



European
**Life After
Stroke
Forum**

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PRAAGUE

**Psychological changes in people
with communication difficulties after stroke**

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Personal Experience

- My husband and my 3 children lived in Spain for 11 years.
- We bought an old house; it was exciting.
- My passion was languages.
- I spoke 5 languages: English, German, Spanish, Russian and French.
- I was a teacher of English for foreign students and a translator.
- One day that changed. I was going to bed and I vomited and passed out.



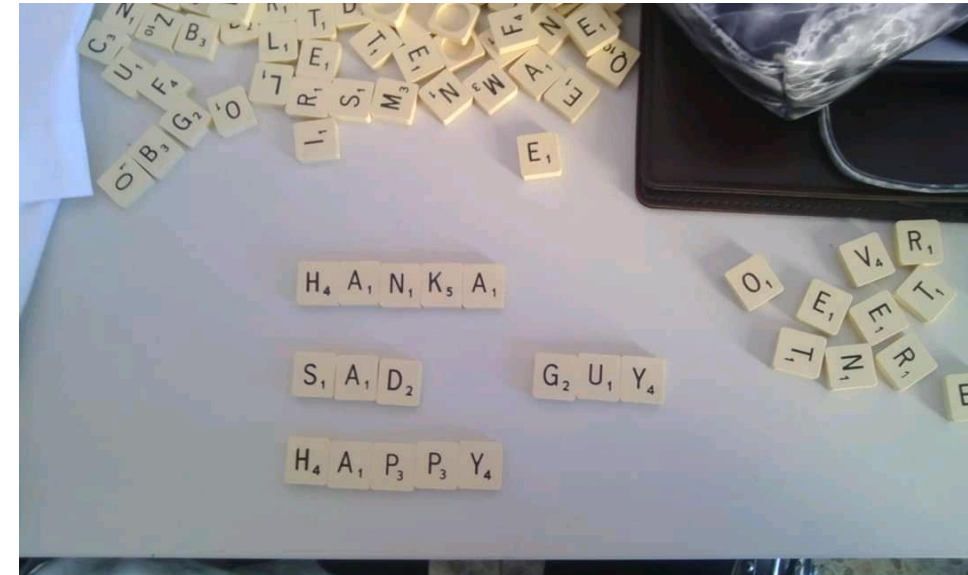
Personal Experience

- My stroke was almost 10 years ago.
- I had a massive bleed on my brain. I was 2 weeks in a coma.
- When I woke up my whole family was there.
- I was confused. I tried to say 'what are you doing here' ... but nothing came out of my mouth.
- I wanted to get up, but I couldn't. All I could say for the following weeks was "in" and swear words



Personal Experience

- After 3 months in a hospital in Spain my husband organised a “Fund me” Facebook page to raise money to take me back to England.
- We thought I would have my therapy in England, and then in a year, we were moving back to Spain...
- This was just the beginning of my stroke and aphasia recovery...
- In England, I was in hospital for another 3 months and in a wheelchair for one year



Different phases of acceptance

- Living with aphasia can be lonely.
- Not being able to take part in conversation, share jokes and feelings.
- Aphasia can have a real impact on self-identity.
- For me, depression lasted about 3 years.
- My husband, close friends, and a counsellor helped me.
- I had never suffered suicidal thoughts because of my family.
- I wanted to get better for my children and my husband.
- Being a mum after my stroke was really difficult.

Counselling and changes in emotions

- My counsellor said: “Find something that makes you completely forget that you are disabled!”
- For me it was **gardening**: After my stroke I did a course in Horticulture and still today I go to volunteer at the garden centre once a week.

3 factors played a role in my emotions after my stroke:

1. I was so **tired** & fatigued. I slept a lot and needed to rest often.
2. I was **crying** all the time.
3. **Noise**. I can't concentrate when there is too much noise.



Now after nearly 10 years after my stroke the crying has gone and I don't get so tired anymore but when I'm at home I usually go for a 'siesta' after lunch.

Physical activity is the key!



- Exercise is important to fight sadness
- Focus on the things you CAN do instead of the things you cannot do anymore



A really good friend, who is a dance teacher, taught me to dance again by helping me to find my balance.



- I do Neurofit on Zoom
- I attend physiotherapy
- I go "swimming" most weeks



- I walk a lot in the countryside.
- Being surrounded by nature is winding me down emotionally and physically.



I do yoga at home.



I have to be honest I don't live well with aphasia. I hate it! But I have got used to it.

Aphasia support groups

- Aphasia drop-in groups have given me the opportunity to help other survivors improve their speech.
- Is useful for exchanging ideas with another person with aphasia.
- I just forget about my aphasia because we are all in the same boat.
- Nobody judges us.
- I am less bothered about little unimportant things, that "normal" people argue about.



Take home message: Exercise more!

- Relieves the stress
- Reduces suicidal thoughts
- Exercise makes feel better
- Make friends at sports clubs and support groups





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- My husband died two and a half years ago.
 - He had a problem with his heart and there was COVID 🙄
 - We were together for 30 years, 25 years married.
 - But coming here and telling my story has helped me enormously and my husband would be so, so proud.

**RIP Guy Mayhew whose love encouraged me
not to give up after my stroke**

