

# Thriving After a Spinal Cord Injury

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**M**y life dramatically changed in an instant on June 13, 1998. While riding my bicycle, a 7,000-pound tree fell on top of me, leaving me paralyzed from the waist down.

At the time of my injury, Mark and I had been married three years. I had a speaking business Rossetti Enterprises Inc., [www.RosemarieSpeaks.com](http://www.RosemarieSpeaks.com), and a publishing company. Due to my injury, I was not able to work. Since I was self-employed, there was no income from my businesses.

Coming home from the hospital in a wheelchair was a rude awakening. Our home was not accessible, and I was unable to function independently.

The journey of recovery was daunting physically and mentally. For two years, I went to physical and occupational therapy three days a week. I started writing about my experiences, thoughts, and lessons that I was learning. I wrote inspirational articles monthly and

began speaking to audiences about coping with change and dealing with adversity.

In 2003, I wrote *Take Back Your Life! Regaining Your Footing After Life Throws You a Curve*. In this book, I shared my five **Lessons to Live By**.

1. Do something new every day.
2. Focus on a hopeful future, not on self-pity.
3. Believe that the impossible just might be possible.
4. Allow more time to get things done and be patient with yourself.
5. To lower your stress, lower your expectations of other people.





Thriving after a spinal cord injury takes motivation, determination, perseverance, and a support team at home. Mark was my life-saving hero on the bike trail and my support at home. At no time did I doubt Mark's unconditional love for me. He demonstrated his love and support daily. Slowly we made the adjustments that were needed to reframe the injury, focus on a hopeful future, and rebuild our lives.

Our home was a significant source of frustration for me since I depended on Mark so often. We knew we had to move. After looking at homes for sale, meeting with builders, and discussing our options, we chose to hire an architect in September 2004 to design a custom home. In January 2005, a group of fellow professional

speakers in our mastermind group gave Mark and me the idea to make our home a national demonstration home and garden to showcase universal design and green building. They also advised us to partner with sponsors for products and services to build our home.

We purchased a 1.5-acre lot in Columbus, Ohio, in December 2006. Construction started in September 2009. Mark and I were the general contractors and acquired over 200 sponsors and hundreds of volunteers to help us build our national demonstration home and garden, the Universal Design Living Laboratory, [www.udll.com](http://www.udll.com). We moved into our house in May 2012.

As a result of designing and building our home, I began writing and speaking about accessible

design and universal design. In 2017, I wrote the book, the *Universal Design Toolkit: Time-saving ideas, resources, solutions, and guidance for making homes accessible*.

The path that I have taken for my life and career has been influenced by new ideas, guidance

from others, and opportunities that I pursued. I am persistent, resilient, determined, and hard-working, all traits that helped me in my recovery. My advice to people who are recovering from an injury is to realize that life can be better once you know what you are looking for and find the people who can help you achieve what you want.

