

How to Deal with Stroke Side Effects and Limitations the Smart Way

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Welcome to part 2 of our [stroke recovery expert series](#) where you're learning how to take your recovery into your own hands.

[Part 1 was about movement, rehab, and therapy.](#) Now, in part 2, we're discussing post stroke side effects and the truth about stroke recovery limitations.

Let's start with the most common side effect: spasticity.

How to Cure Spasticity the Smart Way

Spasticity is the most common post stroke side effect – and unfortunately it's commonly misunderstood.

So first, [what exactly is spasticity?](#)

Spasticity is recognized as the tight and sometimes painful sensation in your muscles. The misconception comes into play when we point at our muscles as the problem when there's actually nothing wrong with them.

The point of focus should always be the *brain*. Spasticity occurs because the brain cannot properly communicate with the muscles. Without proper communication and instruction from the brain, your muscles become confused and contract in order to protect themselves.

Therefore, the only real, permanent solution to spasticity is to regain control of the affected muscles through [rehab exercises](#).

Treatments like Botox can help temporarily relieve the pain associated with spasticity, but the symptom will never permanently go away until the real problem is addressed: retraining the brain to control the spastic muscles.

Understanding Stroke Side Effects

Sometimes post stroke side effects develop 'late in the game,' which can be unfortunate when therapists and doctors aren't around to properly diagnose them.

For this reason, every survivor should be aware of the common post stroke side effects.

Refer to our [guide to post stroke side effects](#) for all the information you need.

Understanding Your Limitations

After stroke, your doctors or therapists may tell you some tough news: that your recovery will be limited and that you won't be able to get back to life exactly as it was before.

It's tough news, and no one enjoys delivering it.

While medical professionals always have a very valid reason for their diagnoses, please take news like this with a grain of salt.

Because if you hear about your limitations and accept them as fate, then you're limiting yourself. But if you hear about them and continue to remain curious about how far you can actually go, then your potential is unlocked.

We would much rather have you believe in a full recovery than a limited recovery. Because when you believe in your full potential, you're much more likely to work hard and persevere in your efforts – resulting in far more improvement.

Achieving a Full Recovery

So you believe in a full recovery now – great! Fantastic!

Here's how to start making it a reality:

First, [compensation techniques may be a trap](#). They're useful when you need them (and we're not saying that they're bad! They're absolutely necessary sometimes), but when they become 'convenience techniques' instead of compensation techniques, that's when you know it's time to start working past them.

Second, remember that the plateau does not mean recovery had ended. Whenever you feel a slowdown in your progress, simply accept it for what it is – a slowdown, not a stopping – and keep going, while adding some variety to your regimen to keep your brain stimulated.

Lastly, understand the power of your mind. You are a *creative machine*, and every thought you have impacts your future actions. If you tell yourself that rehab is pointless and endless and you'll never achieve a full recovery, then you won't.

The opposite is also true.

So feed yourself encouraging thoughts and you will find more things to be encouraged by. Remember, you become skillful at whatever you repeatedly focus on.

If you want to achieve a full recovery, focus on that!

How to Speed That Full Recovery Along

Now I know what you're thinking. "Sure, I'll bite. I'll believe in a full recovery. But I still believe that it's going to take a really long time, and I'm not okay with that."

Well, we have a few tips to help.

You can speed your recovery up with good *goal-setting* and *time-management*. And before you run away from how boring that sounds, hear us out. It can truly make a big, big difference.

First, goal-setting IS boring, and that's why you need a different kind of goal: [an outcome-oriented goal](#). They're far more motivating than their vanilla counterparts.

Second, time-management helps you get things done. Duh, you knew that. But sometimes we forget that time-management is about more than just structuring your day.

Time management is about *prioritization*, which helps you take action when you normally wouldn't.

I'm talking about the [non-urgent but important things](#). These are the tasks that don't need to be done today, but they need to get done at some point (like hand exercises, for example). And when we don't have deadlines on important tasks like that, they get put on the back burner – and stay there.

To prevent that from happening, start creating deadlines for your outcome-oriented goals, and you'll start gaining momentum FAST.