

StrokeSupportQuarterly

About our Stroke Support Group

Capital Region Medical Center Stroke Support Group is available for survivors and others interested in increasing their understanding of the emotional, social and educational needs of stroke survivors. Research has shown that survivors who have a strong social support network have better long term functional abilities! If you have someone that is interested in receiving this newsletter, please contact us!

Stroke Support Group Leader Team

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Email the leaders, or call (573) 632-5614, if you have questions or want to get on the mailing list.



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Meet Stephen Happy and his wife Kim

Meet Stephen Happy and his wife Kim from Jefferson City, MO. Stephen was only 49 years old when he suffered an ischemic stroke of the middle cerebral artery of his brain on 1/25/2018. With the location of his blood clot, he had decreased active motion throughout his right arm and leg. More significantly, Stephen experienced speech production difficulties associated with Broca's aphasia, which is an area of the brain that controls expressive speech. He completed inpatient rehabilitation for 3 weeks following his stroke and was discharged on 2/20/18.

Stephen did not slow down his quest for full functionality after he transitioned home. He has gone through outpatient OT, PT, ST and the student-run, free clinic for OT services at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He even pursued OT treatment virtually with the MU-OT clinic during COVID.

Throughout recovery, the Happy's shared the most difficult part was coping with the change from the "old normal" to a "new normal" in daily life. Kim says, "80% of stroke survivors experience depression, so it became a priority for us to be proactive in healing his mind and his body. We turned to a therapist [psychologist] for help. It's an important aspect of recovery that seems to be often overlooked."

More than a year after his initial stroke, Stephen experienced a medical and psychological set back when he experienced a grand mal seizure. A grand mal seizure is characterized by unconsciousness and violent muscle contractions. Later, this grand mal seizure was classified as a post-stroke seizure, which research has indicated about 7% of stroke survivors experience. He fully recovered from the seizure within a short period, but Kim described the emotional trauma as "heavy" and turned to her mental health therapist for help to work through the complication as a team.

The Happy's care team mentality has been a driving force for them as they rely on each other to push through to the next stage of recovery and maintain a positive outlook.

Stephen is currently taking a break from formal therapy to participate in a 92-week clinical trial through the University of Missouri-Columbia with Dr. Burris, focusing on Botox research.

See the next page for "Tips from the Happys".



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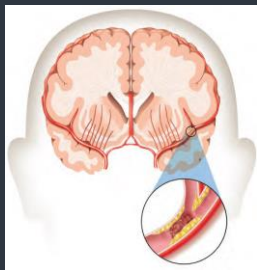
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The Different Types of Stroke

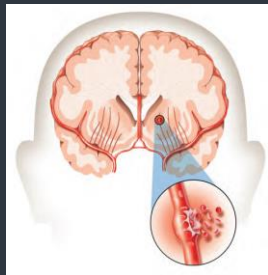
A stroke is classified as either: Ischemic or Hemorrhagic.

Ischemic stroke occurs when a clot blocks a vessel supplying blood to the brain. The artery becomes narrowed or clogged, cutting off blood flow to brain cells. These are the most common.

Hemorrhagic happens when a blood vessel bursts (ruptures) in the brain. This type of stroke may affect large arteries in the brain or the small blood vessels deep within the brain. The rupture keeps the surrounding areas of the brain from getting needed oxygen. These are less common, but more deadly.



Ischemic



Hemorrhagic

Transient ischemic attacks (TIAs)

are often called “warning strokes.” TIAs produce symptoms just like a stroke, but typically last a shorter amount of time. They don’t usually cause lasting damage and typically don’t show up on any imaging. But they are major predictors of future stroke.

The likelihood of a survivor having another stroke is high with some estimates up to 40%. Symptom recognition and early treatment is critical. Call 9-1-1 if you have concerns.

Surviving Stroke Essentials

Strategies that have helped navigate and stay positive during and after suffering a stroke.

During his rehabilitation following his stroke, Stephen has maintained a sunny disposition and motivation with the support of his wife. They truly tackled recovery as a team, which speaks to the importance of having such a strong support network to keep pushing forward.

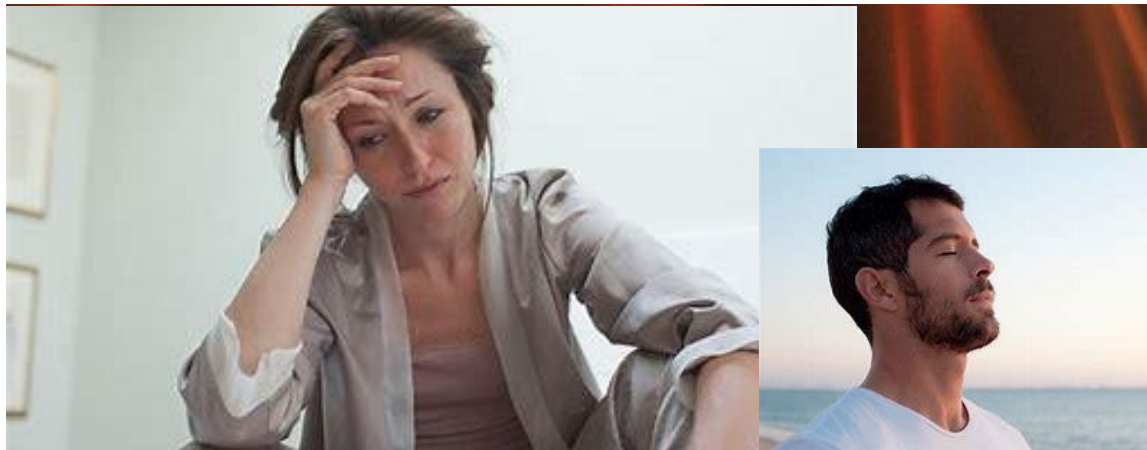
Below is a list of strategies they have used to keep pushing forward.

- **Happiness jar** (play on their last name): Write down positive events and read them at the end of each week. Helped to reflect on accomplishments.
- **Watching on-line videos and testimonials** from other survivors. There are several on You Tube, Facebook and other social media platforms.
- **Attending in-person stroke support group meetings**. Being around others experiencing similar situations can be comforting. **WE WILL BE BACK TO IN-PERSON IN APRIL!**
- **FaceTime** to maintain communication during social distancing needs.
- **Use predictive text or voice-to-text** when writing a message to reduce strain for motor coordination or language difficulties.
- **Maintain activity in therapy and support groups**. Communicate struggles and challenges to your therapists so that they can advocate and problem solve with you.
- **Never stop trying to improve.** Make small changes in your daily routine to make things more functional.

Small routine changes that have made big impacts for the Happy’s routines:

- Moved to bilateral handrails that are lower on both sides of the stairs (no need for chair lift)
- Moved items for easier reach, including coat racks and hygiene items in the bathroom
- Hooks on the inside of closet doors to reduce need for hangers
- Adding seating near doorways to sit and remove shoes
- Grab bars in bathrooms and shower organizer at lower level
- All rugs have non-slip backing
- Video cameras in and around the house so that activity can be monitored from afar
- Yoga socks that have anti-slip supports (vs. hospital socks)
- Dri-fit clothing and athleisure wear is easier to get on
- Elastic shoe laces to eliminate need for tying
- Belts with D-ring fasteners are easier to manipulate vs. standard belts
- On-line shopping and curbside pick-up is efficient and allows participation
- Make time for things you enjoy. Stephen has taken up gardening in raised boxes.

Stephen and Kim have been recognized by the MU OT Department as Outstanding Occupational Advocates! He is back to cattle farming, gardening, and enjoying life with his wife and two children!



Overcoming Anxiety

Anxiety is experienced in 25% of stroke survivors, according to a recent study. Mild to moderate symptoms of

anxiety can occur as early as two weeks after a stroke, which is due in part to changing psychological and biological factors in the brain. In this same study, survivors reported concerns that increased anxiety symptoms including:

- Having another stroke or TIA
- Communicating during an emergency
- Feeling embarrassed in social situations
- Being unable to drive
- Worried about never improving skills

The first line of defense in overcoming anxiety is recognizing that it is an issue. Some degree of worry or nervousness about a problem or event is normal for everyone. However, anxiety produces more intense symptoms that can be overwhelming, debilitating, and isolating. Signs of anxiety disorder include high amounts of irritability, difficulty concentrating, constant fatigue, sleep difficulties, persistent thoughts about the things that are worrisome, and feelings of impending danger (racing heart rate, restlessness.)

The good news is once anxiety is recognized, there are strategies that can be utilized to help manage it:

- Deep breathing and mindfulness based meditation (see side bar)
- Focus on positives and use positive self talk
- Activity: exercise, spend time outside, journal, or try yoga
- Taking a break from typical routine to focus on YOU without other distractions
- Diet changes: reduce processed foods, caffeine, dairy, or alcohol
- Medications (talk with your provider)

Adapted from flintrehab.com

If you are worried about how to manage anxiety or other mental health concerns, consider Capital Region Physicians-Center for Mental Wellness.

Call 573-632-5560 for more information.

EYE ON IT

Current Industry Trends

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

This sounds intimidating, but MBSR is essentially a mental wellness program designed to target both mind and body. This type of technique has been around for decades, but has shown great research outcomes for managing mental health issues like anxiety and depression in the last few years. This technique teaches you to be in control of your mind so that your mind does not control you by bringing awareness to automatic responses that occur either consciously or not. MBSR helps to breathe, relax, and be mindful at the present moment. Rather than struggling with external triggers that are often uncontrollable, MBSR helps to find peace in the moment and allow space to act instead of react to the situation. If you are interested in learning more, check out [Coming to Our Senses](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn or other online resources.



This Month's Q&A

Q: I feel defeated that things are not improving despite all my efforts. How can I overcome this?

A: This is something that almost everyone deals with after having a stroke. The recovery process can take a long time, with some members even citing improvements years out from a stroke. Here are some tips to help keep you motivated when progress is slow.

Source: saebo.com

Tips to Stay Motivated:

- Set relevant and achievable goals: set a long term goal and then several short term goals that can be more easily achieved.
- Address emotional challenges (see above)
- Share your story with others: telling others about your experiences after a stroke is great for coping with your new abilities.
- Keep a routine: consistency in any routine is key for building motivation.



Jefferson City Theater Scene

Enjoy the arts and relax with a locally-produced and performed play.

- **"Elvis, the Musical"** February 10-12

Capital City Productions, 719 Wicker Lane

This Elvis Presley bio-musical takes a closer look at the rock star and cultural icon whose impact shaped the history of music and culture.

- **"Farce of Nature"** February 17-19

The Little Theatre of Jefferson City, Joseph and Etta Miller Performing Arts Center, 501 Madison St.

This Southern-fried farce highlights one day in the life of the Wilburn Family of Mayhew, Arkansas. The struggling family fishing lodge becomes the backdrop for a motley collection of flawed characters stirring up a hilarious comedic stew.

- **"The Mousetrap!"** March 10-12

Capital City Productions, 719 Wicker Lane

Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap!" is the world's longest running play. This thrilling production is THE genre-defining murder mystery from the best-selling novelist of all time...case closed!

*We plan to resume in person meetings in **April 2022**. More information to follow.*

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