

## The IPC's weekly update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - 30/04/2020

*The purpose of this update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.*

This week in the newsletter we have the final article in our three-part series on mindfulness. This has been prepared by International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Governing Board Member Dr. Debra Alexander, a former Head of the Clinical Psychology Department at Tygerberg Hospital and the Stellenbosch University, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. Debra runs a private clinical psychology and neuropsychology practice in her native South Africa.

Mindfulness is the process of intentionally bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment without judgment. Over the last two weeks, Debra has examined the concepts of acceptance and choices we have all had to make regarding COVID-19. This week she considers how it will change us.

Debra acknowledges that this is a time of significant change, but also outlines how change is a constant in our lives and something to be embraced not concerned with. She looks at how we can maintain inner balance at this time by being mindful of our perceptions, behaviours and lifestyles. Debra also offers some practical actions as to how we can care for ourselves right now.

Thank you to Debra for her thoughts. We will have another guest columnist next week.

We want to continue to use the IPC's digital channels to promote and increase awareness of all the positive work that is taking place in the Paralympic Movement right now.

One fascinating COVID-19 story we reported on this week was that of retired British Paralympic wheelchair fencer Matt Campbell-Hill. He is the co-founder and designer of the AerosolShield, a disposable plastic 'pop-up tent' which creates a barrier between COVID-19 patients and medical staff. It covers the patient's head, neck and shoulder area while receiving treatment; and protects staff from airborne droplets that may contain the virus. Read about his amazing invention and story [here](#).

If you would like to let us know about your story or raise awareness of any other initiative, then please get in contact at [media@paralympic.org](mailto:media@paralympic.org)

This week's update contains the following information:

- Tokyo 2020 & IPC updates, including a new update on Qualification
- Getting our heads around the COVID-19 Part Three - Change, by Dr. Debra Alexander, IPC Board Governing Member
- World Health Organisation update
- Latest media statements from the IPC - 'Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes'

## Tokyo 2020 and IPC updates

### Qualification

The IPC has published updated qualification regulations for 11 of the 22 sports on the programme of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games: Archery, Athletics, Boccia, Goalball, Powerlifting, Rowing, Shooting, Swimming, Triathlon, Wheelchair Basketball, and Wheelchair Fencing. Together, these sports represent almost 3,000 of the available 4,400 athlete slots.

Further updates will follow over the coming weeks. We are in regular contact with all International Federations, and we hope to have a complete set of qualification regulations published by the end of May 2020.

The most up-to-date version of the Tokyo 2020 qualification regulations can always be found here: <https://www.paralympic.org/tokyo-2020/qualification-criteria>

### Tokyo 2020 speculation

Some of you may be aware of the comments this week from Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori. He suggested that Games in 2021 could be scrapped if they don't take place next year, and that the Olympics and Paralympics might share opening and closing ceremonies instead of holding their usual separate ones.

It's important to note that these were the personal thoughts of President Mori and not Tokyo 2020, the IPC or the International Olympic Committee (IOC). We are working with all the key delivery partners to deliver the Games as planned. When there are confirmed announcements, our stakeholders will be among the first to be informed.

### The creation of the Outbreak Prevention Taskforce

Last week, we told you about the creation of the Outbreak Prevention Taskforce. This is a medical taskforce to provide endurance events, that include mass gatherings, with guidelines for outbreak prevention.

The Taskforce is swiftly moving forward and have created two strategic workgroups responsible for the following:

1. Guidelines for race organisers and sport governing bodies
2. Develop a 'how to return to normal activities' plan

The IPC is being represented on both subgroups by Professor Wayne Derman. The Taskforce is working hard at adapting and adding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) risk and mitigation matrices. Once there is more news from the Taskforce, we shall provide updates.

### Para sport event postponements and cancellations

This week the decision was made to reschedule the World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe to 26 August-4 September 2022.

The decision follows the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games to 2021 due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. The Kobe World Championships were initially scheduled for 17-26 September 2021 but have been shifted to 2022 to avoid a clash with the Paralympic Games.

The list of cancelled Para sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

### Tokyo 2020 stakeholder communications - accommodation, hospitality and tickets

Updates are being prepared for individual National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) regarding accommodation, hospitality and tickets. Further communications on these and other topics will be issued by the IPC and Tokyo 2020 in due course.

### **Getting our heads around the COVID-19, Part Three - Change**

**By Dr Debra Alexander, IPC Board Governing Member**

In my previous posts about how we approach dealing with COVID-19, I've explored subjects such as acceptance and choice, all the while thinking

about how we take care of ourselves. My final thoughts are about moving in the direction of change - a changing world and our own change.

We are living in a unique time in history. The world as we once knew it is, courtesy of COVID-19, changing at a rapid pace. We are going to have to adapt by changing the way we engage with it, each other and ourselves.

For some of us, the thought of change may be rather scary, whilst others may find it quite exciting. If you are thinking that change is not for you, that you hate change and can't change, well, I have a little surprise for you, as our lives are always about change.

In life, change is inevitable. It is evident in our transformation from infancy to toddlerhood, to preadolescence, adolescence and adulthood. We are constantly evolving, growing and learning and, eventually, change even leads to old age and death. Nothing is permanent.

Change constantly occurs in our bodies mostly without any conscious interventions from ourselves. Within our bodies change is largely protective, if change did not take place, our bodies would not be able to heal broken bones, cuts, bruises and infections. Even in times of great stress or threat, our bodies respond in either fight, flight or freeze mode, and once the 'danger' has passed our bodies return to a state of homeostasis i.e. there's an equilibrium, things are stable and balanced.

Knowing that change is part of our being and that our minds and bodies are adaptable should be hugely encouraging when the subject of embracing change is broached in the context of adjusting to a new world order associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Finding balance in a time of change

How we experience this pandemic will depend on how we perceive change itself. The definitive impact on our physical and mental health from the prolonged experience of negative stress will depend largely on how we adapt to the rapid on-going changes whilst still preserving our own personal equilibrium. Adding to the impact, the prolonged experience of negative stress will be our beliefs about the world and ourselves, the meanings we assign to occurrences in our daily lives, our awareness or lack thereof of our reactions to situations and our mindlessness tendencies.

High achievers are often thought of as resilient because of their ability to endure on-going high levels of stress - they just grit their teeth and push through. However, if they fail to see the positive side of stressful

situations, eventually when faced with sustained challenges and disappointments, they too wither and succumb to ill-health.

So how, even if we are resilient, can we keep changing whilst still preserving our own inner equilibrium and sense of wholeness?

One way of maintaining our own inner balance is to be mindful of our perceptions, behaviours and lifestyles. It is only when we have some awareness of (i.e. we have insight into) our own blunders, gaps and blind spots that we can, if necessary, effect change. So, let's look at perceptions, behaviours and lifestyles, and what actions we can take to look after ourselves.

### Perceiving the positives

Keep in mind that our perceptions become our reality. If we perceive the impact of the pandemic to be extremely stressful, this will be the reality we respond to. Alternatively, if we perceive this stressful situation in a positive light and an opportunity for new growth and learning, this will be our reality.

Do you remember as a child, and when times were tough, those around you said the following: "When life gives you lemons make lemonade" or "Turn that knot in your tummy into a beautiful bow". They were encouraging you to look on the brighter side of life. If it is difficult for you to look on the brighter side, you may wish to try the following when you notice yourself making a negative comment, immediately back it up with three positive ones - eventually you will change your mindset.

If you are unaware of how your perceptions impact your actions, ask a family member or friend to point out these moments to you. You can also reciprocate this gesture if the other is open to it, so that we all start a positive rather than a negative spiral in changing our perceptions.

### Questions to ask of your behaviour

Being mindful of our behaviour requires us to slow down, pause, be still and honestly and openly reflect on our actions towards ourselves, others and the environment. Here are some questions to consider:

- Do we respect ourselves, others, nature and our environment?
- Are we kind, caring, compassionate, charitable, empathic?
- Are we tolerant, understanding and patient?
- Do we nourish and nurture ourselves and others?
- What difference are we making in this world?

## Appraising your lifestyle

Being mindful of our lifestyle involves appraising whether we are:

- getting sufficient sleep and rest;
- managing stress appropriately;
- considering our food choices carefully in relation to a healthy diet, appropriate nutritional supplements and avoidance of harmful substances;
- balancing training, exercise, recovery, work, recreation and fun activities;
- engaging in healthy relationships;
- seeking and providing appropriate emotional support;
- making use of physical and psychological therapies; engaging in sustainable practices;
- engaging with formal (mindful breathing, eating, movement, etc.) and informal mindfulness practices (noticing habits and routine daily activities).

## Springing into action

Another way of maintaining our own inner balance, especially when the going gets tough is to spring into action to take care of ourselves in the best way possible in this moment.

Generally, when one is grounded through the practice of mindfulness, the most adept way to deal with difficult and stressful situations is to remain mindful, i.e. pause, breathe, consider what one can and can't control.

However, if the circumstances are out of our control, simply allow them to resolve themselves, whilst taking care of the things that we can control. Sometimes, however, especially in very difficult times when we feel down, very stressed, exhausted and anxious the wisest thing to do, instead of moping and feeling sorry for ourselves, is to effect change i.e. get into action - drive (motivation) follows action, i.e. just do it. Even if you don't feel like it, don't think about it, just do it! When you start, the motivation will follow.

The best action at this point is to do something that brings you great joy and something that leaves you with a sense of accomplishment and/or fulfilment.

Lastly, whatever you do, do it mindfully. Ask yourself the following questions. Is this necessary? Is this helpful? Is this kind? And, am I making a difference?

Do know however that you will find answers. This time will pass, and you will have changed. You will find yourself back on a road to Tokyo.

The reality is we all will, and together we will make a difference.

### **World Health Organisation update**

According to WHO's latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 30 April 2020 15:00 CEST, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has risen to over three million. The United States of America remains the global epicentre and is responsible for a third of the cases globally. John Hopkins University of Medicine is reporting that nearly one million people have fully recovered.

Thursday 30 April marks three months since WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern over the outbreak of novel coronavirus. By 30 January also, the IPC had disseminated its first two communications to Members on this disease.

This week WHO reiterated a call for unity at the national level, and solidarity at the global level. Also, WHO's Regional Office for Europe published key considerations for the gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions introduced by many countries in response to the spread of COVID-19 across the European Region. The transition out of lockdown is set to be a complex and uncertain phase. Challenges and circumstances vary from country to country and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Later this week, WHO will launch its second Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, with an estimate of the resources needed for the next stage of the global response.

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and have a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

[WHO's WhatsApp messaging service](#)

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service is providing the latest news and information on coronavirus in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

#### Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا](https://wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا)

#### English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp [wa.me/41798931892?text=hi](https://wa.me/41798931892?text=hi)

#### French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017298?text=salut](https://wa.me/41225017298?text=salut)

#### Hindi

Send "नमस्ते" to +41 22 501 73 41 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017341?text=नमस्ते>

#### Italian

Send "ciao" to +41 22 501 78 34 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017834?text=ciao>

#### Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

[wa.me/41225017690?text=hola](https://wa.me/41225017690?text=hola)

#### Portuguese

Send "oi" to +41 22 501 77 35 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017735?text=oi>

#### Latest IPC media statements

**Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes (drafted 18 March, reviewed 30 April)**

At the IPC the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.



Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than is the general population to following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

#### Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)