

A Bod-It-All shop? Not *my* idea of happiness

Should there ever be a pop-up shop selling body parts I wonder if I would be first in the queue. After all I have form. Remember Chapmans and the silver chest of drawers? Me, pictured in the News & Star, embracing my silver chest having stood for two hours, being first in the queue to grab it. My determined spirit has no bounds.

Imagine the demand. Of course these body parts would simply click into place and be very much of the do-it-yourself variety. No need for outside interference and hard-to-fit-in appointments and overnight stays in hospital. A bit like flatpack furniture but easier. On my list, in no particular order, would be a new bit for my right shoulder, a new bit for my right knee and a new bit for my right elbow – all very functional. We shoppers would simply take the path of least resistance and head off to Bod-It-All and hey presto – fixed. Give or take the occasional wrong part.

But, stop. This can't be right. Whole industries would grind to a halt. No more motivating lectures on eating the right nutrition for strong bones. I will say this very quietly – no more Pilates. What would I do? What would anyone do? Only Bod-It-All factories would thrive.

Of course that shop will never pitch up in any out-of-town centre and for that I am actually extremely grateful. Why? Well where would the challenge be? That wonderful resilience humans have to overcome niggles would vanish. Sore knee? Click on another one. It wouldn't be right. We humans would be lost without the occasional conundrum. Something isn't quite right – how did that happen, when did it happen and how can we make it better? It would be akin to not talking about the weather.

Now let us step into the realms of reality. In my experience those that shout the loudest have the least to shout about. The



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real heroes are the quiet ones. I taught workshops for many years – usually groups of 20. I would begin by asking if anyone had anything I needed to know about. I would then visit each individual personally and discuss their case. By the time I reached number 20, whether they had anything or not, they were without fail, not going to be left out. I later changed my question to 'anything chronic' and moved more swiftly. Curiously I will always remember a young girl who once class began didn't appear to have much movement in her arm. It was prosthetic and she was wearing a long-sleeved top. She hadn't said a thing. I have followed Oscar Pistorius for a long time – he is a sensation. Oscar was born without fibulas – the outer bones that run between the knee and the ankle. At 11 months old he had his legs amputated below the knee. He had a disability that would have meant a life of difficulty but no-one told Oscar. He carries on living life to the full. The Biomechatronics Group at MIT are a world away from my fictitious Bod-It-All shop. They seek to advance technologies that promise to accelerate the merging of body and machine. They are playing a huge part in the Paralympic Games.

Nobody could fail to be inspired watching 'Harry's Mountain Heroes'. These military personnel had overcome unimaginable hurdles; apart from the most obvious common bond, they also shared their belief that without sporting challenge they would diminish. And what about the New Zealand swimmer Sophie Pascoe, who claimed New Zealand's first gold in the London Paralympics? She believes losing her leg at the age of two after an accident with a ride-on lawn mower was the best thing that could have happened to her!

These people want to be remembered for their ability, not their disability. Nobody is going to argue with that. 