

REHABILITATION
from the
PERSPECTIVE
of a
STROKE SURVIVOR

By
Ralph Preston

My name is Ralph Preston. I am a videographer and still photographer. I just moved to Murrells Inlet, SC from Franklin, NC, where I took these pictures. I am not a speaker by profession, but speaking and writing have helped me understand my journey. As a photographer, I am a keen observer. This holds true for life, as well. Everything I say today is based on my observations. It's not about me, but I have to use my experience to tell this story. I hope when we are done, you have a better understanding of the importance of attitude and support in a successful recovery. I'm going to move right along, so we have time for questions.

I work as a video technical director at meetings all over the country, setting them up, testing everything, and then living backstage behind the curtains. Check 1 2, Check 1 2. That's what I usually do at the podium. So, what am I doing out in front of the curtains?

Well, I had a stroke a little more than a year ago and I have made quite the recovery due to my attitude and the hard work I did. Anyone who thinks I've recovered 100% hasn't seen me carry 2 full glasses, fold laundry, tie a tie, or wrestle with the dreaded zip-lock bag. They don't know about my teeth clinching or the paresthesia in my face and hand. Anyway, I'm not here to complain. I'm here today to tell you my story and some of what I learned about attitude & hope, PT, OT, rehab, the road to recovery, and the gap that exists once a stroke patient is released from a rehab hospital to manage their own recovery. I am also going to tell you about an idea I have for a Stroke Recovery DVD that has become my mission.

When I first wrote this speech, I had no idea they would schedule me for an hour. It's not that I can't talk for an hour, just ask my wife. But, I wanted to make this meaningful for you. A lot of people have asked me exactly how I made my recovery, so some of that is included. Since I am a photographer, I thought I'd entertain you a little with pictures I've taken since my stroke. Some help tell the story and some are for your enjoyment. This is only the second time I have ever given a speech, so bear with me.

So, how could a 58-year old in good shape have a right-side hemorrhagic stroke on his exercise bike training for the Senior Games? It happened because I wouldn't listen. Well, as much as I hate to admit it, my stroke was completely preventable. I did this to myself. I was a stubborn guy with marginally high BP (140/90) who didn't want to take the medication and who wouldn't listen to his wife, not even when a brother-in-law had a stroke at 53 and she told me, "You are going to have a stroke like Steve". My attitude was these things happen to "other people", not to me. I thought I was somehow bulletproof when it comes to getting hurt, getting sick, even aging – you know the type. Men, we only go to the hospital if we can't stop the bleeding ourselves. I wrote that line and then found out I have a friend who recently went to the emergency and got 11 stitches only when he couldn't stop the bleeding with gauze and duct tape. Well, I found the hard way I am not bulletproof. I tell people **now I am one of those "other people"**.

And so, I ended up like this. I spent 5 days in the Neurological Unit at Mission Hospital in Asheville, NC and then I spent 17 days at CarePartners, a rehab hospital also in Asheville.

One of the first things I did at CarePartners was have my wife, Deborah, bring me my still camera. I took pictures of the flowers around CarePartners one-handed and from the wheelchair. I took my camera to OT and had them show me the exercises I should do to be able to use my left hand on the camera. It seemed everything had been stripped away from me. I wanted to immediately reconnect with one of the important things in my life, my photography. When I did, it made me feel like things would be o.k.

One thing I decided early on was that I wasn't going to try to figure it all out. It was done. There are no do-overs in life. I also decided that I wasn't going to blame anyone or anything in the chain of events leading up to my stroke, especially not myself or God. I decided that was a slippery slope with nothing but anger and self-pity at the bottom. I decided not to even go near the edge. And then a friend gave me a quote on attitude. She had read it to me when we first spoke on the phone after the stroke and she mailed a copy to me. I'd like to read it to you.

Attitude

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is to play on the one string we have and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our Attitudes!"
Charles Swindoll

I have lived by this quote since I first heard it. Sure, I have my moments, **but they are moments.**

So, I threw myself at daily PT, OT, Hand & Arm, and pool therapy sessions. One day no one came for me to wheel me off to PT. That was a huge favor. I didn't want to miss any of my therapy sessions, so I paddled on down myself using my feet, a trick I learned from my 90-year old mother. It's never too late to learn from your mother. I couldn't wheel because my left arm didn't work well enough and I'd go in circles. But I could use my legs. This got me started doing everything for myself. I never let anyone push me anywhere after that day, except down and up the big dip on the way to the pool.

When I was waiting in the wheelchair, I did wrist & hand exercises. I insisted on completing everything and doing everything with good form, or I kept doing it until it was. I had great PTs and OTs. My PT, Kathy, adapted her teaching style to my

learning style; I had no cognitive deficits, but some of your patients do and some even have aphasia. I've always been one for the details, but after the stroke I was even more single-minded, focusing on one thing at a time in my recovery. If you told me too many things at once, I would not be able to make my brain deal with it all. If I focused on one thing at a time, I would achieve it, and move on to the next task. Kathy once said, "We are trying to learn to forget how to walk".

My OT, Robin, also saw how I learned and we tailored my therapy sessions around that. Both she and Kathy realized I needed to talk and understand what we were doing. They learned the best way to teach me was to show me, since I am a visual learner. They showed me, explained things, were very patient, and talked to me as a friend, something I needed. Both of these therapists helped me to achieve more through this.

So, the greatest gift you can give your patients is to **adapt your teaching style to their learning style.**

I said I wanted to walk out of CarePartners like a normal human being. I was worried a bit because I had not walked on my own when I made that announcement to my wife and to Kathy. I've done that a few times, as you will see. Announce something that's a stretch, but within my grasp, and then I have to live up to it. I asked Kathy to walk out with me because I wanted her to share in my success, since she was a part of it.

My first solo walk was the day before I was to be released. We were headed for my wheelchair when I looked to my left and Kathy had let go of me 15 feet back, kind of like when you were five and you realized your dad had let go of the bicycle.

Other patients acted like they were going to return to their old life. **Despite what they think, stroke patients cannot return to their old lives.** I thought that for a while, yeah I'll just kick this thing and get right back to where I was. I even thought I could complete in the Senior Games coming up in a few weeks. But, by the time I was to leave CarePartners, I realized I could not go back to my old life. It simply did not exist anymore. And, I realized there's nothing wrong with that! I told this to one of the nurses and then I just blurted out "**I am going to be the best new me I can be.**"

It's cute to have your granddaughter tie your shoes the first few times. But, what every stroke survivor wants is to be independent of other people, especially loved ones. It's the old, "I don't want to be a burden" thing, not to mention wanting to regain lost skills.

When I left CarePartners, I told myself I don't care if it takes 1,000,000 steps to get better. That seemed like more than enough. Well, I did get a lot better before 1,000,000 steps, but I meant 100%. It seems I underestimated that a bit. I've taken more like 2 or 3 million and I'm still getting better, which means I still have deficits. Maybe it's just a lifelong process and I need to look at it that way.

My wife teaches at the community college. The week I was released was the week of final exams, so she couldn't take off to be home with me. My friend of 15 years, Andy

Leonard, came and we spent the week getting me off to a good start. Andy was a Marine. He actually brought the USMC Fitness Guide book. I was worried. I'm thinking I'm trying to learn how to walk and can't "Get down and give you 50". But, Sergeant Andy had not come, just my friend. Andy also brought me a Total Gym. It was too difficult for me to get on and off it in the beginning, so I used it later.

But, in addition to his organization and determinedness, he also brought his love and patience and we designed a "program" for me, based on the handouts I'd been given and some things we put together. We went to the hardware store and got dowels between endless doctors' appointments. We tested all the exercises together, Andy watching my form. He had this thing he would do. He would stick his hand up in the air and I was to poke the middle of his palm as best I could with my left index finger. He did this every time we passed. That first week set a good precedent for my recovery. I looked at it like a training program, like my job, and it was.

I got frustrated with the wheelchair after just a few days at home. My wife, Deborah, encouraged me to get out of it and fend for myself. And so a short era of "wall-walking" started. She and Andy helped me if I needed to get somewhere and couldn't do it on my own. They also guarded me against injury, **but they let me do things for myself.**

So, my days consisted of wall pushups, shoulder raises with a pole, leaning on my affected side, circles, abduction, the hammer, putty, rubber bands. We walked in the driveway, Andy holding on to me at first and then I walked unassisted with a cane. 20 laps around my driveway make a mile. We walked 3 laps at a time at first, 4 or 5 times a day. I tired easily, despite the fact I had run 4 miles 2 days before the stroke and less than a month ago. I would lie down on the bed and relax and let my brain reconnect. I tried not to nap much, except after big events that really pushed me. I did not want to sleep my life away or avoid the work I knew I had to do. Everyday I did a little more than the day before and pretty soon I was walking farther and faster.

But there was some adjusting to do. I had to watch other people do things I was used to doing, like here in the garden. Soon, I got bored and walked around and then I got my camera and got down on the ground for the first time for this Foamflower shot.

In May my daughter, Lisa, and granddaughter, Anais, came down and we all went to the beach to visit Deb's mom.

It's healing to have your family around in difficult times. Special places can help, too. Huntington Beach State Park in Murrells Inlet, SC, is one of my favorite places on this earth and not just because we got married there.

Support from family & friends cannot be underestimated. In my case, Deb drove 3 hours to see me every day for 3 weeks when I was in the hospital and rehab, encouraged me to get out of the wheelchair, was supportive, was always positive, held me back when I got too gung ho, put up with endless explanations of what was going on with me, walked countless miles with me at whatever my pace at the time was, and

never once complained. I know she had to be tired of me talking about the stroke. I know she hates the word “edgy”. I am a lucky man to have her in my life. Oh yeah, this is the spot where we got married 26 years ago, Antalya Castle at Huntington Beach.

When we were at the beach in May I could walk 1/2 mile, at best. I had to watch others walk to the jetty and back, one of Deb and my favorite walks and one we have done literally 100s of times. I thought to myself, “When we come back in August, I’ll walk to the jetty and back”.

But I did my dowel exercises and practiced squatting and getting up by taking endless pictures of Anais building sandcastles and playing in the surf. I found walking in and out of the surf a safe place to experience all kinds of balance and footing shifts. It took a lot of concentration and Deb held on to me when really big waves came. I wanted to swim, I was always a swimmer and it felt good, but my shoulder was weak. I took my reward in just being alive and able to float in the ocean.

When we came back to Franklin, we went walking (there’s that watchful eye) and butter flying (Anais and I share a love of butterflies) and ATVing. Try to start an ATV when you can hardly stand up. And, look who has got my back. Anais loved the Total Gym. She showed me how she could put her own hair back, but I still couldn’t. Tying shoes, and putting our hair back; **I was relearning how to be 5 again.**

I walked and walked and walked. I tied my own shoes. I started outpatient PT and OT and went twice a week to each. They pushed me there and taught me things I could and did do at home the other 5 days. I rarely missed a day of doing it on my own. I walked and did PT & OT exercises several times every day.

I did my first video and still shoot just 3 weeks out of the hospital. Imagine how scarred I was around all those people in such tight quarters. I avoided people in the beginning. I was afraid they would not see me and move in a way that might make me fall. There were loads of chairs I had to navigate around and I was scared I would hook my foot. Plus, I could barely operate the cameras with my left hand. **But, I showed up and tried.**

My brother and his family came down and we all rode the tourist train. Try walking on a moving train a month out of the hospital or sticking your head out the window to take a picture.

Soon I was walking without the cane, then the 1.2 miles to the end of my road and back. That took 1 hour and 2 minutes the first time I did it, now I can do it in 24 minutes, which is 3 miles per hour. I walked on my heels I walked on my toes, I hopped in place, I hopped from side to side, I hopped laps, I did heel raises, I practiced on stairs.

I was still watching others do things I used to do so easily. Deb learned how to bush-hog our land. She said it was “empowering” to be a “bush-hogging, tractor-driving mama”.

In June, I did my first all-day shoot. I wasn't sure I could stand up that long, but it was an important charity event, so I showed up and tried.

I found it very helpful to talk to a counselor and would recommend it to anyone in stroke recovery. One day my counselor asked me if I had hope for the future. I replied, "That's a silly question, there is always hope for the future." She said not everyone felt that way. A couple days later I went to the Cowee Mound, which is an ancient Cherokee village site and my all-time favorite place on earth. I was in awe of the beautiful day at this beautiful place and when I took this picture, it made me think how anyone could NOT have hope for the future. So, I named the picture "There is Always Hope for the Future" and made her a print.

Before I had my stroke, I'd promised my nephew Geoffry that I would shoot his wedding. I told him while I was in the hospital that I still planned to do it. So, off we went to CT to make good on that promise. I got pushed into some of my recovery, or I pushed myself. We stayed with Lisa in NY and went hiking a few times. These rocks are easy if you are 5, not so if you are relearning how to walk and balance. But, they were good training for things to come. Here they are, My 3 favorite girls. I had to get out in the middle of the creek to take this shot.

The wedding was held at a church with 2 sets of granite steps which made me really nervous. Plus, there were 200 people there. You have to run around a lot at a wedding to not miss any shots. I made it through the wedding, the pictures after, and the reception, taking over 700 shots.

In July, I walked and walked and walked some more. I also tied my hair back for the first time. That was the last thing I couldn't do for myself – independence! I also started shooting still pictures fairly regularly. I went to a conservation property and shot this picture, which became the cover of this year's Land Trust for the Little Tennessee calendar. I've done a benefit calendar with the local land trust for the last 5 years. While I was there, I was chasing butterflies, what a surprise. When I saw this grouping of coneflowers, I thought they would make a nice picture without the butterfly and I took some that way. The butterflies were everywhere, so I waited for one to land took this picture, and a new perspective was born. Take a nice flower shot and add a butterfly or two. I also videotaped oral histories on the Front Porch at the Franklin Folk Festival for 9 hours in the hot July sun. I was getting my stamina back.

August came and we headed back to the beach and like I had promised myself, we walked to the jetty. When we got there, I realized I'd been so focused on making it, I didn't think about having to walk back. When I made it back, I decided I wanted to do another of our favorite walks to Siler Bald in August to see the featherbells. And now, I knew I could make it.

Siler Bald is 2.5 miles out on the Appalachian Trail. Its 1500 feet in elevation gain from the parking lot at Wayah Gap to the top. I used to make it to the clearing in 50 minutes.

We walked it that August day in 60 minutes and I was surprised – almost 85% of what I did before. And, that was over the root, rock, and reggae of the Appalachian Trail. We carried a picnic, water, and my camera. As we sat there on the top of the mountain having a picnic on a beautiful day, I felt on top of the world. I knew then I could do most anything I set my mind to in my recovery. I knew that even if I recovered no more, I could have a satisfying life. That was a big concern of mine as I sat in a rehab hospital in a wheelchair. We headed down after lunch to take pictures. Here's the terrain. And, what we came for.

Once I could rack up the miles, I got into the Quantity or Quality debate. While I could walk many miles, my form was a lot like Chester on Gunsmoke, especially around the house or when I got tired. I got different opinions. But, then I called CarePartners and spoke with another of my PTs, Shannon, who told me to “walk on your heels and if you can, walk on your toes”. So, I walked a lap on my heels and then 3 regular and then one on my toes and then 3 regular and back to the heels over and over. I practiced what I called “pattern walking” trying to walk correctly with the slight kick of the foot, heel-toe pronation, and walking “tall” on the affected leg – form over distance. Walking the correct walk pattern, while patterning my brain. **I can tell you from experience, form is more important than distance.**

When you first start walking it is important to watch your feet because you don't have much of a sense for where they are in space. As time goes on you look up further and further, next a few feet in front, then about 15, then 50. When I practice pattern walking I make sure I look at the horizon. I turn my head from side to side. I look at different things – mailboxes, flower boxes, license plates moving my head while I walk. I find this helps a lot with overall balance and was not easy at first, like everything else. I find I have to pay attention to this or I do not automatically look at the horizon. I am stuck in the middle ground and still have to make an effort. **When they are ready, encourage your patients to start the looking up process.**

In August I took this 2nd new perspective flower and butterfly shot at the Cowee Mound, I call Meadow Dance. I told you it is a special place.

In September, I needed to shoot with my 26-pound Betacam for a Habitat for Humanity project in Charlotte, NC. I have been a volunteer for 22 years. Up until now I'd used a smaller video camera I have. It was time to see if I could do deep knee bends with the broadcast camera. (Yes, I could; for the first 5 or 6 hours, anyway.) My first shoot was at the 25-hour house. Volunteers from Bank of America, including former CEO & Chairman of the Board, Hugh McColl (He's the little guy in the blue helmet there on the left) built a house in 25 hours to celebrate Charlotte Habitat's 25th anniversary.

Another big build they had that month, also celebrating their 25th anniversary, was Building on Faith. Here I am setting up a time lapse with my small camera. But, I am doing it on top of my truck. I was starting to get around pretty well. It rained 2" the night before; so to say the conditions were less than ideal would be an understatement. So, I'm walking around shooting hand-held with a 26-pound camera in the mud. You can't

slip and you can't set it down. Sometimes, I have to stand on things to get a shot, like the wall I'm standing on to shoot this wall raising. Interviews are easier. Look at that left hand involvement.

Here's the 3rd new perspective shot.

In February of this year, I started going to SC to walk on the beach and talk with stroke professionals about my DVD idea. I took my bike on one of those trips and started riding again. Oh what a feeling! I found I could ride at pre-stroke levels, pretty much. I can't tell you how good that made me feel. I rode for 2 & 1/2 hours the first day – up the beach and back, through the campgrounds, along a bike lane on the road, and down dirt roads and hiking trails to an old shell Indian Mound. A couple days later I rode 20 miles on the beach. Putting the bike on top of the car proved harder than biking.

I knew I had made a good recovery. I didn't know the level of my recovery until I started talking to stroke professionals about my Stroke Recovery DVD idea. One group told me they thought I had my stroke 3 years ago to be able to bike. That day in SC when I decided to jump on my bike, I'm glad I didn't know that I shouldn't be able to do it. Part of what I did was due to naiveté. They told me to go home, get out of the wheelchair, and relearn how to walk, so that's what I did. It's another case of you don't know what you don't know.

In March one's thoughts turn to gardening. By now, I was able to operate the tractor. You need both hands and both feet. They have stiff clutches, no power steering, and you need both hands when you operate attachments and the PTO.

April 4th 2009, was the anniversary of my stroke. Some people will tell you that anniversaries are difficult. When I got to a year, I decided to celebrate it. I went out taking calendar pictures on that beautiful April day. I also gave my counselor, PTs, and OTs a print of There's Always Hope for the Future in thanks for their help in my recovery.

In May of 2009 I competed in the Macon County Senior Games. As you recall, I had my stroke training for them the year before, so this was completing the circle for me. If I'd known I would be only about a minute behind the winner, I probably would have trained. I also might have ridden my road bike, not a mountain bike with knobby tires. But no one else in my age group showed up, so I won 3 gold medals and qualified for the NC Senior Games this Sunday. I will do them to draw attention to stroke recovery and my DVD project, not to me.

I'm also going to ride in the NC Stroke Association's Cycle for Life event this October, again for publicity. I am one of their letter writers, to raise money for them for stroke prevention.

I skipped over OT in keeping the chronology of walking. Being able to raise my shoulder and use my hand were both major issues for me. I had deficits, and I still do. I

couldn't keep my hand on the computer keyboard. My hand flopped off the shelf when I got the vitamins down. I decided the vitamin bottles were just the same as the plastic spindles at OT. So, I took the vitamins down and put them back over and over for 10 minutes or more every day.

When I complained about stiffness and lack of range of motion in my shoulder, an orthopedic surgeon told me I had adhesive capsulitis. This is a condition normally from non-use and I was doing PT & OT every day and could pull my OT across the room with the blue band! She'd hold on to the cabinets when we did the bands. They stopped me from pulling the band across and in front of me and the same motion only up in case I had a "pinch" in that shoulder. I was told that these two were the key to getting rid of the shake in my hand, so I was not real happy but I did what I was told. I wanted that shoulder back, so I went to a chiropractor, who is also an applied kinesthesiologist. She did wonders getting rid of the tension in my neck and helping me get a full range of motion in my shoulder. And, she worked with what my OT was doing and my OT was open to what she was doing. How could they not work together when they saw me make progress every week?

The chiropractor said something simple. I told her about my routines with bands and weights. She said, "They are all good, but if you can't do something, why not practice that, too"?

I found driving, lawn mowing, and vacuuming to be good shoulder and arm therapy. Anything where you hold your arm still and have to steer. Yes, I vacuum left-handed. Cooking is good therapy, too. Everything is an opportunity for therapy. Don't turn the bottle, turn the top and you're doing OT! **It's not what you work with but that you put in your time working.**

I'm writing an entry called Integration: Beyond Involvement on my blog, but then I'd need another hour to talk about that. And yes, I stand on one leg and balance when I pump gas.

No matter how many times it takes to do something. I never quit. I always complete the task. I believe in brain patterning – psychological as well as physiological, and that **success builds on success**. If I didn't like how I did something or if my hand shook, I'd just do it again and again until I was happy and I felt my brain was patterned, at least for now. Hopefully the next time I'd start off closer to correct.

Sure I know what shirts will fit over my hands with the cuffs buttoned. I didn't say I don't believe in using your cognitive skills to make life easier, **I just don' shy away from any task, rather I embrace them**. That's how I'm going to relearn and get better, through time and repetition. I have all the time in the world – at least I'm still here. **Am I discouraged by what I can't do? No, rather I am encouraged by what I can do.**

Once you reach a certain level you have to work just to maintain that, let alone get ahead. Like the hand reaching up from the grave scene in horror movies, a stroke tries

to reach up and recapture from you what you have gained. I need to preface this: I am not crazy. And, then there are the little voices; you don't really need to walk today. It's O.K. to not... So, the higher the level I achieve forces me to have to put in effort to maintain that level. It's not fair, but that is the way it is.

People ask me what percentage I have regained or if I have made a full recovery. I not sure you can make a full recovery and I feel it is wrong to compare your old life with you new one. Several have asked me if I lost any of my creativity. I ignore the fact that it is basically an insult, and say no. How would you know if you lost brainpower anyway? I not sure you'd be aware of it.

I was an hour early to a covered-dish lunch for the Senior Games recently. I used the extra time to walk around the parking lot. A woman thought I was leaving and said, "Oh, you're not going to stay for the lunch". I said, "I'm not leaving, I'm just walking laps, trying to walk away a stroke". She said, "Oh, a stroke, you need to keep moving then". As I walked away, I thought nothing could be closer to the truth. I'll keep on moving and fighting this until the day I die if I have to, and I'm fine with that.

OK enough recovery, here's my idea.

When I left CarePartners I discovered a gap that exists for stroke patients who now have to manage their own recovery, rather than have it orchestrated for them, like I assume you do for your patients. It's like the TV commercials with the Verizon guys. They are there for you in the hospital, and no longer covering your back when you are released. And there are no stroke doctors per se. People who have a heart attack have cardiologists. People with cancer see oncologists. There are even doctors who specialize in all the various types of cancer, but not stroke. Once your brain is stable, you are done with your neurologist. I went to see mine a couple of times after I was released because he spent time with me and gave me answers. Normally, you see them a couple times in the hospital and once in the office after 3 months, and you are on your own and the answers are not all in one place.

I went to my family doctor, a blood pressure specialist, an internist, an orthopedic surgeon, back to my neurologist after he had released me, PTs, OTs, a counselor, and a psychiatrist. I still don't have the answers I would like to have. Somewhere they exist. That was the first thing that I thought of in terms of a Stroke Recovery DVD. Couldn't many of the questions those engaged in stroke recovery have be answered by doctors and therapists and put in one place?

The second thing that occurred to me that seemed appropriate to a DVD, was I wanted my PT and OT in my living room on my TV to go over those new exercises we'd just learned. It's hard to remember all the things you are supposed to do and how to do them. Often your family caregiver is not there to help you remember. And, I wanted to have someone to do it along with.

Attitude kept playing a larger and larger part in my thinking about this DVD, so it will be an important section and an underlying theme throughout. I decided to ask some famous people like Chuck Swindoll with the Attitude quote, Ram Dass who wrote Be Here Now and had a stroke and was the subject of Fierce Grace about his stroke, his buddy and neighbor Dr. Wayne Dyer, and Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, who had a stroke and wrote "My Stroke of Insight. Ram Dass has agreed and Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor's assistant told me she declined. When I get funding, I will ask Dr Jill myself. As you might suspect, I won't stop until she tells me, "No".

It will also contain a Caregiver section. Family caregivers have no idea what they are in for. Whether it was a "minor" stroke or if major adaptations to life and the home are required, they need help.

The purpose of this DVD would be to bring together in one place as much of the information as possible that someone in stroke recovery needs for his or her total recovery.

So, I wrote up my proposal and headed out to talk to stroke professionals. I got an overwhelming response from the inpatient & outpatient rehab facilities and the stroke & neurology departments I spoke to.

I'm hoping to get funding for my project from a grant from the Centers for Disease Control that the Tri-State Stroke Association was going to write. But, the CDC changed their policy on funding educational projects, so I must look elsewhere. I would be happy to discuss my idea, or anything else, with any of you, especially if you have ideas on funding. My final points are:

Success builds on success, so help your patients have lots of small victories. Encourage them in everything they want to do.

Take the time to notice the beauty around you; in the people you come in contact with and in this marvelous world we live in. Find the beauty.