

## **A view from the past with an eye on the future: A 38-year perspective on rehabilitation**

Gary Karp

Speaker / Author / Trainer

San Rafael, CA

In the thirty-eight years since Gary Karp's seven-week inpatient rehabilitation experience, life with a spinal cord injury has evolved in a variety of dramatic ways. We are witness to a vastly more accessible world, with the benefit of highly-evolved mobility equipment and assistive technologies, and legislative civil rights gains. While people with disabilities are, in general, dramatically emergent in modern society, access to these resource remains a challenge for many. The substantial rehabilitation experience Karp had in 1973 is far less guaranteed in an age of shortened stays, the effects of which Karp will ponder in contrast to his direct belief that his long rehab stay was critical to his eventual successes in life. While there have been historic advances in modern life with a disability, too many people are denied the chance to reach the expanded potential they offer. While substantial progress continues in rehabilitation research - and in the quest for recovery options - Karp makes the case that an investment in optimal quality of life for people with disabilities is the wisest policy priority for all stakeholding institutions, government and private - an investment that calls on us to bring the pendulum back to the middle so that everyone who needs it get sufficient rehabilitation, and the chance to play the fullest possible role in their families, communities, and workplace.