

Disability & Equality

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&

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Namaste – My personal thanks to Dr. Mithu Alur & the entire team for inviting Nina Foundation at this wonderful conference.

Nina Foundation is a 10 year old NGO, a Consumer Group focused on rehabilitating friends with Spinal Injury.

I am an adventurer. Please allow me to indulge in some MIND ADVENTURES.

Let me share my views on Disability and Equality through an analogy with Sports.

There are three common **RAW** factors between sports & Nina Foundation.

1. Rules
2. Attitude
3. Winning

RULES: As children while playing hide and seek, we would have a very simple rule. All kids pile one hand over each others and shout in a chorus while raising their hands either to show palms up or down...'Majority wins'....We at Nina Foundation have strived subtly to change the rules of the game. We have instituted for the first time in India **Spinal Injury day** and honour one friend each year with a Rockstar award. The resounding chorus is' *Minority also wins!* '

In our own way creating a level and equal playing field! Becoming Paradigm Pioneers.

ATTITUDE: The second common factor is attitude. We all watch cricket. Brave cricketers like Rahul Dravid prefer to play on the front foot and take on all kinds of deliveries head on. This is an attitude which has earned him the title....The Wall. Our ideology at Nina Foundation is similar, to *instil this optimistic and confident attitude to face life challenges and always play on the front foot....with outbound programmes, wellness seminars and participation in dance and sports.* We shape and *encourage this 'bold front foot'* attitude and experience a sense of equality.

WINNING: The final frontier for any sport is to win. All successful sports icons echo the mantra '*We win in our minds*'. A positive frame of mind enables us to stretch our limits and surpass all records. Our, Nina Foundation vision resonates this mantra. All our communication, activities and events are geared to creating a *positive mindset*. We do this through our one-of-its-kind newsletter *One World*, by writing *profiles of our Spinal Injury achievers* who motivate others, sharing ideals of *role models, best practices, innovations* and *possibilities* on our *website, publishing their photos* and writing about them, in *our films*...we continuously share **GOOD NEWS**..and very soon we start believing in ourselves as Winners and we all agree that winners are always more equal than others.

We believe analogies provide a broader canvas to create.

Nina Foundation :

Vision :

To spread optimism and hope of good health

To people with spinal cord injury by offering innovative rehabilitation services.

Mission :

To offer world class spinal cord injury services encompassing physical, psychological, vocational, social, recreational & spiritual rehabilitation for overall well being.

There are over 1.5 million people with spinal cord injury in India, which makes it the largest population with this disability in the world.

Spinal cord injury is a permanent disability which transforms the person's life and rehabilitation is the key to facing life with dignity.

Our Foundation has been encouraging the members enabling them to excel in their respective fields.

All initiatives & activities are planned for making every friend with spinal injury self reliant & independent.

We encourage Equality through :

Information -

- Publication – **One World**
- Comprehensive website: www.ninafoundation.org
- Participation in workshops, seminars and conferences

Awareness -

- Spinal Injury Day (25th June)- Instituted for the first time in India

Empowerment -

- 1st Helpline for p Spinal Injury: 9769680820

Ring of Support :

- 1st Support Group for people with Spinal Injury

Adventure & Achievement :

- Games, Sports & Recreation
- Mumbai Marathon

Confidence Building :

- Outbound Programmes
- Educational Workshops
- Wellness Seminars
- Rockstar & Willstar Awards
- Group Outings on Foundation Day, 9th March

Inclusion :

- Educational Scholarships
- Employment Opportunities
- Research in Disability Studies

Hope :

- Counselling & Therapy (physio, occupation, dance)

Ideas & Innovations:

- Innovate, incubate and institutionalise new ideas, techniques, methods, appliances and equipments for improved quality of life.

Nina Foundation has empowered over 600 friends with spinal injury to lead a good quality of life in India & has written a *Charter* encompassing Educational Institutions, Media, Corporates, Government, Healthcare Professionals and Citizens.

Nina Foundation has also actively given action points & suggested amendments to the PWD Act 1995.

Nina Foundation's ethos is that Disabled means 'Doubly Abled' and to become a catalyst for optimising our potential!

We at Nina Foundation are on our journey towards *Equality* for 10 years. We began with a harsh reality ' Indian Government, medical sector, hospitals, therapists and caregivers - nobody is **interested** in Spinal Injury rehabilitation. Why? Because It's a long drawn process, the results slow and delayed and to top it not much money to be made.

We consciously embarked on our journey to transform this very perception. To make the various stakeholders in the ecosystem to connect and empathise with our issues, to highlight the significance of the rehab process and awaken every person with Spinal Injury, to take interest and participate to create a new reality!

What did we do?

We *shared* what we learnt.

We *created* higher *aspirations*.

We *exchanged newer* methods.

We *stirred* the *collective conscience*

And

We got everyone interested!

We realize lots yet needs to be done. And we are very confident we will get there & get there very soon.