

Speaking from Experience Stroke in Midlife USA

Transcript for Chapter 5 of 9: Impact on life

Dave –

I would say the reaction of my friends was somewhat mixed. I mean, you hear the term that you find out who your real friends are through something like this, and it's true but on the whole, I would say the majority of the people who I considered closest to me, they're still close to me. We don't do the same things together necessarily, but we still get together all the time. So the really good friends are still my good friends, so I haven't really lost much there.

Colin & Caroline –

Socially, otherwise... if Colin's traveling... before I would have just said...if someone was having a party, I'd say, "Oh I'll go along." Right now, if it's somewhere that's unfamiliar ground or it's a house I don't know, I won't because I don't know where there's going to be steps or if I'll have difficulty getting into it if someone's not there. If one of my girlfriends can come with me, fine I'll do that but I very much stick to familiar ground, familiar territory.

Trish –

I give up basketball, soccer and running. Restaurant and bars is too loud so hard to hear me.

Colin & Caroline –

We were about to start drawing up a family when I had the stroke and that we decided after the stroke was just not on. Mainly because when my husband was going to get back to traveling again I would have needed help at home, especially in the evening, at night because when I'm tired and I get up in the middle of the night that's when nothing works, that's when my leg doesn't work and I have to stand and work out how to walk, in the middle of the night and you know, if you've got a screaming baby that's something you just...you can't explain to a baby, "I'm sorry, I can't pick you up right now because nothing's working."

Carmel –

I didn't lie to my son about what had happened. I told him that something very serious had happened, that I had had basically a brain attack in my head and that something had gone wrong in my brain and that's why I couldn't move my left side. But on the other hand, I told him I was gonna keep working until I could move my left side.

Cynthia –

He was used to having a mom that did everything and all of a sudden he had a mom that could do some things and would try, but getting his basketball down off of the roof, I mean, ya know. I did get on a ladder once, that was kind of scary. But at the end of the day, he would compare the old mom to the new mom and sometimes get very sad. And he was sad because I disappeared on him for 6 weeks and ended up in the hospital instead of being there every day. And after about 4 years, when I started getting better and he was still getting sad about it, I said, "You know what? I'm a lot better now. Can we just, like, can we move on?" And he said, "Oh, okay."

Sachi –

I thought my life was over. I can't write, can't speak, I can't communicate well and this is going to be a burden, to my husband especially.

Colin & Caroline –

If you're living together in the same house and still relying on each other in all kinds of emotional ways, as well as being there, it's something you have to... if I were to just continue my life as previously I think it would be very hard. I think that... I feel for people who are in this situation because I know that the divorce rate is extremely high after strokes because some people just can't cope with it. I think we're lucky we're finding a way to cope with it.

Sachi –

One day I was in tears and saying, "I don't want to keep my life and be only a burden." And he was totally surprised. It never occurred to him.

Dave –

So here I am, my wife passed away and I'm quote unquote, I've got some disability and I'm an old guy and I'm no longer working and the idea that I'm gonna go dating? After not having dated for 35 years? It's just ludicrous, there's no way. I mean, it wasn't about feeling any guilt or grief, I was kinda past that part, but I was just scared to death of the whole dating thing. And I accidentally backed into it, quite frankly. As I mentioned, I bought a motorcycle, a specialized motorcycle that I was able to ride and I joined a group of people who...in the Bay Area that liked to ride and it turns out that some of them were single and I was scared to death that someone might actually ask me on a date because I had not spent any time thinking about what that was gonna involve... with the new me. Because, again, I'm redefining myself, so I didn't even know how to define myself anymore so it's hard to have confidence when you don't really know yourself at that point. But it just so happened that I met this woman, and it was just one of these amazing love at first sight things, and she just made it easy and we eventually, just this last fall, got married and now I'm happily married again and it's just been an amazing evolution.