

Life and Success with SMA

Life as a person with a disability, especially one like spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), guarantees the need for a fairly high level of confidence, clear direction and more than average critical thinking skills. Whether its navigating transportation to and from work, managing personal care assistants to get you ready for the day, or medaling through a plethora of seemingly never ending legal and medical documents, days seem short and the light at the end of the tunnel far away. Yet, being successful is not only possible but worth the energy to achieve.

The first question to ask oneself is: *How do I define success?* Someone without a disability may define success by how much money is in their bank account or how many dates they have on the weekend. With SMA those things are important, but not prioritized...at least not until your caretaker situation is in order. A good friend of mine, and well-known Psychologist Danielle Sheypuk, believes that when you have a disability, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is modified. In the traditional sense, Maslow's theory states that at the basis of homeostasis is our need for shelter, food, air, water, etc. In her opinion (which I couldn't agree with more) for individuals with disabilities who depend on others to accomplish activities of daily living - personal care assistants are the number one, baseline need before anything else can function. I've found that navigating personal care assistants and getting the help I need organized and smooth functioning is the number one key to life and success with SMA.

The next level in success for me has been to define what I enjoy doing, what my dreams are, where my skills lie, and create a career that allows my passions to flourish. In college, the goal was to become a M-F employee where more than half of my life would be spent in one office staring at a computer screen. That was the goal, until I got my first taste of entrepreneurship. Owning my own business, making my own schedule and working on my MacBook in more cities than I can count has become my dream realized. Boston, Washington DC, San Juan, Miami, West Palm, Baltimore, Maui.... in an airport, on a cruise ship, driving up a mountain, and 38,000 feet up in the air have been some of my favorite borrowed offices for the day. Each location became the root of a place where passion turned into my life's work and led to a path I wouldn't give up for anything. The world has become my office and the journey has only begun.

The only thing that limits us is our own mind and lack of imagination. Myself and hundreds of others have achieved success living with SMA and even more profound challenges. It's our responsibility to define what success is for us, believe it, tackle each step with a solution-focused mindset and next thing you know.....*you too are a success!*

Biography

Author: Lorinda Gonzalez resides in South Florida with her family and service dog, Remy. She was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy at the age of three, and has used a motorized wheelchair for mobility since the age of nine. As an avid writer and reader, she has worked as a certified grant writer and trainer since 2009 and opened her company, Grants Ink in 2014. She participated in Bold Beauty Project where she was a model supporting the cause of showcasing women with disabilities and beautiful and sexy. Lorinda holds a Bachelor in the Arts Degree in English Writing and Rhetoric, and is currently completing a Masters of Arts Degree in Communications. She was co-founder of NMD United, a 501c3 and on the board of multiple non-profit organizations. In her free time, Lorinda enjoys spending time with family and friends, painting, listening to music, and traveling to historical locations.

