

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a desk. In the background, a silver laptop is open. In the foreground, a white spiral-bound notebook is open, with a black pen resting on it. A green paperclip and a green pushpin are also on the notebook. To the right, a white ruler with the brand name 'Shatterproof' is visible. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a clean, professional workspace.

# TRANSFORMING LIVES AND SOCIETIES

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# WHOSE LIVES

## TRANSFORMING LIVES

**Students' testimonials: How online university transformed lives of students with disabilities**

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# STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Megan   Paolo   Jennifer

Study Girl   Rosemary   Crusoe

## WHO ARE THEY?

Master  
students

Cohort-  
based  
programs

Older than  
average  
students  
35-74

Various  
disabilities

Registered  
with  
accessibility  
services

# Descriptive phenomenology

Amedeo Giorgi (2009)

## Experiences of interaction

For students with disabilities in online university programs

## Becoming

Transformative experience!

I go out to the community and speak about my disabilities and how the art therapy and my schooling has helped me stay quite healthy; mentally and physically.

Study Girl

...in every day life, there's so many restrictions, whereas with the online studying it removes the restrictions. It offers more opportunity... When I do an online course, and particularly when I complete it, I feel like I've conquered quite a bit and still am able to function and contribute to society despite the disability. It helps me to rise above the disability and still function normally to some extent.

Rosemary



I am at the period where I'm finding I can do more than I used to do but in a different area in a different way... I would say I'm feeling very upbeat and I'm really looking at it as being my time and launching myself in a new area.

Paolo

I'm in this transition from who I was to who I am going to be. I am really open about it because I find that suggestions... that my course mates have to say are often helpful in feeling understood, people getting where I'm at.

Megan

I know that I am a productive,  
intelligent and creative individual that  
still has purpose on this planet  
because of this program.

Jennifer

# What made the difference?

Structure of experiences of studying in online university programs for students with disabilities

# Having access

Make courses accessible and flexible

# Working harder

Understand disability and recognize efforts.

# Being supported

Recognize diversity of experiences. Know your role.

# Belonging

Build community.



# REMOVE BARRIERS

Create flexible, accessible and inclusive learning opportunities for all. In cohort-based programs that is what made the difference and transformed the lives.

# Thank you!

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## CREDITS

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- ◇ Photographs by [Unsplash](#)