

Peer Support



Becoming an amputee is a challenging experience for each individual. Losing a limb can be a time of fear and uncertainty. One of the most important sources of emotional support can come from family and friends however, they may not always know the right thing to do or to say. Like you, they are also trying to make adjustment and gain a better understanding of what lies ahead. A peer support visit can sometimes fill this gap. Limbs 4 Life peer support volunteers are all amputees who have lived with limb loss for a number of years and have regained their independence.

The Limbs 4 Life *Peer Support Program* was established to provide new amputees and their families with access to trained volunteers. The program matches new amputees, or those about to lose a limb, with a volunteer who has experienced a similar amputation. Speaking with a peer support volunteer can play an important part in a new amputee's recovery and rehabilitation. Peer support volunteers can offer you encouragement, information and guidance. They can also help to alleviate feelings of isolation and most importantly, they can provide you with an ear to listen. Whether the cause of your limb loss was diabetes, vascular disease, cancer, trauma or infection, it can be comforting to discuss your concerns with someone that has been in a similar situation to your own.

Our program is based on a model of mentoring that has been used for a number of years, for many different health and wellbeing issues. It is used to complement the services which medical professionals provide. As an organisation we are supported in our efforts by health care staff, who praise the program for its ability to assist patients and their families to adjust to their new life. Many amputees have reported that receiving a visit from a peer support volunteer was a very rewarding experience, one that gave them the chance to speak openly about how they were feeling, address issues and concerns that they had, and alleviate the fear of the unknown.

Limbs 4 Life peer support volunteers participate in a comprehensive training program. The program includes presentations, discussions and workshops which deal with effective communication, empathetic listening skills, organisational policies and the resources available to assist amputees and their families.

The Limbs 4 Life *Peer Support Program* currently operates throughout Victoria and in divisions of South Australia. Peer Support Volunteers are available to visit new amputees in hospital and rehabilitation centres or conduct discussions over the phone using our free call number. On-line support is also available to those living in remote or regional communities via the *Limb Link* amputee forum on the Limbs 4 Life website.

If you or someone you know would like to receive a Peer Support Visit, or are interested in becoming a Peer Support Volunteer, please contact Limbs 4 Life on 1300 782 231

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