

NWRSS

Information Sheet No 7 February 2005

Our information sheets have not been as regular as originally hoped but this edition heralds a change. NWRSS have agreed with Disability Services, as part of their Service Development Plan, to issue a regular information sheet.

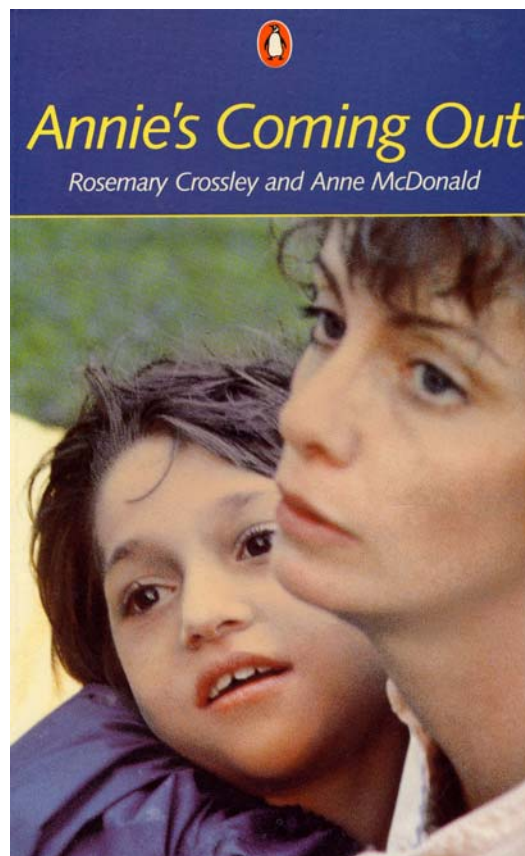
NWRSS RESOURCE LIBRARY

The NWRSS library concentrates on collecting:

- Autobiographies, biographies and personal accounts of disability, illness, devalued difference and marginalization.
- Explorations on the concept of 'home.'
- Research that reveals the values and beliefs that best engage, portray and protect people who are vulnerable to devaluation.

Our current library list is attached. These books can be borrowed by calling on 6442 2920. Please leave a message if the phone is unattended.

DUST COVER



Tina Arhondis and Angela Punch McGregor in Annie's Coming Out.

The book featured from our library this issue is a compelling true story that became a perennial reminder of our responsibilities to the profoundly disabled individuals in our society.

'Disabled by cerebral palsy from birth, Anne McDonald was institutionalized at the age of three, thought to be hopelessly mentally retarded.'

Until she was sixteen it was believed that Anne would never communicate. At eighteen she left the institution to live with her teacher, Rosemary Crossley, but only after Supreme Court judgments had found her able

to communicate and manage her own affairs.

Challenging deeply held prejudices, this story raises vital questions, and demands a radical re-evaluation of the potential and basic rights of people with disabilities.

Annie's Coming Out is now a major Australian motion picture from Film Australia, directed by Gil Brealey, starring Angela Punch Mc Gregor and Drew Forsythe and introducing Tina Arhondis as Annie.

This book holds a special place in my career. Rosemary Crossley worked at the Spastic Society centre where I started my career as a support worker in 1972. She was a loud, feisty advocate of people with a disability who challenged neglect with vigour and generously shared her life with the people she served. Later in 1976, while managing the Chelsea and Peninsula District Spastic Centre in Melbourne, I met Tina Arhondis. Tina, like Annie McDonald, had been born with severe cerebral palsy and, as was the practice in those days, sent home with her parents soon after birth with instructions to contact the local spastic centre.

I vividly recall the day her mother timidly approached the centre with nine weeks old Tina in a bassinet. Mrs. Arhondis was struggling to understand her daughter's disability and imagine some sort of future for her. The Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and Speech Therapist reviewed Tina's hospital notes, carried out their own assessments and devised an early

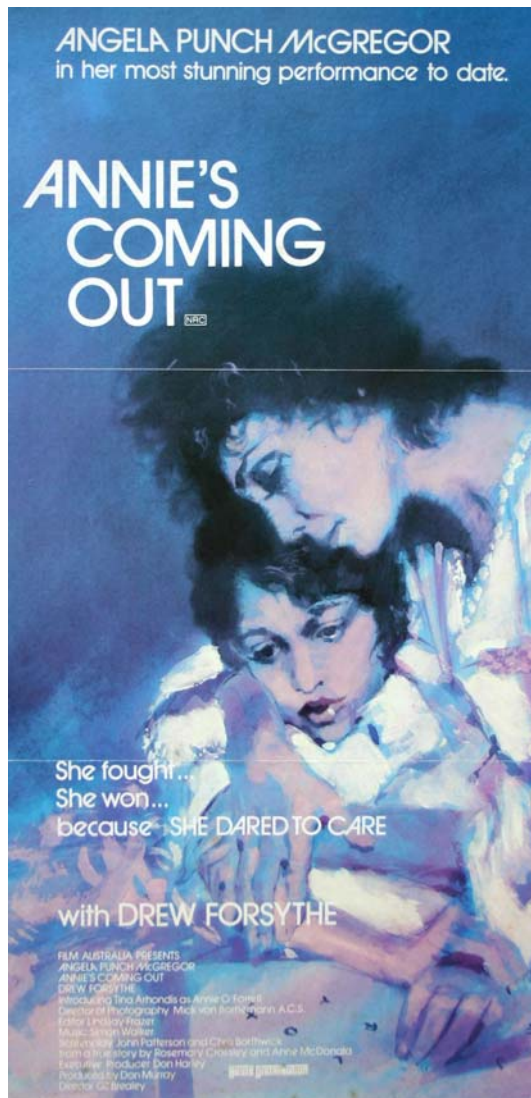
intervention program. After Mrs. Arhondis left with Tina there was a general air of despondency and shaking of heads over the agreed prognosis of a few months of life at best.

How careful we need to be with our opinions and assumptions, even when backed with professional qualifications. The Therapists worked with her mother each week as Tina struggled to survive for many months. But survive she did to gradually emerge as a beautiful and engaging child with deep brown eyes that shone with the depth of her understanding.



In 1977 I photographed Tina when she was four years of age for the front page of the Spastic Society newsletter. A natural actor, she followed my instructions perfectly to get the overhead shot I was working for. Not surprisingly, she was later discovered in the search for an actor to play Annie McDonald in Annie's Coming Out. Angela Punch McGregor, on receiving an AFI award for her performance paid

homage in her acceptance speech
'to my patron saints Rosemary
Crossley and Tina Arhondis.'



Rosemary Crossley never imagined, when setting out to advocate for Annie, that she would rock the disability support sector to its foundations including changes to legislation and forcing the closure of Government institutions.

This book should be read by all people caring for those with severe and multiple disabilities.

Have you read a book that helped you better understand your clients and/or support worker role? If you would like to contribute a book review for the Information Sheet contact Neal Rodwell on 0418140000 or by email <rodwell@southcom.com.au>

TENANCY SUPPORT WORKER MEETINGS

We are now holding regular meetings for tenancy support workers. Meetings will be held at the Wynyard Community Centre between 11.30 am – 1.00 pm on the dates listed in the meeting schedule sent to all employees. Common issues will be discussed as a group and the Manager and Supervisors will make themselves available for private discussions. Morning tea is always provided.

YOUR BACK IS ALWAYS WORKING

Your back is always working, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Every time you lift, sit, stand or even lie down you are using your back. Over the years, the effects of poor posture, being overweight, not lifting safely, or simple wear and tear accumulate and can lead to a "problem back".

Rebuilding a Healthy Back

You can do a great deal to help rebuild and maintain a healthy back. The first step is to understand how your back works and how safe posture and lifting techniques help protect it from injury. These techniques, and simple back

exercises, can help protect your back on and off the job.

Understanding Anatomy and Balance

The back is a powerful, yet delicate machine. Like all machines, it needs proper care and attention to kept it running smoothly and trouble-free. To keep your back in top condition, you need to learn how muscles, bones and other parts work together to keep it strong, flexible and well balanced.

Learning Safe Body Mechanics

Body mechanics is the way you use your body lifting, standing, sitting, or just lying down. Safe body mechanics keeps your back balanced no matter what you are doing. It includes using safe lifting techniques, maintaining proper posture, and supporting your back when standing, sitting or lying down.

Getting Back in Shape

If you're overweight or out-of-shape, your chances of a back injury can skyrocket. But, by doing simple, relaxing exercises on a regular basis, you can keep your back strong and flexible for life. Rebuilding a healthy back that won't let you down requires a commitment on your part. You've got to take care of your back before it can't take care of you.

The Unbalanced, Stressed Spine

The spine is out of balance whenever it loses its three natural curves. Throughout the day your spine can be pulled, jammed, cramped, and pushed out of balance. Lifting awkwardly, slumping in your chair, and sagging bellies are often the culprits.

Unsafe Lifting

Lifting a load that's too far in front of you takes the spine out of its neutral position and can lead to injury. A load closer to your body puts less stress on your back.

Bad Posture

When sitting without support, your upper body presses on your lower back, stressing vertebrae and discs. In time, the spine can be permanently out of balance.

Deconditioning

A pot belly acts as a load and can pull your spine out of balance. Stomach muscles can become weak, and back muscles tight, increasing your chance of back injury.

Balance = Strength and Flexibility

Keeping your back in its balanced, neutral position whenever possible can help prevent back pain and injury. Muscle strength helps to

maintain the 3 natural curves in your spine. Joint flexibility, not just your spine, but all joints, lets you move freely and easily, and still keep a balanced spine.

Muscle Strength

With muscle strength to support your spine, your three natural curves are held in proper balance. The muscles in the abdomen, buttocks and thighs are the most important muscle groups for the safety of your back. These muscle groups are much stronger than your back muscles, so they are the ones to use to help you lift properly and avoid injury. Developing strong supporting muscles is a key aspect of a healthy back care program.

Joint Flexibility

With flexible joints throughout your body, it's much easier to sit, stand, and lift smoothly without straining your back. The joints in your hips, knees, and ankles have a wide range of motion. This range of motion allows you to move in various ways and still maintain the three natural curves of your spine. By using all of your body's joints, you can literally 'take the pressure off' the delicate joints in your spine.

Body Mechanics for Balance

Body mechanics is how you use your "body machine" to do things safely and efficiently when standing, sitting, or just lying down. Safe body mechanics keeps your spine

balanced as you do these simple movements. They not only help prevent back injury, but can improve strength and flexibility.

Standing

When standing, muscles and good posture help to keep your spine in its balanced neutral position.

Abdominal muscles pull up in front and the buttocks muscles pull down in the back to maintain the spine's natural curve and allow you to stay in a balanced standing posture for long periods of time without tiring.

Sitting

When sitting, try to keep your spine in its balanced, neutral position by using the ergonomic chair that supports the three natural curves of your back.

Sleeping

Your back needs support while you are sleeping too. Try using a firm mattress and sleeping on your side with your knees bent to keep your spine in balance.

A Balanced Spine at Work

You can help prevent back injuries by being aware of safe body mechanics that keep your back in balance. Safe body mechanics is extremely important in the workplace. Together, you, your employer, and co-workers can make a commitment to practise safe body mechanics while working. You will probably find that a little planning

and back awareness will go a long way in protecting your back from strain when standing, sitting, lifting, or moving. But, best of all, body mechanics can help you work both safely and efficiently.

Body Mechanics at Home

Back care is a full time commitment. Since many back injuries occur while at home or on vacation, try to take back awareness with you wherever you go. Remember that your back is always working, even when you are sleeping. Using good body mechanics at both work and home will provide protection and support for your back, and keep your spine in its balanced, neutral position. Be aware of all situations that can put a sudden load on your back, or require standing for a long period of time.

Developing Strength and Flexibility

A healthy back is strong and flexible and exercise helps build both. Good body mechanics and a strong flexible back are your best defence against back injury. Give your back the support it needs and it will support you in return.

A Healthy Back Program

Building a healthy back requires time and commitment. A healthier lifestyle, good body mechanics and regular exercise will benefit both your back and overall health. Start by making small changes, and gradually you will find your back feeling stronger and more flexible.

A Healthier Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle reduces the stress and tension that can lead to back discomfort. Control your weight, eat well balanced meals, get enough calcium, and limit fats and sweets.

Good Body Mechanics

Good body mechanics protects your back when you're sitting, lifting, and standing. Using good posture and body mechanics should become healthy habits you will never regret.

Regular Exercise

In addition to specific exercises for your back try and add overall conditioning such as running, swimming, callisthenics, or brisk walking, to a healthy back program. Choose an activity you enjoy and do it for at least 20 minutes, 3 days a week.

WEBSITES WORTH A VISIT

Kendrick Consulting is a very small specialized international consulting firm principally focused on leadership and emerging developments in the fields of disability, mental health and aging. Its focus is on innovation, quality, change, leadership and other technical aspects of creating sound solutions of a very advanced calibre. The founder, Michael Kendrick keeps his website up to date with many of the articles he has written.

<http://www.kendrickconsulting.org/>

IMAGERY



As an old folk phrase reminds us, people are 'judged by the company they keep.' People with a disability are, too often, judged by the company they are forced to keep or inappropriately connected with.

This sign sat for years outside a Northern Nursing Home on the Bass Highway. The facility was known for housing ageing people with dementia and young adults who had acquired brain injuries. There were no benefits for either group in this association.

As if this combination was not damaging enough, the sign reinforced the widely held societal belief that disabled people are just 'big children' and ageing people often enter a 'second childhood.' Both groups are commonly treated inappropriately as children, without having this demeaning role reinforced by public signage.

We all have a responsibility to be aware of and counteract imagery that damages people's identity.

Thankfully, the sign has now disappeared, probably more to do

with roadwork than consciously correcting damaging imagery.

Have you seen any examples of damaging imagery? Let us know. We will photograph them and include them in our information sheet.

IDEAS

Let us know if you have any ideas for the information sheet or suggestions on what we should include.

