

## ***Identity Theft: Rediscovering Ourselves After Stroke***

**By Debra E. Meyerson, PhD with Danny Zuckerman**

### **Chapter 10: Partners and Intimacy**

1. Debra describes the tensions and friction that developed due to her wanting to be independent but struggling to do certain tasks. She was at times resentful of Steve helping and not helping her when she needed it. (p. 121)
  - a. Has this dynamic occurred in your relationship with your survivor post-stroke?
    - i. If so, how was it or could it be remedied?
  - b. Do you think it is important to allow the survivor to ask for or confirm a need for help before it is given?
    - i. Why or why not?
  
2. Debra describes how early on, her husband Steve received important advice: “he’d be no good as support for me, if he didn’t take care of himself.” (p. 127)
  - a. Do you agree it is important for carepartners to take time for themselves, even in the immediate aftermath of a stroke?
    - i. Why or why not?
  - b. Were you able to do this and if so, did you find it difficult to do?
  - c. In what ways do you take time for self-care now?
  - d. What are the obstacles to taking even more time for self-care?
  - e. Consider the example of Martina Varnado who occasionally hires someone to help with home responsibilities that she used to take care of. Why does she do this?
    - i. If what Martina did is not financially possible, are there people in your support network who could be asked periodically to help alleviate some of your caregiving load?
  - f. Do you feel appreciated for your work as a carepartner?

- g.** In what ways would you like to be shown appreciation for your work?
- 3.** Debra states, “I have found that sometimes the most helpful support I can provide to Steve is giving him the space and encouragement to do the things that make him happy, without me.” (p. 128)
- Do you feel able and supported to take time for social, athletic, and other activities alone that you used to do with your survivor?
  - If that is currently not an option in your life, what types of support would you need in order to build these opportunities into your life?
- 4.** Debra states, “Although sex certainly isn’t the only form of intimacy that makes our relationship rewarding, it is an important one.” (p. 129)
- If your survivor is your romantic partner, what impact has their stroke had on intimacy?
    - Are there positive and negative impacts?
  - What forms of intimacy do you and your survivor feel comfortable with since their stroke?
    - Have these changed over time?
  - How has your survivor’s self-image evolved since their stroke?
- 5.** Debra states, “... so many things in our lives, even sex, are driven not by our capabilities but by our sense of self, our identity, and that our identity is powerfully influenced by those around us, especially those closest to us.” (p. 131)
- If in a romantic relationship, what impact did your survivor’s stroke have on the dynamic between you and your survivor?
  - What has helped you and your survivor navigate through the different phases of recovery as sexual partners?
  - How do you strike a balance between providing care and support, and maintaining your role as a romantic partner/significant other?
  - Has finding this balance been easy to do?

- i. Why or why not?
- e. When the balance feels “off”, have you found effective ways to restore it?
  - i. If so, how?