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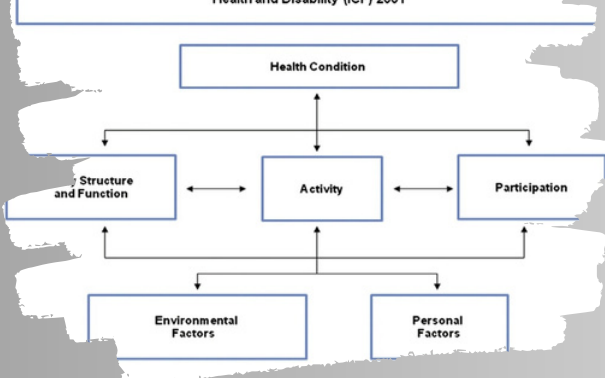
# PHYSIOSA

MAGAZINE

FOR EVERY PHYSIO WHO CARES



The International Classification of Functioning,  
Health and Disability (ICF) 2001



THE ROLE OF  
SPORT IN  
REHABILITATION  
AND GLOBAL  
HEALTH



BEYOND  
IMPAIRMENTS

LEADING WITH  
PURPOSE

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Don't forget  
to share the monthly PhysioBiz!

Okay!

I Got It



# EDITOR'S NOTE

As we turn the page into May, the global focus on wellness and movement takes centre stage with Global Move for Health Day—a perfect reminder of the unique role physiotherapists play in encouraging healthier, more active lifestyles. This issue of PhysioSA dives into how we, as a profession, continue to be powerful advocates for physical activity, recovery, and resilience.

Inside, you'll find stories of leadership, innovation, and inspiration—from grassroots rehabilitation projects making waves in communities, to thought-provoking reflections from our provincial branches. We also highlight the tools and platforms the SASP provides to support your professional growth, advocacy, and marketing efforts—including resources like PhysioBiz and PhysioPlus.

Whether you're working in private practice, the public sector, or exploring new avenues of community engagement, we hope this issue reminds you of the impact you make every day—and equips you to keep making it.

Warm regards,

*Diana Coetzer*





# THE ROLE OF SPORT IN REHABILITATION AND GLOBAL HEALTH:

## ADVANCING PHYSICAL RECOVERY, MENTAL WELL-BEING, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Written by Mughammad Abu Bakr Reis

### Introduction

Sport rehabilitation is a vital yet often underutilised tool in global health, offering significant benefits for physical recovery, mental resilience, and social reintegration. In South Africa, sport has the potential to drive social transformation, enhance health outcomes, and foster greater inclusivity for individuals with disabilities.

### The Value of Sport in Rehabilitation

Sport-based rehabilitation strengthens both the physical and psychological recovery of individuals facing injuries, disabilities, or chronic conditions. Research highlights numerous benefits: physically, structured physical activity improves cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal strength, and functional mobility, promoting faster recovery from injuries and surgeries. Mentally, sport participation boosts endorphin levels, helping to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety while building resilience and emotional well-being. Socially, engagement in team sports and adaptive programmes restores confidence, reconnects individuals with their communities, and challenges the stigma often associated with disability or illness.

### Adaptive Sport and Disability Rehabilitation

Adaptive sport plays a critical role in promoting inclusivity within rehabilitation. Programmes such as wheelchair basketball, para-athletics, and community-based disability sports initiatives offer individuals with disabilities opportunities to enhance their mobility, independence, and overall quality of life. In South Africa, grassroots initiatives have made notable progress in integrating people with disabilities into mainstream society through the power of sport.

### Barriers to Sport Rehabilitation

Despite its clear benefits, the integration of sport into rehabilitation faces significant challenges. Cultural misconceptions about the abilities of disabled individuals can discourage participation, while economic barriers—particularly the high cost of adaptive sports equipment—limit access to necessary resources. Geographical constraints further compound the issue, especially in rural and under-resourced areas where sports infrastructure is lacking. Additionally, the absence of structured policies that integrate sport rehabilitation into broader healthcare frameworks restricts opportunities for individuals to benefit from these interventions.



## Best Practices for Implementing Sport Rehabilitation

Overcoming these barriers requires coordinated efforts from healthcare professionals, policymakers, and sport organisations. Inclusive policies at both national and international levels must recognise sport as a critical component of rehabilitation. Community-driven programmes need adequate funding to ensure greater accessibility. Healthcare providers, especially physiotherapists and rehabilitation specialists, should receive specialised training in sports-based recovery techniques. Strong collaboration between healthcare facilities, sports federations, and disability advocacy groups is essential to expanding the reach and impact of sport rehabilitation initiatives.

## Sport Rehabilitation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sport-based rehabilitation closely aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) emphasises the importance of physical activity in improving health outcomes and quality of life for individuals with disabilities. SDG 4 (Quality Education) supports the inclusion of sports within school curriculums, creating more inclusive learning environments. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) highlights the role of sports in empowering women and supporting survivors of gender-based violence. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) recognises how sport initiatives, especially within refugee camps and underserved communities, contribute to social reintegration and trauma recovery.



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## Case Studies in Sport Rehabilitation

Several case studies illustrate the success of sport-based rehabilitation, both globally and within South Africa. The Paralympics continue to be a powerful platform for advocating disability sports and raising awareness around accessibility. Initiatives like wheelchair basketball programmes across Africa have significantly enhanced social inclusion and mobility for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Physical Activity Guidelines offer a robust framework for incorporating sports into public health and rehabilitation strategies.

## Call to Action

To strengthen sport rehabilitation efforts in South Africa, healthcare professionals, sports organisations, and policymakers must take decisive action. Priorities include advocating for sports-inclusive rehabilitation policies, promoting adaptive sports programmes within healthcare settings and communities, supporting research into sports rehabilitation outcomes, and expanding access to sports programmes that focus on rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities.

**THIS EXPERIENCE HAS NOT ONLY ENRICHED OUR ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE BUT HAS ALSO PREPARED US TO BECOME EVIDENCE-DRIVEN, THOUGHTFUL PRACTITIONERS**



## Conclusion

Integrating sport into rehabilitation offers immense potential to improve health outcomes, build resilience, and promote inclusivity. By addressing existing barriers and adopting best practices, South Africa can fully harness the transformative power of sports within healthcare and social development. The South African Society of Physiotherapy's Sports Group can lead the way, ensuring that sports rehabilitation remains a key pillar in building a healthier, more inclusive society. 🦿



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# BEYOND IMPAIRMENTS: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN PHYSIOTHERAPY: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR CLIENTS WITH NEUROLOGICAL IMPAIRMENTS

Written by Alison Smith

Participation is a core component of health, as defined by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). As physiotherapists, we understand its importance, yet we often feel more skilled and comfortable addressing impairments in body structures and functions than facilitating true participation.

Let's be honest: clients rarely tell us they want "better hip control" or "less knee hyperextension when walking." Instead, they share goals like getting from one class to another before the bell rings, crossing the street safely, or walking through a shopping mall alongside their family. Physiotherapy—especially for adults and children with neurological impairments—becomes truly effective only when it empowers individuals to engage meaningfully in their daily environments.

In this article, we explore the "what, why, and how" of participation, particularly in the context of working with clients who have neurological conditions. For these individuals, complete "fixing" of impairments may never be possible. Understanding and facilitating participation, therefore, becomes essential for making a lasting, meaningful difference.

## What Is Participation?

The ICF defines participation as “involvement in a life situation.” In physiotherapy, this means more than simply sitting, standing, or walking; it concerns whether individuals can apply these skills meaningfully in their everyday lives.

Importantly, participation is not just about physical attendance at an event or activity—it is about active involvement and engagement. A person may be present at school, a sports event, or a social gathering but still experience exclusion if they lack the motor, cognitive, or social skills necessary for full engagement.

## Why Does Participation Matter?

Participation is both “a means and an end,” as Imms et al. (2017) describe.

It is not merely an outcome of therapy but a mechanism that drives development and well-being.

Participation in home, community, school, and work environments fosters:

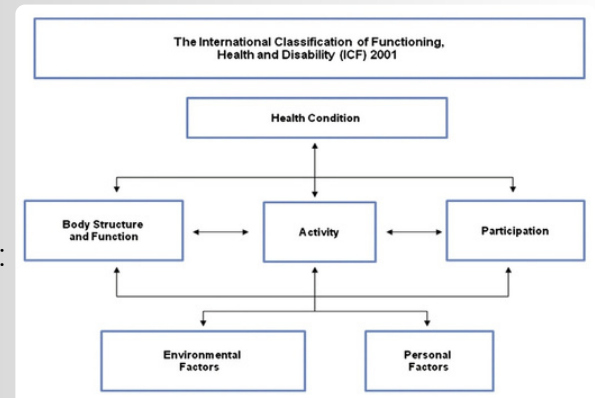
- Skill development
- Refinement of movement strategies
- Improved emotional and psychological well-being
- Increased confidence
- Enhanced quality of life
- Exploration of personal interests
- A strengthened sense of identity

Conversely, limited participation reduces opportunities for learning, social connection, and independence, often perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

If physiotherapists focus solely on "fixing" impairments—as encouraged by the medical model still prevalent in much of our training—we risk missing the broader picture. For many individuals with neurological conditions, some level of impairment is likely to persist. Striving for full "normalisation" of movement may be futile. Instead, we should broaden our focus to holistic outcomes.

Rather than asking, “Can this child dorsiflex their ankle?” we should ask, “Can this child run and play with their peers?” Our aim should not only be improving movement quality but ensuring that movement enables meaningful participation in daily life.

Without a focus on participation, even clinically effective interventions risk becoming functionally irrelevant.



The ICF

# How Can We Embed Participation into Our Practice?

## 1. Assess Participation from the Start

Participation should be assessed during the initial evaluation. Explore which activities are most important to the client and their family, the daily challenges they experience, and the environmental barriers or facilitators they face.

The nine ICF domains can guide this assessment:

- Learning and applying knowledge
- General tasks and demands
- Communication
- Mobility
- Self-care
- Domestic life
- Interpersonal interactions and relationships
- Major life areas
- Community, social, and civic life

**WORKING ALONGSIDE  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS,  
SPEECH THERAPISTS, TEACHERS,  
AND FAMILIES ALLOWS FOR A  
RICHER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE  
APPROACH TO PARTICIPATION.**

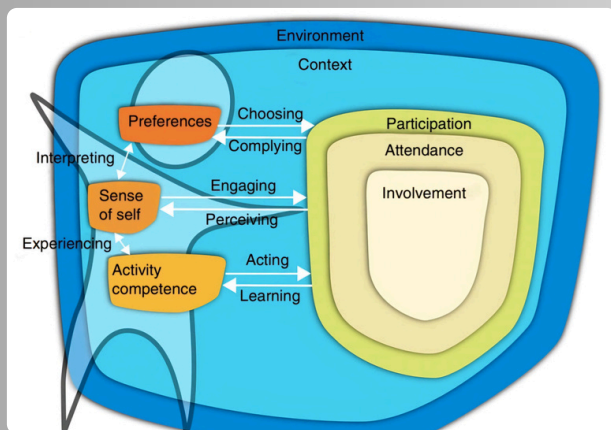
## 2. Set Participation-Based Goals

Traditional goals often focus on impairments (e.g., increasing knee flexion or strengthening a specific muscle). While important, these goals should be connected to real-world outcomes.

Instead of saying, "Improve right ankle dorsiflexion strength," consider:

- "Move independently from one classroom to another within three minutes before the bell rings."
- "Cross the street independently at a pace of 0.8 m/s to safely access local shops."

Participation-focused goals should be meaningful, measurable, and directly linked to activities that matter to the client.



Participation as a means and an end

## 3. Conduct Sessions in Authentic Environments

Physiotherapy delivered in sterile, clinical settings may not translate into real-world skills. Whenever possible, assess and treat clients in natural environments such as homes, schools, or workplaces. If in-person visits aren't feasible, request videos of the client engaging in these settings.



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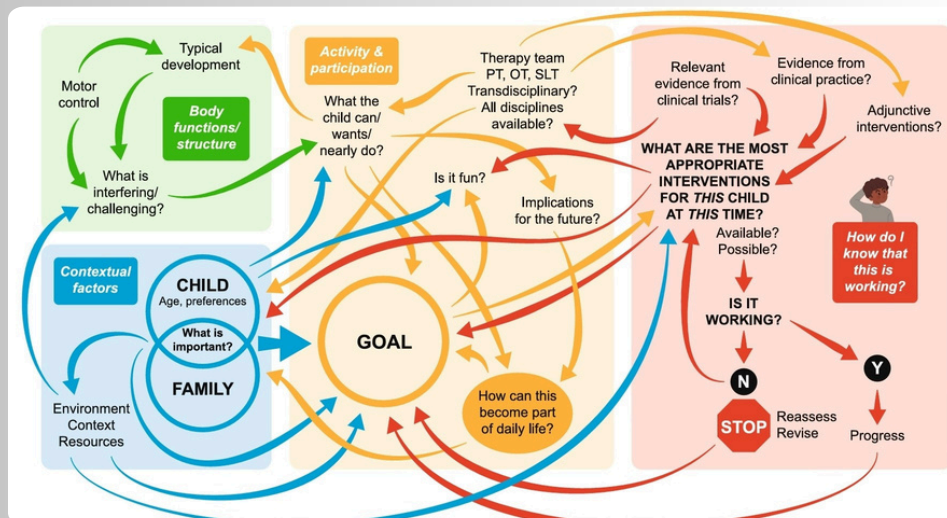
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## 4. Enhance Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Working alongside occupational therapists, speech therapists, teachers, and families allows for a richer, more comprehensive approach to participation. Each team member brings unique insights and expertise that can help address participation barriers more effectively.



The Bobath Clinical Reasoning Framework model for paediatric Bobath based on systems science (taken from Mayston, Saloojee & Foley, 2024). Notice the centrality of participation

## 5. Address Environmental Factors

Environmental factors play a significant role in facilitating or hindering participation. These include:

- Physical accessibility
- Availability and appropriateness of adaptive equipment
- Family and community support
- Social attitudes toward disability


Physiotherapists should advocate for environmental modifications and inclusive policies, recommend appropriate assistive devices, and collaborate with others to enhance access and engagement.

## 6. Connect Every Session to Participation

While addressing impairments remains important, it must always be linked to functional outcomes. Even dedicating just 10 minutes at the end of a session to a participation-focused activity can make a meaningful difference in a client's life.

## Conclusion

Participation should not be a secondary consideration—it must be a primary goal in physiotherapy, especially when working with individuals with neurological impairments.

By embedding participation-focused principles into our practice, we ensure that our interventions are not only clinically effective but also meaningful and empowering. Our role extends beyond improving movement; it encompasses enabling individuals to live full, connected, and engaged lives. 

**PHYSIOTHERAPY**



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# LEADING WITH PURPOSE: MEET LOUISE (DE JONGE) VAN ROOYEN, NORTHERN CAPE SASP CHAIR

From managing a thriving private practice to launching inclusive community projects and navigating the joys and challenges of motherhood, Louise (de Jonge) van Rooyen has worn many hats—each with passion and purpose. As she reflects on her four-year term as Chair of the SASP Northern Cape (NC) Branch, Louise shares the journey, the lessons, and the heart behind it all.



Louise (de Jonge) van Rooyen and her family.

“Serving as Chair of the Northern Cape branch of the South African Society of Physiotherapy has been one of the most enriching and inspiring chapters of my professional life,” says Louise. “I knew the role would come with challenges, but I also saw it as a unique opportunity to grow—both personally and professionally—and to strengthen our profession within one of South Africa’s most diverse and expansive provinces.

Physiotherapists in the Northern Cape are no strangers to doing more with less. With vast distances and limited resources, the region presents its own set of challenges. Yet, as Louise explains, it’s precisely this environment that fosters an incredible spirit of community, resilience, and innovation.



NC school outreach.

“I’ve had the privilege of working alongside some of the most dedicated professionals—people who go above and beyond to serve their communities,” she says. “As a province, we focused on nurturing those connections, advocating nationally for our needs, and making professional development opportunities more accessible.” One of Louise’s proudest achievements stems from her community service year in the public sector. There, she encountered the deep social isolation experienced by people with disabilities—particularly in relation to sports and community participation. That realisation sparked an idea that would grow into a transformative initiative.



The Wheelchair Rugby Challenge, a local event that began as a once-off game, soon evolved into an annual highlight. “Our goal was to create a space where people with disabilities could not only play sport but also experience the pride and joy of teamwork and competition,” she explains. “Through local fundraising and generous support, we secured sponsorships, equipment, and even helped athletes travel to competitions. Today, it’s more than just a sport—it’s a symbol of inclusion, empowerment, and resilience.” All of this happened while Louise continued to lead Louise de Jonge Physiotherapy, a dynamic private practice committed to patient-centred care. And just when life seemed full enough, she embraced another major role—motherhood. “Becoming a mom brought its own kind of beautiful chaos,” she reflects. “It taught me to set boundaries, lean on support systems, and find joy in small victories—whether at home, in the clinic, or within the community.”

Balancing her many roles hasn’t always been easy, but Louise believes each one enriches the other. “My clinical work keeps me grounded. My leadership role connects me to a larger purpose. My community initiatives inspire me. And my family gives it all meaning.” As she steps away from her role as Chair, Louise does so with immense gratitude. “I’m thankful for every challenge, every success, and every person who walked this path with me. This experience deepened my love for physiotherapy and for the people who are driving it forward. I hope my journey encourages others to get involved, give back, and believe in the power of small beginnings to create lasting change.” 🦋



Working alongside some of the most dedicated professionals.



“My community initiatives inspire me.”



“My clinical work keeps me grounded.”



Wheelchair Rugby Challenge






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WRITTEN BY DALE LINSTRÖM





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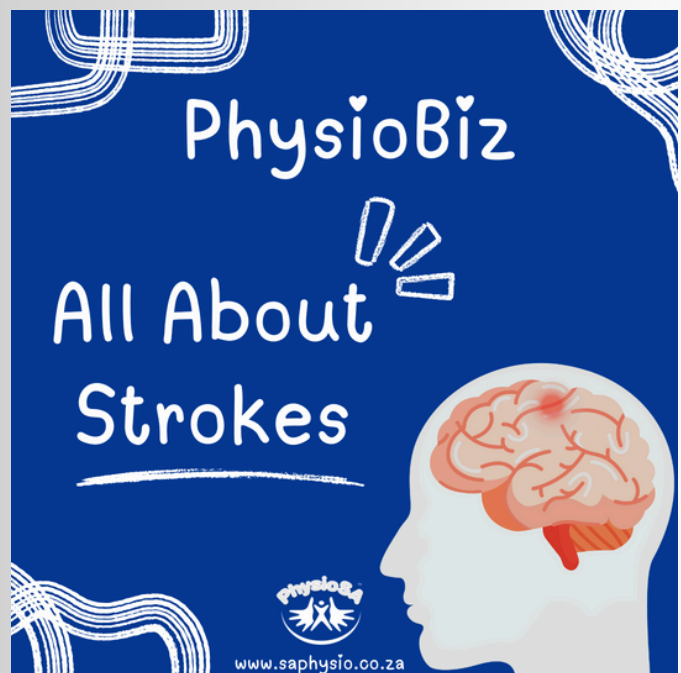
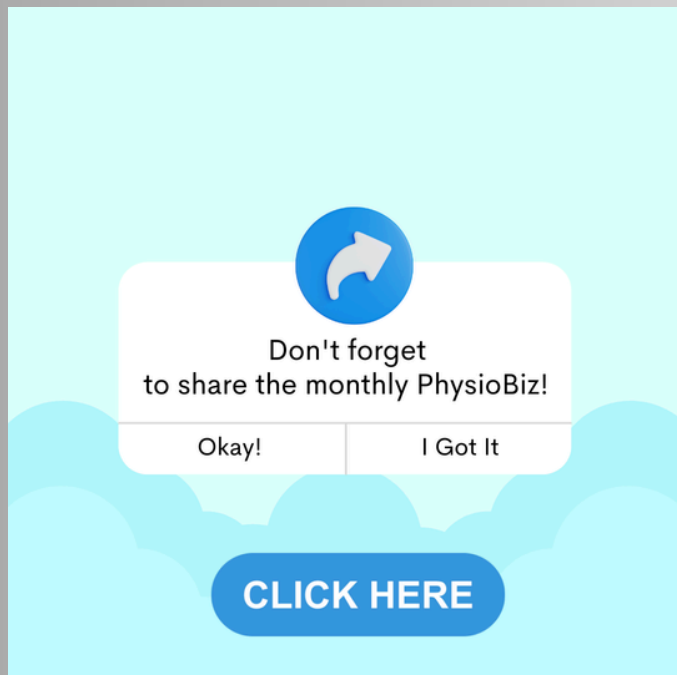
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