

MY LIFE IS NOT MY FAULT, BUT IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY

By Charles Robinson
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The biggest trauma of my life happened on May 16, 1988 when I had my stroke. I did not know what was happening, but I knew something was not right. For years I blamed myself for it, not knowing it was not my fault, but the way I was born. I thought my life was over. I never thought about suicide or even hurting myself, but I was very angry at myself. I felt I had let myself down in the biggest way I could have ever done. For years I felt that way. I felt weak and ashamed of myself. This was not supposed to happen to me or people like me. It was always supposed to happen to the other guy. But now all of that has changed. I have now come to terms with myself and life as it is. Now it is no one's fault, not even my own.

Bad things happen to all of us that you cannot explain and this is mine. So I can get on with my life, or I can sit around and mope and feel sorry for myself. And who's going to care? No one is going to sit around and hold my hand and cry with me. So I know that it is not what happens to you, but how you handle it that makes all the difference. When you are humble and accept yourself, life begins. I have to believe in myself; that I am as good as anyone else. Now I do not look at my life as being over, but just getting started. I now feel better and take better care of myself. I now know what love is and I no longer beat myself up about what happened. My life is not my fault, but it is my responsibility.

I was 32 years old when my stroke happened, and I am 50 now. Every day is not a good day for me, but I still try to make the best of each one of them. I have to know and believe in my heart of hearts that my life is okay and that I am a child of a loving God. I like to think "outside of the box" and see the good of it all. People will lend you a hand when they see you trying to help yourself. So today I feel better about who I am and why I am here on this earth. My trauma has brought out the best in my life.

I had a good childhood, but I had a lot of problems that went unaddressed emotionally. I missed out on a lot, so I have to use good personality and character to get through life. I did not have a hard life growing up, but I had an overbearing mother. She did not know she was hurting me. She thought she was showing love. She did not know any better. In the summer of 1973, I was in a very bad automobile accident and was nearly killed. It was no one's fault but my own. I went through the windshield. I was messed up pretty bad all of my teenage years. I felt very inferior about my looks and for many years, I did not try to talk to any girls other than my girlfriend. That was a very stressful time in my life and sometimes it can come back to me. I can be looking in the mirror and see the scars and it hurts real bad because it did not have to happen. Most of

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the time we pay for our mistakes and sometimes the consequences can be bigger than we can stand.

I never went to talk to any one about any of these things. I came from a family that did not know how to care or how to show or say, "I love you." I lived by the "don't ask, don't tell" rule. Whatever went on in your life was your business. So I learned how to keep my feelings deep down inside. I never knew how to ask for help or even act like I needed help. There were years of bottled up hurt inside of me along with anger. And the only way I knew to handle it was in some kind of negative way that did nothing but cause more hurt and pain. I got tired of carrying around all of my burden, never having any one to confide in. We all need someone to share our deepest thoughts with. I had to learn from a lot of costly mistakes, but God kept me going. And I will not lay down and die.

No one said that life was easy, and for me, it sure has not been, but I just keep trudging along. No matter what, there will be some good days ahead. I have to keep trying my best. Things will not always go against me nor for me. I have to realize that my life has gotten better. I went a whole life time carrying that awful load around with me for 50 years. But I am trying to learn to let things go with God's help. I will be alright. I just have to keep talking to people about what's going on.