



## Speaking from Experience *Stroke in Midlife*

### Transcript for chapter 6 of 9: Psychological impact

**Jack, 53 years, stroke 11 years ago:** Memory wise, it's a known fact that most people have short term memory loss. It's common, I have that too.

**Leonie, 37 years, stroke 4 years ago & husband George:** I do have a memory problem. And it's not long term memory, it's short term memory, which at times can be difficult.

**Robyn, 48 years, stroke 11 years ago, & mother Cath:** Any appointments are always in her diary. She knows that if someone says, "I'll see you on Tuesday", she says "Wait a minute", and goes and writes it straight down, or she wont remember.

**Robyn & mother Cath:** But, I mean, five minutes...

**Robyn & mother Cath:** And it's gone.

**Jack:** One of the side effects of stroke is also the emotional part of it. That was very embarrassing. Somebody would say something to you, "G'day Jack, how are you?" [pretends to cry], "I don't want to know anything". But after a while, you get to control that.

**Helen, 54 years, stroke 11 years ago:** One of the problems with stroke is not being able to control your emotions. And crying is just a terrible thing associated with stroke. And I can't say that you're necessarily unhappy or anything but you just find yourself in tears.

**Jack:** One of the after effects of stroke is also depression, which I didn't know what it was, but I found out later on what it meant quick smart.

**Leonie & husband George:** Well, I didn't have any really big times of depression that I can remember. I was doing really well, just going for it. I was ready to go back to work too, and then having had a Tonic Clonic and the doctors telling me I have epilepsy, well it was a huge blow. I think I plummeted down to rock bottom.

**Noelene, 63 years, stroke 7 years ago:** Now, I've learned how to control my emotions again.

**Leonie & husband George:** While Leonie was depressed, I was pretty much down as well. But I wasn't there to let her know that I was down and out and to this day, I wonder how far I've come as far as depression goes. I have my moments when I'm still quite down, but regardless, I don't tell Leonie that I'm feeling down and out. My whole idea was to push Leonie as far as I could and improve her to the point where she'd be able to just walk out in the street and have no problems.

**Helen:** You're not just dealing with the physical things that have happened to you, including the emotional side of it, but I mean your loss of work. I mean, it's a bit like a bereavement, in some ways, I suppose, because of some of the things you've lost. You've had no time to prepare. Suddenly, you're working one day and the next day you're at the hospital with a bunch of strangers not able to move. That in itself is a huge shock.



**Leonie & husband George:** You needed external intervention, I suppose. We had to do something, or we were just going to go deeper. Anyway, we went and saw the psychologist and I suppose she set us on the road back.

**Robyn & mother Cath:** These last few years, somehow or other she's, I can't explain why she's become happy, she's very pleased to be independent. She's proud of herself and she's pleased.

**Leonie & husband George:** I would have done something differently, knowing what I know now. I believe we needed more interaction, I needed someone to help me. But even knowing that now, I find it hard to ask someone to help me. You know, I don't ask for sympathy, I feel like I'm asking for sympathy, even though I realised I needed help. But in regards to Leonie, I think she needed more interaction with other people. I should have asked her family, all the friends that we had, to come and socialise more. But my lack of knowledge didn't help because Leonie was saying, "I don't want to see people". Which, in effect, was just closing her into her shell.

**Robyn & mother Cath:** I think you have to be positive. I mean, I think I'm an optimistic nature anyway. I'm always inclined to look at the good things, I suppose. And I am an optimist. But you could let it get you down. You could quite easily think that I can't be bothered doing this anymore, I've had this. You just have to talk yourself out of that. No, I think you have to keep positive.

**Noelene:** I think I'm very fortunate to be here after the stroke and I think that one, as I said before, one has to be positive and try.

**Jack:** I think good things, and that slowly brought me out of depression. I also go to church, and my wife to be, she also got me out of depression as well.

**Noelene:** There are more positives now in my life than there were before. I think that the main thing is my faith.

**Helen:** As a Christian, I believe that I was given a number of gifts and one I think was the acceptance of what happened to me. I think I was given the gift of hope. I was given the gift of love by the people who are around me; the medical people, family and friends. And, you know, when I went home I thought, what am I going to do with my life? But it's never been a problem.