

Stroke Recovery Prognosis Part 3: Cognitive Recovery + Treatments

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We are now in part 3 of our stroke recovery prognosis series: How to treat the cognitive side effects of stroke.

Cognitive & Emotional Side Effects & Treatments After Stroke

If stroke affects your cognitive abilities, then you may have trouble with memory, attention, and perception. We dedicated parts 3 and 4 to cognitive and emotional healing because the NIH Stroke Scale focuses mostly on physical abilities. Although physical mobility is extremely important – so is everything else.

So let's discuss the cognitive side effects of stroke, starting with memory.

1. Difficulty with Memory

When stroke affects that part of your brain that controls storing and retrieving information, then your memory can be affected. Sometimes stroke affects short-term memory and sometimes it affects long-term memory. Patience with yourself and asking for patience from others is crucial if impaired memory after stroke applies to you.

Treatment:

Although many sources will say that there are no treatments for bad memory after stroke, that's not what we believe. Rather, we believe that you can restore your ability to do anything, as long as you engage the two most important factors for recovery: neuroplasticity and repetitive practice.

You can improve memory after stroke if you *practice using your memory*.

There are many **games that you can play online** that exercise your memory. Search for some and spend a little time everyday exercising your memorization skills. Your brain gets better at whatever you repeatedly practice, so your memory will begin to improve through good, consistent practice.

2. Difficulty Paying Attention

Some stroke survivors have difficulty paying attention, especially if your **frontal lobe** was affected as it controls attention, reasoning, and impulse control. Often, lack of attention mostly occurs on a stroke survivor's affected side. This condition is known as **one-sided neglect** where stroke survivors are not aware of what's going on in the environment on their affected side.

Treatment:

Like memory, you can improve your ability to pay attention through practice.

If you suffer from one-sided neglect, then a simple way to improve your ability to pay attention to your affected side is to turn to your affected side often and look at what's there. Practice paying attention, and you will slowly get better at paying attention.

While this advice might feel repetitive, **repetition is the best way to recover from stroke!**

3. Difficulty with Accurate Perception

Our perception refers to our ability to interpret something. When stimulation from our environment enters our brain through our senses, we have to break everything down into meaningful information. Sometimes stroke can impair our ability to process everything – especially while the brain is healing and sucking up a lot of your mental juice. But like all cognitive stroke side effects, difficulty with perception can be treated.

Treatment:

Mindfulness can be an excellent treatment for difficulty with perception. Mindfulness requires that we slow down and live 100% in the moment. And the more you practice living in the moment and being aware of your senses, the better you will get at being aware. As your awareness increases, your perception will continue to improve.

Emotional Stroke Side Effects

Now that you know how to treat the cognitive effects of stroke, let's move onto the emotional stroke side effects in Part 4.