

When Recovery Slows Down after Stroke... It's Not What You Think!

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When progress slows down after stroke, it doesn't mean that it's going to stop. It means that you're experiencing a plateau, but we prefer to use the term 'slow down' because the word 'plateau' in itself is very deceiving. A plateau does not mean recovery has stopped. It just means that things are slowing down for the time being, but recovery will continue.

Recovery only stops when you stop.

Don't Think of It as a Plateau

Researchers used to think that the plateau was the end of the road, but early science actually got it wrong. The plateau is not the end of recovery, it's just the end of a 'heightened state of plasticity.'

Right after injury, the brain enters a phase where plasticity, the brain's ability to heal and rewire itself, intensifies. During this time, the brain is rapidly trying to heal itself, typically causing noticeable improvement in the first few months of recovery.

After this phase, the rate of recovery slows down a little, but the brain will never stop trying to heal and improve itself. Neuroplasticity works wherever we put in the effort. It's all about focused attention, and the following 5 principles.

How to Bust Through

The **3 keys to motor recovery after stroke** are neuroplasticity, repetition, and feedback. Now we're adding two new members to the list: *variety and challenge*.

When the brain is learning something new, it loves variety. So switch up your exercises, try a new form of therapy, or pick up a new hobby that **uses the skills you want to improve**. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as it's different and uses your affected muscles.

You should also keep yourself consistently challenged. Find your edge and push it a little. Don't push too hard and hurt yourself or burn yourself out, but keep your routine slightly uncomfortable and challenging. We experience the most growth when get outside of our comfort zone.

Always Be Curious

The plateau can create a self-fulfilling prophecy where telling yourself that this is the end of the road will inevitably turn it into the end of the road. Don't let limiting beliefs limit your recovery.

Always be curious about your potential. When you choose to believe in yourself, you unlock a precious reserve of willpower within. You'll find the motivation to take action and see how far you can go.

So stay curious, **set some solid goals**, do your rehab exercises, try new things, **stay disciplined**, and most importantly, don't fall for the plateau. If you do all these things, the rest will follow.