

Identity Theft: Rediscovering Ourselves After Stroke

By Debra E. Meyerson, PhD with Danny Zuckerman

Chapter 9: Stroke Is a Family Illness

1. The chapter titled “Stroke is a Family Illness” (p. 102) begins with Sarah Zuckerman’s “Chapel Talk.” In it, she describes the lessons she learned about “going it alone.”
 - a. Discuss the chapter title. Do you agree with its assertion?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - b. Why do you think that Debra chose to include her daughter’s speech in this chapter?
 - c. How do you think your survivor’s stroke impacted your family, friends, and community?
 - i. Did reading Sarah’s speech change your view in any way?
 - d. Do you agree that asking for and accepting help from others can in fact be a sign of strength?
 - i. Share your reasons.

2. In her chapel talk, Sarah Zuckerman describes her support network as “a net ready to catch me if I fell.” (p. 104)
 - a. How would you describe your survivor’s support network?
 - i. What about your own as a carepartner?
 - b. How have these networks changed over time?
 - c. How comfortable are you with asking for and accepting help?
 - d. How have the people in your support network helped you and your survivor?
 - i. Consider reaching out to your support network to let them know how appreciative you are to have them in your life.
 - e. If you feel the need, how might you go about strengthening or finding new communities of support?

- 3.** Gabrielle Kitzmuller and colleagues identified four common themes in families' post-stroke experiences: family as a life buoy, absent presence, broken foundations, and finding a new path forward. (p. 108-110)
 - a.** Which theme resonates the most with your circumstances right now?
 - b.** Has this changed over time?
 - c.** Did you as the carepartner feel like a life buoy for an extended period of time?
 - d.** If so, do you still consider yourself to be one?
 - i.** How does this make you feel?

- 4.** Debra talks about the many roles Steve played in the immediate aftermath of her stroke: primary caregiver, healthcare advocate, emotional coach, motivator, financial manager, rehab equipment manager, etc. (p. 112)
 - a.** What current roles do you have in the aftermath of your survivor's stroke?
 - b.** Have these roles changed over time?
 - c.** Which roles are you most/least comfortable with?
 - d.** How involved are other family members and/or people close to your survivor?
 - e.** Have you had to take on new domestic roles in addition to your direct role as a carepartner?
 - f.** Are there any roles that could be assigned to others, especially over time?
 - g.** Are there roles that are currently needed that you are unable to fill?
 - h.** Are there any roles from your pre-stroke life that have been abandoned and are missed, that could possibly be brought back with or without adaptation?