

Learning to Live with 2 Prosthetic Hips

Jesús Olivares

BEFORE YOU READ: Read about the words *prosthesis* and *prosthetic* in the box on p. 6. Try using the words in a several sentences.

An Accident

Before my disability, when I was young, I loved outdoor activities. I loved to play sports, especially baseball and American football. Then I had an accident, and I had to have hip replacement surgery in both hips. I have had hip prostheses for 20 years.

The accident happened in Mexico. I was working on the air conditioner on the roof of my house. When I finished the work, I went down the ladder, but the ladder broke. I fell down four meters. I felt intense pain, so my family took me to the hospital. The doctor said that both of my hips were broken and I needed prostheses.

Pain and Upset

After my hips were replaced with prostheses, I felt very sad and angry. I couldn't walk properly, and I couldn't do the things I normally did. This was a very difficult time for me and my family. The physical therapy was very painful. I took my anger out on myself and my family. I kept asking myself, "Why did this happen to me?"

During the time I was in recovery, I often wondered, "How am I going to teach my son to play his favorite sport? How will I teach him to ride a bike?" Sometimes I accompanied my friends to baseball tournaments. I watched them participate and that motivated me to keep fighting for my recovery. I wanted to be able to play with them again.

Recovery But No Work

As time passed, the physical therapy started to work. I began to feel better. Most important was the support of my family. I began to accept what

had happened to me. My question changed to: "What am I going to do now?"

I tried to return to my work, but no one would hire me. When I was called in for an interview, they looked at me, saw my disability, and didn't give me the opportunity. Since I couldn't find a job, the social security system in Mexico gave me a disability pension. Now that I am in the U.S., I hope I will find a job. People with disabilities have more opportunities in this country and are treated more equally.

Fighting to Live a Full Life

I have learned so much from my experience with disability. I have learned how to do things with two prosthetic hips, such as going up and down stairs and bending down to pick up things off the floor. I have also gained empathy. I know what people with disabilities go through. And I know first-hand how you have to fight to live your full life. Finally, my disability made me appreciate what I have, especially my family. Without their support I would not have been able to get this far.

AFTER YOU READ: When Jesús first gets hurt, he asks himself a certain question. Then his question changed. Write down both questions. What do you infer about how this new question affected him? Write a short reflection sharing your inferences.

Originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, Jesús Olivares is a student at Ysleta Community Learning Center in El Paso, Texas. He holds a degree in engineering and is committed to continuing his journey of growth and adaptation in the U.S. He lives by the inspiring words, "No matter what happens, never stop fighting."

