

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

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### **Introduction**

1. Debra and Steve utilize the term “carepartners” to define their post-stroke relationship; they intentionally do not define Steve as a caregiver. This choice has helped them both to feel more comfortable with their roles, and removes the implication that Steve is always the giver while Debra only receives care. They are on this journey together.
  - a. What term do you use when describing your role relative to your survivor?
  - b. What term does your survivor use to describe your role?
  - c. What do you think about the term “carepartner”?
  
2. Debra’s stroke exposes her to a community built around navigating post-stroke life. She notices “similar dynamics in other communities, as well—colleagues struggling with the loss of a loved one, survivors recovering from brain injuries, and even just friends facing the realities of older age.” (p. 3)
  - a. Think about these communities.
    - i. How are they similar?
    - ii. How might they differ?
  - b. What communities do you currently participate in?
  - c. Have you had opportunities to be an active participant in a carepartner group?
    - i. If not, have there been any obstacles to your joining a carepartner group?
    - ii. If so, has being part of a carepartner group helped you?
      1. Why or why not?

- d. How might you go about finding or strengthening your communities of support?
  - e. Has your survivor had opportunities to be an active participant in a survivor group?
    - i. If not, are there local or virtual options for your survivor to participate?
    - ii. If so, have these activities been helpful?
      - 1. Why or why not?
  - f. Do you and your survivor belong to any of the same support groups?
    - i. Why or why not?
    - ii. Would you like to participate in a group together?
3. Debra states, “I found numerous resources to help me understand my journey to recover physically, but there was a profound lack of guidance when I faced the emotional challenge of rebuilding my sense of self.” (p.3)
- a. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
    - i. Why?
  - b. Did any healthcare professional(s) discuss your survivor’s mental health recovery at any point with you?
    - i. If so, was this discussion focused on acute symptoms, potential longer term mental health counseling needs, or both?
  - c. Was the emotional challenge of rebuilding identity and a healthy new sense of self addressed? If so,
    - i. By whom?
    - ii. When?
    - iii. Was this input helpful?
      - 1. Why or why not?
  - d. Did any healthcare professional(s) discuss your own mental health needs as a new carepartner with you at any point?
    - i. If so, was this discussion focused on acute or potential longer term

- mental health counseling needs, or both?
- e. Was the emotional challenge of rebuilding identity and a healthy new sense of self addressed? If so,
    - i. By whom?
    - ii. When?
    - iii. Was this input helpful?
      - 1. Why or why not?
  - f. What steps did you take to ensure your own mental health and well-being, either early on or later in the journey?
    - i. Were these enough?
4. Debra states, “A vital part of my rebuilding process has been acknowledging, and sometimes even celebrating, my identity as a stroke survivor.” (p 6)
- a. How do you and your survivor mark the anniversary of the stroke?
  - b. Has the way you acknowledge the stroke changed over time?