

Stroke **FORWARD**

MARCIA'S TOP 12 TIPS FOR RECOVERY

1. Accept help. When you are in early recovery, chances are that you have got to let someone bathe you, help dress you, and help you go to the bathroom. It made me realize how dependent I was on other people. It also made me want to get better, so I wouldn't need their help. It is a great motivator.
2. Nap whenever you need to. It may be that you can only get up for a short time. That's OK. Sometimes it took me all day to get shower, brush my teeth, and comb my hair. I'll tell you a secret. I sometimes went back to bed immediately after the shower. My teeth and hair needed to wait until later that day.
3. Exercise your brain every single day. Maybe you have to learn to walk, talk, eat, or pick up things. Very few people understand how difficult (and sometimes agonizing) rehab is. Please remember to celebrate your victories . . . large and small. I celebrated when I could walk without thinking,
4. Believe in yourself! Your healthcare providers may say you get better the first six months to a year after your stroke. While that is true, don't let them fool you. You can continue to get better as long as you think you can, and for me that means the rest of my life.
5. Find a doctor you like. You should know within seconds of the first meeting if s/he has warmth and competence. I spent a lot of time working with my doctors. It didn't give me confidence when I butted heads and simply followed what s/he said. When I was at an impasse, I asked people I knew for recommendations and found doctors that fit my style.
6. Ask questions. It's important to ask about any medicine you have been prescribed and don't understand! It turns out that I received medicine that generally every stroke patient receives, despite the fact that my stroke was abnormal. After I left the rehab hospital and was visiting my general practitioner, we discussed the drug and I went off of it right away.
7. Step back from people when you have sensory overload. It's normal for stroke patients to be overwhelmed. I think you have the right to withdraw even though some people won't understand.
8. Consider holistic practitioners who try to figure out how to treat your entire body. They have a lot of information that is off the radar from other doctors. Seeking help from holistic practitioners has resulted in wonderful relationships for me.
9. Recognize mistakes and be kind. Everybody makes them . . . from doctors, nurses, the caretaker, friends, and you. You have other things to worry about on your road to recovery.
10. Remember that people love you for who you are. If you have friends that leave, then find new friends. Easier said than done? I don't think so. If someone didn't fit with my new style, I moved on. There is so little time in our lives. I just didn't get it until my stroke.
11. Heartbreak happens. For me, it hurt the most when I couldn't tell my story succinctly. You just have to get up and try again. Maybe it takes confidence. Maybe it takes a new treatment. You have to keep going despite the disappointment you feel in the moment.
12. Sometimes things (interviews in my case) don't work out the way you plan. That's okay as long as you pick yourself up and try again. Maybe you try the same thing. Maybe you try something different. The point is that you keep going on.