

# Ash's Advice: Article 10

By Ashley Moore

I have officially been writing advice articles to the group of people I am most thankful for, supporters of The Miami Project and Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis, for an entire year. When I was trying to develop a topic for this specific article, I wanted to leave 2014 with a bang by writing a message I am incredibly passionate about. While browsing through the Internet, I came across an article from the online edition of The Huffington Post (now called the [HuffPost](#)) about a thirty-one-year-old artist who starved herself to death after six years of life as a quadriplegic. I apologize for the grim topic. I know of too many stories similar to this.

Depression is common amongst those with spinal cord injuries. These individuals are most at risk of depression during the first five years post-injury. I do have first-hand experience in this area. Over the last sixteen years, I've experienced phases of depression caused solely by the fact that I cannot move any parts of my body below the neck. I might have gotten through it, but sadly enough, not all people with spinal cord injuries do. My secret? Not only do I have a great support system, but I was able to suck up my pride and seek professional help. Too many people put a stigma on depression. Does it hurt to try seeing a counselor just once? Nobody will even know. Take that leap! I promise you, speaking to a professional will be worth your time. You are not alone. There are so many resources online and through the health system these days that are here to help.

For those of you quickly sinking into depression after suffering a spinal cord injury but choose not to get the help you need, listen up. You are not dead. You are paralyzed and must do things that everyone else in the world does differently. It's not too late. Death is final. Life, in any way, shape, or form, is not. *The Theory of Everything*, a recently released film about the brilliant mind of Stephen Hawking, encompasses the message I'm trying to get across to those living with a spinal cord injury like myself by stating, "Where there is life, there is hope." You have a spinal cord injury, yes, but is the honor of living your life out of the picture? No.

Living with a spinal cord injury requires a great deal of determination. To have that kind of drive, one must have a motive to keep living. Find your motive! Whether your reason is family or watching your favorite football team every year, focus on it and strive to live every day for it. Now, I know not every person is gifted with a loving family. With the vast universe created by the Internet and organizations like The Miami Project, no individual must face their new life alone. Before his injury, Ronnie Ahmed, a college student who now has paraplegia after being shot twice in the 2014 Florida State University shootings, was an introvert with only a small group of friends. Today, strangers support him through donations and letters. Your motive doesn't even have to be people. It could be life itself. My reason to keep going includes my family and friends and the opportunity to experience life itself. I live for the chance to experience human emotion, the chance to feel the wonders of nature like the warm sunshine, and the many possibilities of what I can do during my lifetime.

It's okay to get angry. What matters is how you use that anger. Please do not take it out on the people around you or yourself. Use your anger to prove a point. Show the world that a spinal

cord injury cannot defeat you because many people think it can. Prove them wrong. To those of you who are reading this as someone who knows an individual with a spinal cord injury, it is your responsibility to give that person the motivation to gain the determination they need by offering your support. Please don't run away from it. Meet it head-on.

My first piece of advice for someone waking up today to the shock of life with a spinal cord injury would be to learn as much as you can about The Miami Project and Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis. Upon hearing the amazing discoveries made by spinal cord injury research, I promise you and others in your life will experience a strong feeling of hope. I would also advise these individuals to remember that everyone has a story to tell no matter what cards they have been dealt in life. Please do not give up the opportunity to tell your story because of a spinal cord injury. Speaking from personal experience, more people will listen if you show the world what it looks like to live despite a debilitating injury. Can you imagine having the ability to change the course of another person's story by merely choosing to live? The new year is all about embracing change for the better. Living should be your resolution.