

Coping with Cognitive Changes After Stroke

Stroke survivors may experience changes after a stroke related to: thinking, memory, processing of information, attention, problem solving, reasoning, or judgement. These are called “cognitive” changes. Stroke survivors may not be aware of these changes. Families may notice that their loved one has a difficult time:

- Remembering old or new information
- Staying on topic and taking turns in conversation
- Planning and performing daily activities
- Focusing on a task
- Problem solving
- Controlling inappropriate comments

Before discharge from the hospital, your treatment team will provide you and your family with specific strategies to assist with these challenges during caregiver training. Below are some general strategies caregivers can use to support a stroke survivor experiencing cognitive changes.

Tips for Success:

- Create a familiar routine by doing tasks in the same place and at consistent times.
- Use a written checklist as a visual reminder for the routine.
- Minimize distractions when performing a task.
- Before performing an activity with your loved one, say your plan out loud, then perform the activity.
- Reflect on how the task went (what went well, what to improve).
- Provide one-step instructions.

- Use gestures, demonstration and non-verbal communication if your loved one has a difficult time understanding spoken language. Refer to your speech and language pathologist for details.
- Allow more time for your loved one to process and begin the instruction before repeating or providing another instruction.
- Keep tasks simple.
- Do one part of a task at a time.
- Allow time to rest between activities.
- Have patience when communicating and assisting with daily activities.
- Provide positive feedback for your loved one's effort and performance.
- Talk to your occupational therapist to develop a list of self-care, home management and leisure tasks that can be performed to improve recovery.

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