

The AFib Five: John Criswell's Story

John Criswell

My name is John Criswell, and I found out I had Atrial Fibrillation two and a half years ago. I had no symptoms of AFib, atrial fibrillation. I had no symptoms of heart disease other than the fact that I've had high cholesterol nearly all my life, and it's a family situation. I had a little high blood pressure once I turned 60 and turned 70, I realized that my blood pressure was higher than it should have been.

I was made aware of the risk for stroke and the reasons why that risk occurs. And so I suppose I keep an eye out for it. We've learned the symptoms of a stroke and what to expect, and what's a good sign of it or a bad sign of it, however you want to put it, but I don't obsess about it. And I take my medications very carefully. Religiously. I really don't miss medications. Even if I'm traveling. I make sure that I have extras in case something gets lost.

Because I don't want to miss and let whatever it is get ahead of me. But at the same time, I don't fret about it. I've not become a hypochondriac. I'm not constantly worried, "Oh my, it's going to take me any moment now." It's just good practice, I think, to keep up with what I'm being medicated for, with what, and when I'm supposed to be taking it. But I don't. I don't take all that much, quite frankly. I only take a couple of pills, and that's it.

I take a very positive attitude. I have extra years that I have been given by catching this when we did, and I'm going to use them as best I possibly can.

Every now and then one of my grandkids will just spontaneously come up to me and say, "Granddaddy, how are you doing?" I think I say the same things to them that I'd say to anybody who may be listening or watching is, "I feel great!" I'm doing the things I want to do and need to do and for the most part, with no difficulties.

I fish; I chase the dog around the yard and play, yell, hoot and holler with the grandkids. If you're willing to work for it and if you are willing to try to stay to healthy, rather than just continuing the old whatever bad things you were doing, and that – I think as much as anything- that's it for us. Elizabeth and I have decided that we're not going to let our illness, heart disease or whatever else is going on, we're not going to let that dictate our lives. We'll dictate our lives on our terms.

There may be some slight modifications based on, you know, our age. This has not been a huge thing in my life, it's just one of those stumbling blocks that you pick up and dust yourself off afterward and you go on and you learn from it. And you don't repeat the dumb things that you did, but it is not the end of your life.