

28 Stroke Recovery Tips for Healing, Habits, and Happiness

April 13, 2016



These stroke recovery tips start with the brain and end with your lifestyle... Why? Because stroke recovery is about more than just the 'brain thing.' It's about the 'life thing,' too.

So we'll start with some basic tips on healing the brain after stroke, and then we'll cover other important topics.: mindset tips, habits tips and happiness tips. You can pick and choose which stroke recovery tips you like, but we encourage you to stick around for the full show.

1. Master the Rewiring Process

To rewire your brain after stroke, you need to utilize [repetitive practice](#) (repeating an exercise over and over) to trigger neuroplasticity, the mechanism that your brain uses to [heal itself after injury](#).

[Neuroplasticity](#) is the #1 thing to focus on during stroke recovery. Become an expert on it and you won't regret it.

A great book that goes into depth on the subject is called *The Brain that Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge. It's one of our top recommended [stroke recovery books](#).

2. Keep Your Nutrition Game Up

We'll keep this part extremely simple: Eat mostly [whole foods](#), avoid packaged/processed food as much as possible, and [supplement where necessary](#).

If you do these things, then you'll be consuming a diet that supports your body's healing.

3. Don't Fall for the Plateau

The plateau is real – but the word itself is so deceiving! [When results slow down](#) after the first few months of recovery, don't mistake it for a dead end.

Recovery will only stop when you stop.

You can bust through the plateau by keeping your regimen consistent but varied with different exercises.

4. Avoid Permanent Lopsidedness

During stroke recovery, the phrase “use it or lose it” is commonly used by therapists to describe the clinical condition of [learned nonuse](#).

Learned nonuse occurs when you completely stop using your affected limb, and after a while your brain literally forgets how to use it.

The best way to avoid learned nonuse is to move your affected limbs at least a little bit every day.

5. Permanently Treat Pain and Spasticity

[Localized pain](#) can be treated with heat packs and medication, which can provide the relief you need to carry out necessary tasks. These treatments, however, are short-term and temporary.

To get long-term relief from painful spastic muscles, you need to relieve the spasticity. [How do you get rid of spasticity?](#)

By dutifully performing your rehab exercises so that your brain regains control over your spastic muscles – and they relax. Again, it's all about neuroplasticity.

6. You Don't Know What Works...

...Until you've tried them all.

There are many [methods for motor recovery after stroke](#).

Something that worked for a friend might not work for you, or it could be the best thing ever! But you won't know until you try.

7. Get Tons of Sleep

Sleep helps improve movement recovery after stroke by giving your brain a chance to process and retain all the information it learned from the day's exercises.

Sleep also helps reduce fatigue, irritability, and toxic buildup in your brain.

It what stroke survivor Jill Bolte Taylor, a neuroscientist who survived a massive stroke, rates sleep as her #1 recommendation for recovery after stroke.

8. Prevent It from Happening Again

Stroke survivors are at higher risk of experiencing another stroke, so prevention is key.

Know your stroke risk factors, manage excessive inflammation, and try to do something active every day.

This isn't the perfect formula, but they're great guidelines for a generally healthy lifestyle that promotes good health and vitality.

9. Deal with Misbehaving Feet

If you're suffering from foot drop or curled toes, then AFOs (ankle foot orthosis) can help align your feet and make walking easier and safer.

If you want to regain normal use of your feet without AFOs, then rehab exercises combined with TENS therapy can help get you there.

It's strongly suggested that you continue to do rehab exercises for your feet and legs because the use of AFOs will make the conditions worse since you won't be exercising those muscles at all.

Mindset Tips during Stroke Recovery (Part 2)

April 15, 2016



We wrote a whole section just on mindset because it *matters*. You need to have your head in the game, physically and psychologically.

Use these tips to develop a strong mindset during stroke recovery.

10. Make the Mental Switch

You really, really need to set [goals during stroke recovery](#).

It helps create vision and necessary momentum to get things done. When we choose a specific goal and set a deadline to achieve it by, something switches in our mind – *in the best way*.

It puts wind in our sails, so to speak.

All you need to do is print out a couple monthly calendars and write down 3 goals that you'd like to achieve in the next 2, 4, and 6 weeks. Make them very clear and reasonable. Then, look at this calendar every morning to stay accountable and motivated.

11. Adopt a Growth Mindset

There are 2 types of mindsets: fixed and growth. Those with a growth mindset will naturally go farther in their stroke recovery – and in life.

The good news is that you can develop a growth mindset by simply following [these steps](#) to create permanent, lasting motivation.

12. Better Attitude, Better Recovery

After surviving a fall from the roof of her apartment building, TBI survivor Nicole Marquez was left immobilized in her hospital bed, and her dreams of becoming a professional dancer were crushed.

But that didn't stop her. Nicole pushed through her recovery and ended up regaining way more movement than expected.

The difference was all in [her attitude](#).

Nicole refused to be a victim to her circumstances and chose to focus on the silver lining. [Read her inspirational story here](#).

13. Use the 1% Motivation Method

The all-or-nothing approach doesn't work with stroke recovery. If you feel burnt out, then take a step back and breathe. You don't need to win the war today. You only need to win the battle.

Instead of trying to get as much done as possible, just focus on 1% improvement every day. This will help prevent burnout and accumulate real results in the end.

14. Avoid the Nasty Nocebo Effect

The nocebo effect is nasty. It takes someone's negative words and imposes their limiting beliefs onto us.

This happens in stroke recovery when a medical professional tells you about the limitations of your recovery. Perhaps they told you that you'll never be able to walk without a cane ever again.

Limiting statements like that have a nocebo effect on your mind, and because of them you might not even try to [regain full mobility](#) because you believe in those limitations.

For this reason it's absolutely essential to think for yourself and constantly remain curious about the potential of your recovery. Nothing is set in stone. You're writing your own story.

Here's a [powerful story of a woman](#) who rejected the nocebo effect and regained movement in her husband's paralyzed hand when the doctors said there was no hope.

15. Believe in a Full Recovery

So take the nocebo effect and crumple it up into a ball. Now, throw it far, far away from your mind. Throw it so far away that you can't even see it anymore.

Now get out a new sheet of paper, either in your mind or in reality, and write this down: *I believe in a full recovery. I can achieve a full recovery. I will achieve a full recovery.*

As you do this, you're reprogramming your mind. Then once you truly, sincerely believe that it's possible, you'll get so much farther in your recovery.

16. Read Motivational Quotes

Motivational quotes are little life lessons boiled down into a sentence or two, making them powerful sources of motivation when we need it most.

Whenever you're feeling down, read some [inspirational quotes for stroke survivors](#). You will never find a shortage of them on [Pinterest](#).

17. Put Success on Your Nametag

Our psyche is designed to act in alignment with our values and sense of identity.

If you identify yourself as a carefree, loving, forgetful person, then your actions will reflect that – for good and for bad. This means that if you choose to identify yourself with other qualities, then your actions will reflect that too.

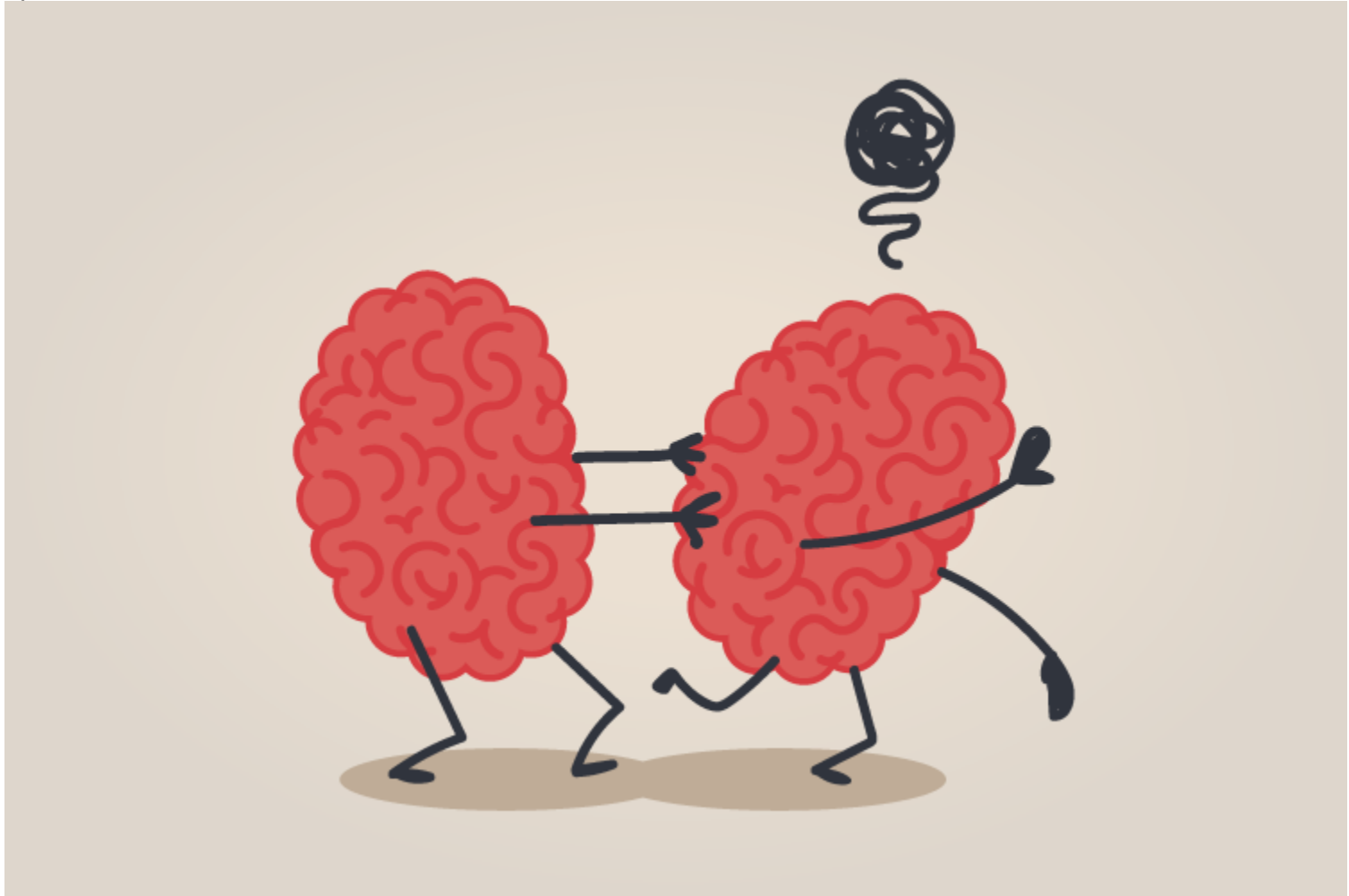
What do you want written on your nametag?

Hardworking? Studious? Disciplined? The one who beat all odds?

Whatever it is, become *identified with it* and you'll be naturally more inclined to take actions that reflects it.

Good Habit Tips for Stroke Recovery

April 18, 2016



This is the habits section of our stroke recovery tips series. Find our other tips for stroke recovery here:

“You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.” – John C. Maxwell

Like your mindset, your habits make all the difference. If you don't have habits that set yourself up for success, then it will be that much harder to succeed.

For example, if you don't have the habit of doing your rehab exercises, then you won't do them – or you'll use up all your willpower getting yourself to do them, with none left over for the rest of the day.

Therefore the answer is simple: **to succeed in your recovery, you need good habits.** Start with these 3.

18. Do What Michael Phelps Did Everyday

Visualization is a [powerful neuroscience technique](#) that can help rewire your brain and improve performance.

Michael Phelps, 18 time Olympic gold medalist, used visualization to prepare for his swim meets. He would spend time visualizing himself winning his races, and he would also visualize himself dealing with complications. That way, when complications arose, he was already wired to deal with them.

You can apply the same technique to stroke recovery.

Researchers have [already proved](#) that it works.

Visualization can help rewire the brain after stroke by triggering neuroplasticity the same way that physical practice does. While visualization cannot substitute physical therapy, [combining the two](#) can lead to a higher recovery.

We recommend doing mental practice for 5 minutes every morning. Pick a task or ability that you want to improve and visualize yourself doing it. Be sure to use excruciating detail. ([Learn more about the process here.](#))

In a few days' time you'll start to see results.

19. Grow Your Good Brain

Meditation is a [habit that every stroke survivor needs](#) as it helps **grow your brain, regulate emotions, and reduce fatigue** – invaluable benefits for stroke recovery.

This solution is simple, but not easy. Getting yourself to sit down and actually meditate is the hardest part. That's why you need to make it a habit.

Pick a specific time to meditate every day (we recommend the morning time after your cup of [stroke-preventing coffee](#)), and only aim for 2 minutes a day to start. (It's really hard to find excuses when it just takes a couple minutes.)

The longer you keep the habit up, the more benefits you'll feel.

20. Reverse Negativity

Our brain naturally has a negative bias, remembering negative events more vividly than positive events. Luckily gratitude can reverse that mechanism.

To cultivate an attitude of gratitude, spend some time every day – even if it's just for another 2 minutes – writing down things you're grateful for in a journal.

Once this habit is developed, **it will train your brain to notice more and more things to be grateful for.** Again, it's all about neuroplasticity.

We are what we repeatedly do.

Tips on Happiness during Stroke Recovery

April 20, 2016



Welcome to the final post of our stroke recovery tips series. Find our other tips here:

[Healing Tips](#) / [Mindset Tips](#) / [Habit Tips](#)

With one third of stroke survivors suffering from post-stroke depression – and most others suffering from anger, grief, or frustration – fostering positive emotions during stroke recovery is essential.

Here are 8 tips that can help.

21. Posture Is Weirdly Important

Try this: Lift your arms up into a V (using one arm works just as well) and puff your chest up. How do you feel?

You probably feel more presence, confidence, and comfortability in your body. At least, that's what psychologist Amy Cuddy discovered during her research on body language.

'Power posing,' which includes expanding your body to make yourself feel big, boosts the testosterone (the dominance hormone) and reduces cortisol (the stress hormone). This winning combination makes us feel positive and powerful when we're in that posture.

Next time you're feeling low, strike a power pose.

22. Happy Gut, Happy Brain

Your gut health is closely tied to your brain health through the [gut-brain axis](#). Many [studies](#) have linked an unhealthy microbiome, the ecosystem of 100 trillion little bacteria in your gut, with anxiety and depression.

To [alleviate post stroke depression](#) caused by an impaired microbiome, make sure that you eat foods containing probiotics (like yogurt, tempeh, and kimchi) or take a high-quality probiotic supplement.

You'll learn quickly after ingesting some probiotics whether it was the cause or not.

23. Know How to Ask

Knowing how to ask for help during stroke recovery is essential because you can't do everything yourself. As much as you may want to, it's simply too demanding.

You may need help around the house, or you might just need someone to lend a listening ear. Whatever it is, don't be too proud to ask. Even the strongest people need others to lean on.

24. Freedom and Fun Are Yours

There are so many ways to [find freedom and happiness during stroke recovery](#). You just have to experiment and find one that works for you.

For one, you can use painting to get into the state of flow, a place where you're completely present with what you're doing and everything else melts away.

You could also try [dance movement therapy](#) or yoga to work on your body-mind connection.

It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you manage to have a little fun!

25. Develop Your Self-Confidence

One of the best ways to boost your mood and self-confidence is to recite self-affirmations daily. It feels weird, but it's one of the most popular pieces of advice in self-help literature.

If you tell yourself that you feel good, then you'll feel good! Or at least better than before. Try reciting this affirmation to yourself: "I can handle any obstacle that life throws my way."

Then repeat it over and over for 5 minutes a day, and eventually your mind will buy into it. You'll feel much more confident the next time you hit a bump in the road because you'll recall those words.

26. Permission to Grieve

Everyone who goes through loss must deal with grief.

If you don't face your feelings, they'll continue to sit inside and stir up negative emotions until they're finally free. Instead of suppressing your anger and depression, acknowledge that they're there and treat them with the respect they deserve.

Then give yourself permission to fully feel them and let them run their course. The sooner you start the [grieving process](#), the sooner you'll find acceptance.

27. Make Peace with Slow

We live in a society that idolizes busyness and productivity, and we've become programmed to resist slow processes and opt for a faster way of doing things. As you can imagine, this creates inner turmoil when we can't do things fast and conveniently.

This is where change needs to be made.

Learn how to become a master of [the science of healing and happiness](#) by focusing on mindfulness and meditation. It will help you live more presently and make peace with slow, and you'll be so much happier because of it.

28. Master Your Healing & Happiness

If you'd like to take everything that you just learned to the next level, then you will enjoy our stroke recovery book called [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#).

Our science-based book shows you exactly how to boost self-esteem, happiness, and recovery.