

## **JOEL'S JOURNEY – 5/8/17**

THE END OF THE ROAD, BUT NOT THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

“Project walk is closing in one week, I'm sorry, I can't give you any reasons”  
- CEO Project Walk San Diego.

After what I have been through in the past three years, the events in the past 48 hours are merely a bump in the road, or as I like to call it a “curveball”. Shattering as it may be, it opens up my eyes and opens up new opportunities for Elisa and I to try and experiment with, that otherwise, I would not have done so. No more than one hour after I found out I would no longer have a gym, I rung those who I knew could help me out in such a time and clear my mind of anger/shock/confusion. Amongst much I was given, this bit of advice was strangely familiar, yet sound and very effective “What's done is done, you cannot change this, but now you need to improvise, adapt and overcome”. I swung into action immediately and began assessing my options, fortunately for me, one door has closed, and another 15 and have opened. It has been extremely hard to remain on task whilst trying to overcome and console not only Elisa but Family and friends back home and try to figure out with other staff and clients what has just happened and where to from here.

The staff, the clients and the families involved are the elements that when combined, produce what we know as “Project Walk”. Not the gym, not the equipment, not the executives, not the managers and not the CEO. That is the reason that this community will bounce back and no doubt will be assisting those in need in the near future in some way, shape or form.

Fortunately for some people, we have social media, we have emails, but for some, they do not. Social media was the form of communication used by the CEO of Project walk to inform both staff and clients of the impending foreclosure of Project walk. My mum called me from Australia and told me of the publication released by the PW CEO; 30 minutes after leaving my workout, 30 minutes after making eye contact with the CEO, seeing the CEO laughing and joking in the gym with another client. As I write this, nearly 48 hours after this shattering news was released, I can guarantee you some stakeholders and relevant people have still not been informed. What I witnessed this week, was sheer incompetence and an inability to manage and lead people appropriately.

For international clients and international staff, this is a bit harder to deal with and overcome due to VISA'S and dependence on private funding. Because the person involved has no integrity and does not deserve to be named, the situation is a waste of my time, so is talking about it, therefore I declare it history, and it will remain there, useless in moving forward, useless for dwelling on yet very useful to learn from.

I have arranged interviews and tours with two other paralysis recovery centres, and have been approached by numerous and now unemployed staff and told they would be offering their services to me and other clients at the private residences until we find the next best thing. This sort of positivity and incredible attitude is just 'par for the course' when talking about the individuals that make up what we used to know as "Project Walk".

It may seem as if this week has been shrouded with negativity, but there were plenty of positives to take from it also. I now am Nearly 9 kg lighter than when I first touched down in America this year. Due to my lighter frame my ability to stand, aided, is clearly getting better. I am now in the stages of learning to bring my hips forward when standing, something I never envisaged, yet never thought unattainable four months ago. When kneeling on hands and knees I am now able to comfortably and correctly hold my posture and my body weight up.

For everybody at home who has their eye on me and is interested in my next step forward in rehabilitation, I will be posting updates on social media so I'm keeping everybody informed on the next venture. For the amazing people I worked out with and will continue to do so until something is formed, thank you, the environment you created for myself and Elisa could not be replicated anywhere in the world, you brought happiness and inspired hope. I will continue my rehabilitation in the clients' garages, public gyms and wherever else can facilitate me, I will utilise the wealth of knowledge in the brains of the unemployed staff. Returning home is not a viable option.

For anybody who feels the need to vent their frustrations, please keep in mind there are other branches franchised by Project walk who have staff similar and clients similar to me, who are 100% innocent to all of this and do not deserve ANY backlash.

Before I end my Final journal entry of my time that is "Project Walk" or otherwise known as "My happy place", there are some heroes and inspirational people who need to be named and thanked for making my world a better place and so many others along the way. Every organisation around the world needs people like you with the passion and attitudes you have shown me from day one. The ability to seamlessly yet genuinely care for, work with and communicate with people from all walks of life, of all abilities, is beautiful to witness and you will never TRULY understand the importance of what you do and will CONTINUE to do.

ANDON GAMACHE  
ALYSSA FISCHER  
FELIPE FREITAS  
SHANE PAULSON  
JAGADE SNYDER  
BRANDON YATES  
JASON SMITH  
TROY BAKER  
JAMES HYLTON  
STACEY HYNES  
STEVE SALA  
AMANDA MCKINNEY  
SEAN LEE  
LAUREN BLOOM  
JEFF LEFKOWITZ

Thank you!