

Frustration

Few conditions would give rise to quite the amount of frustration that a stroke does.

It can be frustrating trying to come to grips with what has actually happened – the stroke itself is invisible, there is no warning, no pain, and stroke works in hundreds of hidden ways.

Rehabilitation can be frustratingly slow. Effort often seems not to equate with progress. Caregivers must adapt to the deliberate, unhurried pace that living with a stroke demands, even when they have a dozen jobs to get on with.

Little in this physical situation can be changed, but trying a different approach often works well:

What helps

- Take one thing at a time. Focus on whatever you're doing at the moment, unconcerned about the next event
- Try and see things that go wrong as part of the learning process rather than failures
- Remember how much progress has been made since the beginning – each day adds to the progress, though it may not seem much of a triumph at the time. (Read back through your diary to be reminded of how far you have come.)
- Graph important indicators of recovery, for example, distance walked, or how long it takes to get dressed
- Realise how much energy frustration uses up and put the energy into effort instead – never give up
- Find someone to talk to about difficulties and feelings. Share the load. A phone call to a Stroke Foundation field officer or a friend will bring in a new angle, a ray of light...

- Beware of denial. Denying limitations can be as dangerous as ignoring faulty brakes on a car
- Learn to let things go! Become adept at changing the subject. Even when you know you are right, deciding not to argue to get a point across can save energy and distress, and before long you're onto new ground
- Accept the reality of outcomes that cannot be changed.

