

Katie Franz

PEER SUPPORT OFFICER



A typical day for mother-of-two Katie Franz reads like many other working mums: up early to organise her two young daughters to get them to school on time, some quiet reprieve in her car while she drives to work, a busy day at the office, then back to school to pick her girls up and home for dinner where all of the associated tasks that come with being a married mum await.

What sets Katie apart from many other mums is that she uses a wheelchair after sustaining paraplegia in a car accident when she was just 16.

Now aged 31, Katie said when it sunk in that she had a permanent injury all those years ago, she made a conscious decision to continue making the most of every opportunity.

“I have always had an optimistic mindset. I was a kid, just 16 years old, when I had my injury and my philosophy in life then was basically to get out there and have fun,” Katie said.

“If you say ‘no’ to something, you will miss out. I like to take opportunities and make the best of them. My parents would always say to me to give it a go.”

Katie met her husband-to-be Danny just before she was discharged from the Spinal Injuries Unit, and they married three years later. Katie said she always knew she wanted to be a mum.

“As well as the usual decisions that are typical for any couple contemplating having a baby, we also had the added questions of what my injury would mean during my pregnancy, the birth itself and of course the everyday issues of raising children,” Katie said.

“But like anything, I saw our situation as a challenge that was more than worth the hard times.”

Chelsea was born in 2001, followed by Tiana in 2004.



“Sometimes they say it sucks because they want me to help them climb a tree or go to the beach. But we have lots of aunties and uncles around to shove them up that tree or take them to the beach.

“My girls don’t know any different. That’s the up-side of it. They have only ever seen me use a wheelchair so to them it’s the complete norm.”

Katie also said it was important for her to remain positive not only for her frame of mind, but to lead a good example for her girls.

“If I don’t care, they don’t care. If one of their friends asks them why is your mum in a wheelchair, they just say: ‘she hurt her back and her legs don’t work and come on now, I’m going to the tuckshop because I’ve got \$2 to spend!’” Katie said.

“It’s really not an issue for them, which makes it a non-issue for their friends.”

A qualified personal trainer, Katie enjoys regularly going swimming with her daughters.

“I must admit I often see people doing a double take when they see me slide from my wheelchair into the pool, but they’re always positive, giving me the thumbs up and saying ‘good on you’,” Katie said.



“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you choose to react to it.”



“It’s always a good feeling to challenge people’s perceptions of what people with a disability can do.

“Being a mum is a right any women should have, regardless of whether or not they use a wheelchair.”

It’s this positive attitude that has made Katie such a highly-regarded member of the Spinal Injuries Association’s Peer Support team.

“It’s the perfect job for me because it allows me to share my experience with people who are still in the recovery and grief phase of having their spinal cord injury,” Katie said.

“My outlook on life is extremely positive; I push the boundaries of disability on a daily basis and I want to inspire others to adopt that same philosophy.

If you want to get in touch with Katie,
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