staph infection went into his blood stream. About two weeks later he experienced horrible back pain and visited the doctor several times. They did a CAT Scan, MRI, and an Ultrasound. The doctors told him he had fluid in his lungs and diagnosed him as having pneumonia. The next day he was sitting at home and it felt as if his legs were going asleep. Minutes later he couldn't move. He was sent to the hospital by ambulance where they finally diagnosed him with a staph infection that had attached to his spine. "When I got him to the hospital they told me 12 more hours and he would have been gone," his wife Char explains. He had surgery immediately to remove the infection from five of his vertebrae. His surgeon gave him a less than 10% chance of ever regaining feeling below his waist. But five weeks after his surgery, Dave began to move his feet and his surgeon and doctors were amazed!



“The first time I was able to stand up, I felt like I was seven feet tall.”



“Standing changed everything so dramatically, so fast.”

SERIOUS THERAPY

Convinced that some day Dave could walk again, his Physical Therapist, Jay Haug, got him into extensive therapy that included 45 minutes of daily standing in an EasyStand standing frame. Dave’s daily standing routine and therapy sessions greatly improved his health and mobility. “The standing program helps relieve the tightness in Dave’s heel cords and hip flexors,” stated Jay, “as well as helping prevent the risk of a decubitus ulcer.”

A THERAPIST THAT CARED

Jay Haug remembers when he first talked to Dave about standing, “Since I met Dave I had been bugging him about getting a stander. He had all the typical complications that many paras have from spending all day in a wheelchair. Tightness in this heel cords was preventing his leg braces from working properly. I told him standing would do a lot for him in very little time.” Dave admits, “Yes, my therapist wanted me to have a stander from day one.”

COMMITTED TO STAND

Dave received his EasyStand one year post injury. When he first started standing he didn’t feel much of anything, but after about a month, feeling in his legs started to return. “I could actually feel myself standing,” said Dave. Determined to someday walk again, and hopeful from the movement in his feet, Dave made the commitment to stand for 45 to 90 minutes a day. He remembers, “My right ankle kept twisting, that was the only thing that kept me from standing longer.” He noticed that standing straightened out his back and gave him a good stretch. His bowel program improved almost immediately, and his range of motion greatly increased. “The more I stood the better it felt.” One year after starting the standing program Dave regained 75% of his feeling below the waist. “Standing changed everything so dramatically, so fast.” Dave added.

STANDING TALL

Standing not only helped Dave physically, but mentally as well. “Something about standing mentally helps you. You are not always sitting in a wheelchair or lying in bed.” Dave reflects on when he first began standing, “The first time I was able to stand up, I felt like I was 7 feet tall.” Jay, his physical therapist, agrees, “Standing can change a patient’s perspective on life and the world around them. Being upright allows them to address people eye to eye.”

CHALLENGE: MINIMIZE THE SECONDARY COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TYPICAL WHEELCHAIR USE.

SOLUTION: STANDING PROGRAM HELPS LESSEN CONTRACTURES, PREVENT DECUBITI, AND IMPROVE BOWEL PROGRAM.

CHALLENGE: REGAIN SOME MOBILITY

SOLUTION: FOLLOW THROUGH WITH A DAILY STANDING PROGRAM. GO TO THERAPY AND KEEP THE BODY MOVING THROUGH BIKING AND LIFTING WEIGHTS.



“My standing program played an important part in getting my range of motion and strength back.”

ONE YEAR LATER

Dave continued to get stronger. After about a year he went from standing daily to standing three times a week. He also began using a bicycle to loosen up his knees, strengthen his calf muscles, and work his ankles. He went to therapy three times a week with Jay, where he used a walker, lifted weights, and did other therapy programs. During the thirteen month period that Dave used his stander, he never stood less than three times a week, “Jay, my therapist, got on my case if I didn’t stand.”

INDEPENDENCE & STRENGTH

With intense therapy, he began to regain some of his mobility. Dave’s wife, Char comments, “He has come a long way from where he started, it’s great, it’s amazing.” Dave’s persistence paid off, he went from barely moving to walking again, with many falls along the way. Dave adds, “My doctor said he has been in practice since 1973 and he had never seen someone come back from an injury like this. I knew it would happen, I had a lot of confidence that I would walk by myself someday.” Dave recalls the first time his family saw him walking, “The whole family was over for Thanksgiving, I surprised them when I came out of the back bedroom using my walker. Most of the family didn’t know about my progress and had never seen me walk since I was injured. There were lots of tears and cheering.”

SETTING NEW GOALS

Dave is now able to walk with a cane. He does use his wheelchair from time to time but no longer needs to use his stander. His goal is to be able to use a cane as his primary source of mobility in the future. He reflects on his long journey, “My standing program played an important part in getting my range of motion and strength back. It was a tough road but it got so much better.” He adds, “I had a lot of family support and a lot of help from my church. I did a lot of things that others said I couldn’t do.” Dave managed to beat the odds, but not without hard work, determination and that ‘never give up’ attitude.



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STANDING PROGRAM:
45 TO 90 MINUTES A DAY
7 DAY A WEEK

HEALTH BENEFITS:
INCREASES ROM
IMPROVES BOWEL PROGRAM
RELIEVES TIGHTNESS
STRETCHES BACK

THERAPY EQUIPMENT:
EASYSTAND 5000
LEG BRACES
RECUMBENT BICYCLE
WALKER

SUPPORT GROUP:
FAMILY
CHURCH
THERAPIST

STANDING ACTIVITIES:
PLAYS WITH HIS GRANDCHILDREN
WATCHES TV
SLEEPS (YES, SLEEPS!)

