

LIFE AFTER MY STROKE: NEVER STOP FIGHTING

by Frederick Owens

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I remember the day of my stroke like it was yesterday. Late one night, I started getting sick from my sickle cell anemia. My cousin took me to the Emergency Room and the doctors came and took a look at me. I was going through the pain crisis that comes with the sickle cell. They gave me pain medication, but the next thing I knew, I started having an extremely bad headache. I was sent to x-ray and the doctors did their tests. That is when they came to the conclusion that I had had a stroke. They gave me more pain medication and admitted me to the hospital. They called my family and the next day, when I awoke, my mother was standing over my bed. I asked her, "Why are you here? Why aren't you at work? I'm just having a pain crisis. This is something I have been dealing with all of my life." That's when she looked down at me and said, "Fred, you had a stroke." I was just 22 yrs. old.

It was hard not being able to walk, not being able to do anything for myself. But I learned how to deal with the situation real fast. I received medical treatment for my sickle cell and after that, I was transferred to a rehabilitation hospital where I learned to do things for myself again from a wheelchair. I was not able to walk yet. I remember one day after I was discharged from the hospital. I had a clinic appointment early in the morning. My mom came to take me and I was still asleep. When she saw me still asleep instead of up getting ready to go, she was very angry and started to scream and yell. It made me so mad that I just stood and began to walk and that's how the walking began. I walk more now; not 100% the way I want, but I can walk. I do have use of my leg again and it all started with that argument.

I have now met a beautiful young lady who has made me feel that life is worth living again. We have our ups and downs like everyone else, but I know she loves me for who I am and that she is not going to let the stroke hold us back from being together. We now have dreams of getting married, starting a family and living life to the very end together. So, I keep hope alive and keep going. I have goals and ambitions. I want to be able to run and play with my children. I want to be able to go places and do things with my fiance, like long walks on the beach, dancing, dinner and movies.

My uncle was in a wheelchair. He was told he would never walk again, but today he is walking and out of his wheelchair. He told me, "Whatever you want to do, do it. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do this, you can't do that. Whatever you want or feel you can do, do it." Now I have learned to adjust my life and myself to this whole, new ordeal. Life, as I knew it before, is over. But now it all begins again. And it is a great beginning as I start it.

Never give up on your dreams and you can accomplish all of your goals. Through the whole ordeal of life after my stroke, it just seemed that the world had ended on me. But if you keep pushing for your dreams and go as far as you can, you will find that life is not over. It's just a setback and it will only set you back as far as you let it. When the world is against you and a big weight is on your shoulders, that is the time to fight harder and push forward to try to accomplish more things in life. Show everyone you can shine as bright as a star. Work hard. Put it in the hands of the Lord and have faith. You can become whole again.