

How to Naturally Treat Pseudobulbar Affect After Stroke

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Do you suffer from uncontrollable emotions after stroke, like random bouts of laughter or crying? If so, then you may have a condition known as *pseudobulbar affect* (also known as *emotional lability* or *involuntary emotional expression disorder*).

There are 2 very different treatment options for pseudobulbar affect. But before we dig into them, let's discuss the cause of this condition.

The Cause of Pseudobulbar

Pseudobulbar affect is caused by damage to the emotion center of the brain after stroke. It can trigger emotional outbursts like crying, laughing, anger, or sadness. Typically, these emotions are triggered by something irrelevant to the emotion.

For example, a stroke survivor with pseudobulbar affect may find themselves laughing at a boring situation or crying because of something funny.

Pseudobulbar affect is very unpredictable, which can make it tricky to cope with. But there are still ways to cope!

Medical Treatment for Pseudobulbar Affect

A common way to treat pseudobulbar affect is with medication. This treats the symptom, but not the cause. However, if pseudobulbar affect is severely influencing your quality of life and you'd like to explore medication that can help, then talk with your doctor. They may prescribe antidepressants that have been proven to help with pseudobulbar affect.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with choosing to take medication to help cope with pseudobulbar affect. In fact, it's a sign of strength that you're willing to seek help.

Next we will discuss a natural treatment that doesn't involve medication.

Natural Treatment for Pseudobulbar Affect

Since pseudobulbar affect is caused by damage in the area of the brain that controls emotion, then you can treat pseudobulbar affect naturally by *rewiring your emotion center of the brain*. This rewiring process is known as [neuroplasticity](#).

While neuroplasticity is most often associated with movement recovery after stroke, it can actually be applied to more than just movement.

To help clarify this approach, let's compare improving emotional control to improving movement control after stroke.

When your motor cortex (the part of your brain that controls movement) is damaged after stroke, you will have difficulty moving. And the best way to regain movement is by practicing rehab exercises.

Rehab exercises spark neuroplasticity and rewire your motor cortex to improve your brain's ability to control movement. By linking your brain to your muscle, you can rewire your motor cortex. The same concept can be applied to pseudobulbar affect. You can link your *emotions* to your brain.

Since pseudobulbar affect is caused by your brain's inability to control your emotions, *practicing* emotions can help you gain better control over them.

Rewiring Your Emotions

This sounds pretty weird, we know. Not many people are talking about *practicing emotions* as a treatment for pseudobulbar affect. But it makes sense when you think about it. The more you practice emotions, the better you get at them. Which begs the

question, how can you practice emotions? You can practice emotions the same way you would practice anything else: *through consistent practice every day*.

Let's elaborate.

Emotional Practice

A great time to practice your emotions is during regular, routine activities that trigger a specific emotion.

For example, playing with your pet should make you happy; watching a comedy skit should make you laugh; watching a sad movie should make you sad.

During these activities, try to *feel your emotions on purpose*.

You can achieve this by telling yourself, "I feel happy right now." Or, "I feel sad watching this." As long as you're making the connection in your brain between your emotion and the activity, then you will start to rewire your brain.

And by linking your brain to your emotions like this, you can start to slowly regain control of your emotions.

For a deeper look into emotionally rewiring your brain, check out our book [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#).

Pseudobulbar Affect CAN Be Treated

If you suffer from uncontrollable emotions after stroke, then know that there *are* treatment options that can help. Pseudobulbar affect is absolutely NOT a hopeless condition.

If you choose to go the medical route, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that; especially if the condition is interfering with your motivation to pursue recovery and quality of life.

If you have the patience to rewire your emotion center of the brain by practicing emotion – then try going that route. It addresses the root cause of pseudobulbar affect and permanently treats the condition.

Best of luck as you begin your emotional practice, and don't forget that our book [Healing & Happiness After Stroke](#) contains more detailed advice that can help.