

Eric Robert – Stroke Survivor Story

Eric is a self-employed massage therapist, who is married and has two children. Eric experienced his first of three strokes in December 2009 at age 37. At the time his spouse was pregnant with their first child. This stroke was the worst of the three and recovery took the longest. His second stroke occurred December 2015, happened on the opposite side of the brain and recovery was faster. His third stroke happened November 2019, Eric was diagnosed with a vertebral artery dissection which affected the brain stem. Eric felt that it was important to note that this stroke did not fit within the [FAST](#) guidelines Eric experienced dizziness, loss of balance and vomiting.

Eric was discharged home following all three of his strokes. Following his first stroke Eric experienced challenges with short-term memory loss, speech and reading. He accessed out-patient speech-language pathology therapy and played Big Brain Academy on the Nintendo Wii to assist with rehabilitation. Following his second and third stroke he did not require any rehabilitation services following hospitalization. Eric was back at work within 3 months following all three strokes.

How did having a stroke change your life?

Having a stroke changed Eric's outlook on life. He now lives for today and doesn't plan years in advance, he "enjoys today for today". Some of the changes that Eric has experienced since having a stroke are changes in the way he manages stress commenting that he used to be very laid back. Now he is more anxious, and his energy levels aren't the same. Eric was an avid gym user and hockey player prior to his stroke and describes this as a passion, but now he is not able to exercise as much which has been a challenge. He must remind himself to slow down and rest even though he wants to do more.

What do you feel you've accomplished through your stroke and recovery?

Learning to manage fear and anxiety was a huge success for Eric. Following his first stroke, where the deficits were the worst, there were very challenging days filled with fear. He was able to work through this and move forward. Eric has been able to return to living a productive life and has expanded his business which fills him with a great deal of pride.

Is there anything you would have done differently?

Eric would have reached out for support sooner to discuss how he was feeling and changes he was experiencing with his mood. He would have reached out to someone with knowledge of fatigue who would have understood what he was experiencing and provided him with guidance. Eric recognized that, “you have to try to understand what is going on in your brain and body during the recovery process”. Increasing his knowledge of stroke and recovery assisted in the process.

Now that you are a survivor, how are you living your life differently and why?

Eric is living life for today! He feels that it is important to be happy as life is a lot easier when you are happy and believes that “It’s a great day for a great day”. Eric recognizes the need to slow down and conserve his energy whenever possible.

What three things would you tell a person who just had a stroke?

- 1) Be patient with your recovery, it can take years. Don’t worry how you are feeling today, tomorrow will be better
- 2) Take your time resuming “normal” life
- 3) Take care of yourself

What is your one key message about your experience with stroke?

For health care professionals to listen to the patient and treat everyone individually.

