

MY STORY  
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Hello, I am a stroke survivor as of July 9, 1999. I would like to share with you the way I feel about myself at this point in my life. I have to admit that I have experienced a lot of different kinds of feelings and emotions since my stroke. I notice that I get sad at times and depressed, but then I realize how far I have come or how much I have recovered. This makes me feel a lot better about myself. And then, I also think about how much I would like to recover. This gives me the incentive to improve as much as I can. I work out at a gym. I ride a bicycle in the summer along the lake, and do as much walking as I can.

The stroke left me in a coma and subsequently in a wheelchair. I just refused to remain that way. Thank God I had what it took to stay determined to overcome this traumatic experience.

I can really attribute this quality of character to my mother. I can still hear my mother telling me I could do anything I put my mind to. My family has always let me know they are there for me, no matter what I may need. This gives me an incentive to work since I feel like I let them down as well as myself when I do not do my best. I do feel disappointed in myself and the mistakes I have made, acting like a fool. In hindsight, I hear my family trying to save me from myself. It took something like this to make me realize I was on a collision course. I eventually crashed as a result of being hardheaded and stubborn. I guess I thought I had it all under control. It has always been said that God knows how to get your attention and it took God to get mine, because I wasn't listening to anybody else!

Through this experience, I have learned that I do not have all the answers when it comes to the decisions that I have made in the past. I know the things that I chose to do ended up hurting a lot more people than I could have ever realized, especially me. I know better now.

I am not sure how the stroke has affected others in my life, except that I have noted that the people that I used to socialize with do not appear to want to keep in touch as much as they did before. This could be because I do not indulge in the things that I did before my stroke. But I always assumed that these were friends that cared about me, and it took something like this for me to realize that this is not true. Although there are times that I feel sad about this, I know that there were a lot of things that I needed to change in my life. Something like this had to happen in order for me to stop procrastinating.

I have also learned that I cared and did more for others than I did for myself. I took things for granted and put things off. I thought that I had time to take care of

my own needs and wants; that when I got tired of doing for others, I would take care of my own desires. I had no idea that I put myself off for so long. I feel as though I lost out on so many opportunities that I had been blessed with and because of this, I can feel real stupid about myself. It is hard for me to accept the fact that I did this to myself for so long.

For me, the stroke has meant that I have got to take my life a lot more seriously. My attitude now is that it is my turn. I have always felt like I never wanted to appear as a selfish person, but now I have learned that I was not being unselfish, I was being a fool. I do know that I will probably still be a giving person, but I will have to be a lot more careful and selective about the people that I socialize with. It is really ironic that it took something as drastic and traumatic as a stroke for me to stop and pay attention to what God has been trying to tell or show me all my life.