

SPORTS & RECREATION: MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK

BARRY LONG

Talk & Roll Enterprises

For the last 16 years—ever since a motorcycle accident in 1991 left him a T6 paraplegic—Barry has been on a quest to help people recover from their injuries or situations through sports and recreation. In this workshop, Barry will share insights into how sports and recreation can be a part of a person's rehabilitation—not just in recreation therapy sessions, but during all facets of recovery. He will offer ideas about everyday activities that can be used as recreational therapy tools. If time permits, during Q&A he will also talk about a few of the extreme activities that he has been involved in.

Over the years, Barry has worked as an equipment specialist for a durable equipment dealer, a volunteer and participant for an outdoors disabilities activities program, the marketing director for a wheelchair equipment company, a consultant for the rehab units at several hospitals, and a peer mentor for newly injured SCI patients throughout the northwestern United States.

In the beginning, Barry found that many patients believed that rehabilitative sports and recreation were only for jocks and athletes. Therapists also tended to support this idea. When Barry visited patients, they were almost always opposed to any type of recreational activities—especially if they hadn't been an athlete or very active person before their new situation.

Barry also found very little supportive content in books and videos. Even today, very few books and videos highlight the everyday sports and recreational activities in which patients can participate. Most of the information that is available focuses on people who have achieved superstar status by performing extreme stunts or activities that most people (even those who aren't in rehab) would never attempt.

Barry is an extreme sports athlete himself, but he knows that most people will never take the stroll out to the end of a bungee platform that he took in his wheelchair shortly after his accident. People can participate in many other recreational activities, however, and these activities can be a key part of rehabilitation. For example, people can derive as much pleasure and positive rehabilitative function from gardening as Barry did from jumping out of a helicopter with a rubber band tied around his waist! Both activities provide a feeling of accomplishment and reward that can help a person move forward with confidence.

In his quest to understand how sports and recreation can be used in the therapy process, Barry has visited and interviewed hundreds of therapists, nurses, doctors, and patients. In this workshop, he'll share some of what he has learned. Come prepared to gain a new perspective about what sports and recreation really is and how important it can be to the rehabilitation and recovery of any patient.