

# Recovering from a Stroke – Building Essential Knowledge – Part 2

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Recovering from a stroke requires 4 essential steps – building your knowledge is step 2. The other steps in this series are:

1. **Motivation** – to jump-start your efforts
2. **Education** – to cover all your bases
3. **Exercise** – to regain mobility
4. **Prevention** – to make sure it doesn't happen again

In the first step we laid a solid foundation of motivation. You learned why your recovery efforts are falling short and how you can fix your thinking to overcome them. Now we're moving on to the bread and butter of stroke recovery: *rehabilitation education*.

## Brain vs Muscles

To understand how to get your mobility back, you need to first understand how your brain and muscles were affected. Then we'll get to the rehab exercises in the next section.

After stroke, the affected areas of the brain are having trouble maintaining their responsibilities. If your motor cortex was damaged, then you'll have issues with movement. If your emotion center was damaged, then you'll have trouble controlling your emotions.

Whenever movement impairments are involved, it's all caused by the same thing: brain-muscle miscommunication. To restore this communication, you have to start with the brain. Your muscles didn't suddenly get weaker and your spasticity isn't just there because it wants to be. It's all because your brain is having a hard time communicating to those specific muscles.

So how do you fix it?

## Your One Focus Should Be...

Your job right now – the single most important thing that you should be focusing on – is healing your brain. To heal your brain, you need to move things around and work to make it work. This is possible through the phenomenon of **neuroplasticity** – and you should seriously read up on it. Neuroplasticity allows your brain to heal itself after injury by forming new neural pathways. Consider it mind reconstruction. There are two things that you can do to really make neuroplasticity work for you.

## 3 Essential Tactics to Heal Your Brain

In order for your brain to create these new neural pathways, you need to utilize *repetition* and *consistency* during your rehab exercises.

**Repetition** is extremely important because the more you repeat an exercise, the stronger those new neural connections will become. And when you're consistent about your rehab regimen, your brain will effectively relearn the movements until they become natural again. Think of it this way: *Rehabilitation is just like any sport.*

You have to show up to practice consistently (with proper rest in between, of course) in order to get good at it. There's no way around it; you simply have to put in good work. And if you really stick with it, you WILL see results.

If you're undisciplined about your rehab exercises, you can learn how to become a disciplined warrior [here](#).

Lastly, you need to meditate. Meditation is good for all sorts of brainy things, like growing your grey matter, reducing depression, and improving attention. See [what other stroke survivors are saying about this essential habit](#).

## Busting the Big Fat Lie

The plateau is a big, fat lie. Seriously. *This is the pitfall that most people fall for.* After you've been diligently performing your rehab exercises, you'll experience a slowdown in your results around the 6 month mark. This slowdown does not mean recovery has stopped. Recovery will only stop when you stop.

Although the plateau is likely to deter your efforts (which is why motivation is the foundation of stroke recovery), do not stop doing your exercises. *It doesn't matter if you're 2 months or 20 years post stroke.* You can still change your brain as long as you're putting in the consistent, repetitious effort.

However, sometimes a great way to bust through a plateau is to try something new like a different type of therapy.

## Treat ‘Different’ Differently

Your **physiatrist** probably told you this a million times: *Every stroke is different, which means that every recovery is different.* This means that a method that worked for someone else might not work for you.

Learn about your different options by referring to our article on [7 Methods for Motor Recovery after Stroke](#). Then experiment until you find the one that benefits you the most.

Up next is **Part 3: Optimizing Your Rehab Exercises, 12/23/2015**