

How to Use Mental Practice to Get Faster Results during Stroke Rehabilitation

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Mental practice is sooo underrated in the rehabilitation world. This simple practice can help you see better, faster results during stroke recovery — and it only takes a few minutes each day! Are you ready to ramp up your rehab results? Let's start with the basics.

What Is Mental Practice for Stroke Recovery?

Mental practice involves visualizing yourself doing something that you want to get better at. For example, if you want to improve movement in your leg, then mental practice would involve visualizing yourself moving your leg. By mentally practicing every day, you can get better results from stroke rehabilitation. Here's how it works:

How Does Mental Practice Benefit My Recovery?

When you mentally practice something, you activate **neuroplasticity** the same way that **physical practice** does. Neuroplasticity is critical to stroke recovery because it's the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire itself. Each time you practice something, your brain starts to create and strengthen neural pathways that control that behavior.

The more you practice, the stronger those neural pathways become, and the stronger YOU become.

The Best Way to Use Mental Practice

There's an art to mental practice. If you want to see the best results, then it's best to combine both mental and physical practice because [studies](#) have shown that it produces even better results. Also, try to use as much sensory detail as possible as this engages your brain even more. For example, if you want to improve your **gait**, then it's not quite enough to just visualize yourself walking. (Um, boring.)

Instead, visualize yourself walking down the beach with the sand in between your toes and wind in your hair. Mentally practice what it will feel like to roll from your heel to your toe and then push off the sand with the front of your foot. The more sensory detail you add, the more neuroplasticity will be engaged.

And if you mentally practice walking down the beach AND you practice leg exercises daily, then you'll see even better improvement in your leg function.

An Example of How Mental Practice Can Get You Faster Results

There was a yoga teacher and stroke survivor that we talked about in our book [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#) named Isabelle who is a great example of how mental practice can boost results. As you can imagine, Isabelle was eager to get back to yoga after her stroke. To achieve this goal, she would practice different yoga poses every day during her recovery. At first, she could barely manage to stand, but Isabelle knew that there was hope. So she mentally practiced specific movements while lying in bed. And with each day, she got better and better. Isabelle went on to achieve a remarkably fast recovery, which she attributed to her background in **mindfulness/meditation** and combined physical and mental practice.

Start Your Practice Today

As you can see, mental practice can have a massive impact on your recovery. It can help activate neuroplasticity and rewire your brain faster than just physical practice alone. *How will you work mental practice into your daily routine?*