

Stroke: Emotions and Support

A stroke is a serious medical event that can change your life, and the lives of your loved ones, in a minute.

While the stroke itself is a one-time event, its effects may be permanent or require hard work and lots of help to overcome.

The emotions you are feeling as a stroke survivor can be overwhelming – you may feel frustrated, depressed, thankful you survived, angry, or confused.

“I wouldn’t call it depression. I’d call it more just frustration because I couldn’t do things.”

“First I was very angry that this happened. Then I kind of broke down and realized the loss. I lost a lot. I lost my old life.”

For both the survivor and your care givers, it is important to accept your emotions and get the support you need to help you cope.

After a stroke, it can take time to adjust to the changes in family roles especially if you used to be the caregiver of your household and now you suddenly find yourself as the patient. Or if you have to take on new responsibilities.

Have patience, you cannot change how you relate to one another overnight. Open communication and professional support can be key to dealing with these complex emotions and changes.

One thing that can help you through the frustrations of rehabilitation is working with your healthcare team to set reasonable goals.

Then with each success, reward yourself for a job well done.

When rehabilitation does get frustrating and overwhelming, take some time to highlight your successes – no matter how small.

Each step you take forward is worth celebrating and can help you feel more positive.

“You know, you get angered, then you cry and you get upset, and then you accept and you move forward.”

Reach out to family and friends. They love you and want to see you succeed.

Talk to them about the emotions you are feeling. Sometimes just voicing a feeling to someone else can help you move forward. And they might observe emotions, like depression, that you might not notice.

Sometimes, however, you might feel down no matter how hard you try to be positive.

You may also feel helpless, weak, angry. All of these emotions are normal and can lead to depression, which is very common after a stroke.

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Depression can affect your rehabilitation and recovery so it should not be ignored or left to your caregivers to manage.

If all of your efforts to beat depression are just not working, don't be afraid to talk to your healthcare team.

Many times a psychiatrist or medications may be needed to help the situation. Whatever you can do to get past depression will help your recovery and healing.

No matter what your emotions after a stroke, you may find it helpful to talk to others who have gone through what you are experiencing.

There are a variety of support groups for stroke survivors, people caring for stroke survivors and even combination meetings. Ask your healthcare provider about support groups in your area.

"Oh, the support group is very nice. You go around the room and tell your story briefly and so everybody can hear and understand and they support you."

Having a stroke is scary. But staying positive is the best way to get positive rehabilitation results. When you get frustrated, overwhelmed, or depressed don't be afraid to reach out for the support you need. It can make the healing difference.