

## Anuya's Story

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*Anuya told her story in a recorded interview. This is the transcript.*

I live with Cerebral Palsy (CP) and I am unable to walk, so I use an electric wheelchair to move around. I do not really see it as a burden because all people face challenges and experience moments of frustration, whether they live with a disability or not.

While I may not have control over the circumstances into which I was born, I can manage my attitude and how I chose to cope with any difficulties that arise. It is with this in mind that I do my best to maintain an optimistic attitude and find the humour in every situation.

I am most proud of my university graduation. It was good to be at the ceremony with my peers and enjoy crossing the stage to collect my Bachelor's degree certificate. I love learning, and view education as something that can never be taken away by others.

I am currently pursuing my Masters in Disability Studies. I came here from the United Kingdom after completing my undergraduate degree. I love travelling and had wanted to visit Australia from a very young age. To be able to study while I am doing this has presented more wonderful opportunities than I could ever have imagined.

I do miss friends and family in the UK, but I am really enjoying being here too. University is great because I have met so many friendly and accepting people. I think I have been very lucky that way. All the lecturers and staff are incredibly supportive. They have done everything I needed. Once I have finished my Master's degree, I would like to undertake doctoral study.

My dad has accompanied me to Australia to provide the physical care support that I require. He will do anything I need and is, without question, hugely dedicated to helping me succeed. My family has always made me believe that I can accomplish my goals. I am immensely grateful for their support and acutely aware that not everyone is as fortunate as me in this respect.

I am also thankful to the people who doubted me in the past because, rather than acting as a deterrent, their skepticism strengthened my resolve and desire to fulfill all of my ambitions.

It is true that things have not always worked out the way I originally envisaged, but more often than not, this has led to something better. Everyone experiences disappointments, setbacks and heartache at some time in their lives, but these are not worthy reasons to cease dreaming, hoping and planning for the future.

My parents instilled these values in me by never making me feel as though there were things I could not achieve as a consequence of my disability. They never once said, "You have a disability, so you might not be able to go to university." It was not a question of "if," rather a case of planning for the things I would need in place "when" I entered university.

In the future, I hope to establish a non-profit organisation which provides support for people living with disability and their families. As part of this, I would also like to teach and speak to people about disability in schools, universities and workplaces.

In particular, I think it is important for general educators to be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to better assist students with additional or special needs. Having always attended mainstream school, I believe that this is fundamental for two main reasons.

Firstly, it allows students with these needs to feel supported, which can increase their chances of attaining educational success. Secondly, teachers may also benefit in that if they are properly prepared, they will be less likely to suffer anxiety or stress at the prospect of instructing students with additional needs

I love music and you can usually find me with a pair of earphones fastened to my ears. I also like going to the cinema. I particularly enjoy comedy films because I think that laughter is an essential component of a happy life, which is why I do an awful lot of it! I am a voracious reader and constantly in search of new material, whatever the genre.

In April 2011, I went surfing with the [Disabled Surfers Association of Australia](#). It was something I have always wanted to do and definitely counts as one of the best experiences of my life. I thought, "I'm in Australia, what better place is there to attempt it?"

I just typed "disabled" and "surfing" into Google and up came the Disabled Surfers Association. They hold events two or three times a year on different days throughout the country, and it is all completely free. My Dad and a friend came too, but it was the volunteers who were with me in the water. They were all eager to help and so encouraging. They are an amazing group of people.

I guess I pursue experiences like this because I do not want my life to be in any way limited. I think there are a number of opportunities available for people with disabilities to try new things if they know where to look for them.

For example, with the surfing, I thought it might be a possibility, but unless I had looked it up, I would not have known for certain. I might have decided, "Oh, that's probably not something I can do, I'll just forget about it", so I am really glad that I found the organisation.

I think the way in which society is constructed to serve the needs of people without disabilities can sometimes leave people with disabilities feeling disempowered. I believe that everybody's lives have purpose and value, whatever their circumstances may be.

Whether it is through the time you spend in the community or in the love you give to family and friends, we all contribute to the lives of others. With every action or word, big or small, you are making a uniquely beautiful, powerful and indelible mark on the world.

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