

How to Stay Disciplined During Stroke Rehab

January 20, 2016



You wouldn't be the first to admit that it's difficult to stay disciplined during stroke rehab. [The process is tiring, frustrating](#), and seems like it's never ending. We get it.

But there's a way to stick to it even when times get tough. And it all starts with some good ol' grit.

You Gotta Have Grit

Grit is the ability to persevere in the presence of overwhelming challenges.

In order to grow as a person, we have to challenge ourselves. Sometimes we have to go out and find those challenges ourselves; other times life hands them to us all on its own.

To push through your stroke recovery, you need to turn your obstacles into opportunity. This challenge has found you – whether you like it or not – and it will make you stronger *if you let it*.

Allowing your stroke recovery to make you stronger – that's grit. **As a stroke survivor, you'll naturally develop a ton of grit.**

And the fact that you're reading this article means you're already willing to make positive change.

Grab and Pencil and Paper and Do This

So you've got grit. **Now it's time to find direction.**

You can't blindly move forward, otherwise your efforts will be meek and haphazard. And that doesn't lead to positive change.

No, you need a vision. And you can develop one by [setting smart goals](#).

There's something about having this *thing* that you're trying to achieve for that motivates us and keeps us disciplined about our practice.

Your goal can't just be to get better. Your goal has to be small and specific. Something that you can clearly see yourself achieving.

Here's how to set goals the smart way:

- Pick something small and specific to achieve
- Set a reasonable date to accomplish it by
- Look at your goals every single morning before you get up

We kid you not, this could be the most motivating thing you do for yourself every day.

You want to be able to use a keyboard two months from now? Write it down and look at that goal every single morning before you get up.

Then do your rehab exercises while keeping this very specific thing in mind.

If you do this, you'll succeed.

It's part of the glory of being human. We're wired to accomplish the small tasks we set out to do.

Big things, not so much. (At least, not right now.)

Stay Challenged but Don't Overdo It

Another characteristic of being human is the need for instant gratification.

We want results and we want them now.

So what do we do? We set really big goals and we go all out.

We work, work, work until we can't work anymore. And where does that leave us?

Partially recovered and burnt out.

To develop discipline during stroke recovery you have to take the slow and steady route.

You'll resist it, but that's the only way you'll ever get [fully recovered](#).

Your time is best invested in the slow and steady race than in the half mile sprint because the sprint just leads to burnout.

[Taking small, consistent steps](#) is what leads to true success.

But only if you're consistent.

Be Consistent... Really, Really Consistent

Right now your brain is in the process of [rewiring itself](#).

And in order to [effectively heal itself](#) and regain lost movement, you need to repeat your rehab exercises over and over.

This [repetition](#) helps reinforce the new pathways in your mind.

Consistency delivers double benefits: It helps you regain lost movement and develop a habit of doing your rehab exercises.

And habits are the best way to develop discipline.

Stop Wasting Your Willpower

Willpower is a limited resource.

When we use all our willpower up now, we're likely to be less disciplined later.

So stop wasting your mental juice mulling over *when* you're going to do your rehab exercises and start using it *during* your rehab exercises.

Pick a specific time that you'll do your rehab exercises every day and stick to it. Soon it will become a habit and you won't even have to think about it anymore. You'll just do it.

And with all that extra willpower left over, you can use it *during* your exercise and see results faster.

It's all about working smarter, not harder.

Don't Delay Your Recovery – Use Mind Sculpture

If you're waiting around until you feel like doing your rehab exercises, then you're delaying your recovery.

Because let's be honest, you'll never *feel like* doing your rehab exercises (unless you're a [super positive and ambitious person](#)).

And that's why you need discipline. You need to be able to do the things you don't want to do.

To help you get started ([because getting started is the hardest part](#)) use this super easy trick that's backed by neuroscience: *mind sculpture*.

In our article on [how to recover from stroke in 30 seconds a day](#), we wrote about the power of mind sculpture, which is a visualization technique that can help you do the things you don't want to do by visualizing yourself doing it.

Here's how to do mind sculpture:

- Pick something that you're undisciplined about doing (like those dang rehab exercises)
- Spend 30 seconds a day visualizing yourself doing it
- Use excruciating detail in your visualization ([refer to this article for more instruction](#))

If you do this every day, you can mentally train your brain to perform the daunting task. Then when it comes time to actually perform, your brain will already know what to do and your muscles will simply follow suit.

As you start visualizing yourself doing the things you don't want to do, you will become more disciplined and you'll start to consistently follow through.

And you can use mind sculpture at any point in the discipline-developing process. Whenever you're facing a [plateau that you can't get past](#), mind sculpture can help you get there.

So now, what will you start with? Mind sculpture? Goal setting? Make one small step right now.