



Rebuilding Identity and Rewarding Lives

## *Identity Theft: Rediscovering Ourselves After Stroke, Second Edition* By Debra E. Meyerson, PhD, with Steve Zuckerman

---

### **Chapter 20: Five More Years of Living, Working, and Learning**

1. "For many years I (Steve) avoided sharing my challenges with Debra. I was embracing the 'ring theory of support'... By that theory, my role was to support Debra, and if I needed help I would look for others to get it from.
  - a. Have you found yourself in a similar situation, where you felt the need to prioritize supporting your loved one over sharing your own challenges?
  - b. How did you manage this dynamic?
  - c. In what ways has your relationship with your loved one evolved as a result of their stroke?
  - d. How do you balance your own needs and identity with your role as a carepartner?
  
2. Debra and Steve discuss the concept of "cycles of grief" and how it has been a part of their journey. "My mind chatter went something like this: 'We can't dance the way we used to. I have to be ready to help Debra to the bathroom as the walkway is uneven. My conversations get interrupted to help Debra with hers.'"
  - a. Have you experienced similar cycles of grief in your journey as a carepartner?
  - b. How did you manage these feelings?
  - c. In what ways have you found it helpful to acknowledge and validate your emotions?
  - d. How do you refocus on the present and move forward?



*Rebuilding Identity and Rewarding Lives*

3. The chapter highlights the importance of mental health support for both survivors and carepartners. "For about a year, one of our Stroke Onward colleagues, Jodi Kravitz, led a mental health listening tour. In all, we talked to several dozen clinicians, including some who had personally experienced stroke."
  - a. What mental health resources or practices have you found helpful or lacking in your journey?
  - b. Have you accessed any professional help or support groups?
  - c. How do you think the stroke care system could better integrate mental health support for carepartners and survivors?
  
4. "We've benefited from technology and innovation throughout our post-stroke journey – from Debra's receiving a still experimental cranial artery stent implant, to electronic devices that assisted in all manner of rehabilitation therapy, to the use of technologies like Siri voice dictation"
  - a. Are there any technologies you've encountered that you believe could significantly benefit your loved one or you?
  - b. How do you think these technologies could be accessed or utilized?
  - c. In what ways have you seen technology create new opportunities for connection for stroke survivors and carepartners?
  - d. What are some potential challenges or drawbacks to relying on technology for support?
  
5. "Ultimately, the power of technology in stroke recovery lies not just in its ability to restore physical function, but in its capacity to empower survivors, to restore agency, and to open up new avenues for engagement and meaning."
  - a. How do you envision technology playing a role in your loved one's future recovery or adaptation?



*Rebuilding Identity and Rewarding Lives*

- b. Are there specific technologies or innovations that you're hopeful about?
- c. In what ways can technology support the emotional and social aspects of recovery for both survivors and carepartners?
- d. How can you stay informed about new technologies and their potential applications?