



Nate's Story

Quick recap

Nate, a 27-year-old personal trainer who had a stroke at age 13 affecting his right side mobility and speech, shared his recovery journey and how he adapted to pursue education in exercise science and public health despite ongoing physical limitations. The group discussion included Crystal sharing about her daughter McKayla who recently had a stroke during a parade, with both families discussing the challenges of rehabilitation and returning to normal activities. Nate offered insights about his experiences with anxiety, driving adaptations, and rehabilitation strategies, while emphasizing the importance of pushing through recovery exercises and finding ways to adapt to limitations.

Summary

Young Stroke Survivors Support Group

Nate introduces himself to the group as a 27-year-old who had a stroke at age 13. Crystal shares that McKayla is feeling anxious because she scratched part of her surgical scar on her head, while Derek mentions his son is currently in 18 hours of therapy per week.

Teenage Stroke Survivor's Recovery Journey

Nate shares his experience of having a stroke in his left MCA affecting the Broca's area of his brain when he was 13 years old in 8th grade, which took away his right side mobility and ability to speak. He describes the onset during gym class, his collapse on the field, and being airlifted to Children's Hospital in DC after initially being taken to Shady Grove Hospital. Nate explains his rehabilitation journey, attending physical, occupational, and speech therapy daily for five months, during which he made gradual improvements, and eventually returning to school with assistive devices including an ankle-foot orthotic (AFO).



Personal Trainer's Stroke Recovery Journey

Nate shares that he is a personal trainer who owns his own business despite having had a cryptogenic stroke in his left middle cerebral artery, which affected the right side of his body. He explains that his arm remains the most affected area, with limited mobility and some nerve pain, while his foot has recovered better, noting that larger muscles typically recover first after a stroke. Nate demonstrates his current limitations, showing how he can partially raise his arm but struggles to fully open his hand without assistance.

Stroke Recovery Experiences and Rehabilitation

Crystal shares that McKayla had a stroke on March 17th while baton twirling in a Saint Patrick's Day parade, and was taken to the ER afterward. Nate discusses his recovery after his stroke at age 27, focusing on learning to play soccer with his left foot since his right foot was affected. He also mentions using a TENS unit for rehabilitation 3-4 times a week for about 15-20 minutes at a time, acknowledging the difficulty of relearning basic movements like opening his hand.

Nate's Athletic Journey and Career

Nate explains how he adapted his soccer playing style after his injury by focusing on positioning rather than running. He also tried weightlifting in high school, which he practiced five days a week and eventually led to his career as a personal trainer. Nate shares that he pursued a bachelor's degree in exercise science, despite initially thinking it wouldn't involve much science or math, and is now working on a master's degree in public health with a concentration in physical activity at UMD.



Post-Stroke Identity and School Adjustments

Nate shares that after his stroke, he experienced significant anxiety but not depression, particularly feeling self-conscious about his changed gait and worried that others would immediately identify him as a stroke survivor. He mentions that his personality became more closed off for several years, especially when he realized the long-term implications of his stroke as he approached college. Crystal discusses her daughter McKayla's situation, noting that while McKayla is comfortable mentioning her brain surgery, her friends don't understand what a stroke is but likely notice changes in her. Crystal explains that she had McKayla return to school part-time for the final five weeks of the school year to secure an individualized education program (IEP), as McKayla was previously a high-performing student.

Stroke Recovery and Encouragement

Nate shares his experience of having a stroke at a young age, explaining that while his speech and physical abilities were affected, his mind remained sharp. He discusses how the stroke made him seem more mature for his age, which he uses to make better decisions. Crystal mentions that her daughter McKayla is trying to return to baton twirling, which requires using both sides of the body, presenting a challenge for Nate who has limited use of one side. Nate encourages McKayla, acknowledging the difficulty of her situation but assuring her that things will improve over time.

Post-Stroke Recovery and Adaptation

Nate shares his experience with driving after a stroke, explaining how he made it a mission to continue driving despite challenges, even choosing a manual car.



When asked what he wishes his parents had done differently, Nate mentions he wishes he had been pushed harder with physical therapy and exercises during the critical first six months of recovery, though he acknowledges the difficulty in balancing pushing a child who has just had a stroke. He also discusses how his aphasia affected his reading and writing abilities for about three years after his stroke, but eventually his interest in reading returned, particularly with fantasy and sci-fi books that helped him escape negative feelings.