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Paul Berger & Stephanie Mensh's Stroke Survivor
NEWS & ATTITUDE FOR YOU - WINTER 2018
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<http://twitter.com/#!/PauleBerger>

### Catch up on last year's newsletter! Now posted at:  
<http://strokesurvivor.com/newsletter.html> ###

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Please FORWARD this newsletter to your friends and  
colleagues who would benefit from these tips. Click it  
forward to people in your stroke club, volunteer groups,  
place of worship, community services and neighbors, too!  
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- 1. NEWS: RESEARCH on Stroke Recovery & Rehabilitation:  
    Arm Therapy Using Virtual Reality

Virtual reality devices seem to be as effective as  
conventional therapy by a physical or occupational therapist  
for treating mild to severe muscle weakness or impairment in  
the wrists, hands or upper arms of individuals who had  
recently suffered a stroke.

Researchers in Norway divided 120 patients within about a  
month of their strokes, average age of 62, into a test group  
who received 1-hour sessions of virtual therapy 4 to 5 times  
a week for 4 weeks, and a control group who received the  
same treatment from OTs or PTs.

The participants used a screen and gloves with sensors to  
play several games that incorporated arm, hand and finger  
movements, adapted to the person's abilities. Substantial  
functional improvements were seen in both the virtual and  
OT/PT treatment groups. The results were the same, meaning  
that more choices could be available for treatment.

To read the press release from the American Academy  
of Neurology (AAN):  
<https://tinyurl.com/AAN-Virt-PT-Press>

To read the study details & results published in the  
December 12, 2017, issue of "Neurology":  
<https://tinyurl.com/AAN-Virt-PT-Abstr>

For additional resources to help you find information on medical, health, rehabilitation, recovery, self-empowerment, and more, we have collected our favorite links at: [http://www.strokesurvivor.com/resource\\_links.html](http://www.strokesurvivor.com/resource_links.html).

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Do you wonder how I look & sound? Meet me at my video page: <http://strokesurvivor.com/video.html>

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2. PAUL'S TIPS FOR SURVIVORS:

A New Place to Live: Part 2: Survivor's Bathroom

Two winters ago, we decided to move from our house to an apartment condo, and talked about how we made the decision in our previous newsletter (Fall 2017). A key feature of the new place was our ability to modify the bathrooms to make them safe and accessible.

We used our accessible bathrooms in our old house as a model. We gave our contractor photos and measurements from our old bathroom. For the master bathroom, we replaced the bathtub with a roll-in shower with fold-down seat, hand-held showerhead and grab bars inside and outside the shower.

Because it is an apartment building, we could not move the plumbing. So, we could not install a prefabricated ADA compliant shower unit, like the one we had in our old house, since the drain did not line up. We would need to custom build the new shower, and move the wall between the bathroom and master closet about one foot into the closet.

Like many bathrooms, the door was too narrow, so we widened it. The ADA standards say doorways should be 32 inches, but our accessibility consultant said doors only need to be wider than the wheelchair we use. He said most wheelchairs and walkers are about 26 inches wide, so an opening of 28 inches would work. Our contractor installed a regular door frame and door. If I need to use a wheelchair in the future, it will fit.

I have problems with standing up, and need a grab bar near the toilet. In our old house, the toilet was near a wall, but the new bathroom is larger, and the toilet is in the middle of the room.

My physical therapist, Susan, told me about a secure ceiling-to-floor-type pole that could be placed anywhere in the room without attaching to the wall or floor. So when the renovations were finished, I showed the contractor where to place the pole, and it works great.

The toilet is considered accessible, since the seat is 19 inches from the floor. And we have a free-standing toilet roll holder that can be placed in easy reach.

I also use a small chair to complete some of my morning routine. It is a lightweight wrought iron with a washable padded back and seat.

For the other smaller bathroom, we chose an easy, very affordable approach. We kept the bathtub, but replaced the

showerhead with a handheld showerhead with a long a hose. The one we found in Home Depot was reasonably priced and has a magnetic attachment so it snaps easily into place for someone who wants a stationary showerhead.

We have a lightweight adjustable transfer tub bench that provides a safe and easy seat for me. It has a long padded seat that extends across the tub with 2 legs inside and 2 legs on the floor, with a sturdy backrest. I tuck the shower curtain around me to keep the water in the tub. This gives me a second option if something goes wrong with the plumbing in the master bathroom.

Resources:

Examples of ADA shower stalls like our old one:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ADA-shw-stall>

Transfer tub bench like mine:  
<https://tinyurl.com/Tub-bench-like-mine>

Our next newsletter will cover some of the modifications we made to the kitchen.

Do you have a tip to share with others? Send it to me at [Paul@strokesurvivor.com](mailto:Paul@strokesurvivor.com) and we may include it in our next newsletter.

Other insights and tips for coping with life and taking control of your recovery after stroke are available on my website at <http://www.strokesurvivor.com>.

\*\*\* Looking for even more inspiration & solutions for survivors? Read, "Conquering Aphasia & Stroke TODAY! Vol. 1: Paul Berger's Guide for Stroke Survivors"  
<http://tinyurl.com/ConqAphasia-Stroke-Vol-1>

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3. STEPHANIE'S TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:  
A New Place to Live: Part 2: Caregiver's Bathroom

Over 30 years ago, when Paul had his stroke, his OT and PT drilled in the need for a safe bathroom, regardless of how much progress he made. For 15 years, this meant a transfer tub bench. Then, we were fortunate to be able to add an accessible bathroom to our old house, with a pre-fab accessible shower unit.

To me, the biggest problem with accessible showers is that they do not come with doors or shower curtains and the water never seems to stay in the shower. Water on the floor seems as big a hazard as climbing over an edge. Throwing towels on the floor seems just as dangerous. Plus, Paul would not be able to take his shower without my help.

So, in our old house, we installed a custom shower door that unfortunately cost as much as the unit itself.

In remodeling our new condo, I learned a few more things about making a bathroom accessible and easier for the caregiver:

- \* Work with a contractor who has experience in apartments and older homes, and who has really good bathroom tile guys and plumbers. They handmade the

the shower floor for a very low threshold and to slope into the existing drain.

\* Use a shower curtain. It is safer & easier to fit into a small space than a glass or plastic door & is more accessible, because you can pull it one way to enter and the other way to exit.

\* Use a weighted shower curtain. You may need to install a flexible "dam" strip along the bottom and possibly up the sides of the shower to catch the shower curtain so the water doesn't go out.

\* Lower the rod so that the bottom of the weighted shower curtain overlaps the floor a couple of inches, again to keep the water in.

\* Build the entrance to the shower with a couple of inches on each side and install the rod inside the shower, again to keep the water in.

\* Reinforce all the walls in the shower so you can safely and securely attach the fold-down seat and grab bars. This can be a little tricky around the plumbing for the showerhead and controls, so you need to measure and calculate the placement of the grab bar, possibly using a longer one.

\* Use a lightweight non-skid bath mat over the threshold to prevent slips. You might need to cut a few inches off a regular shower-size mat.

\* Reinforce the walls around the toilet for grab bar placement, whether or not you install grab bars now. This gives you the option in the future.

\* You can buy grab bars that match the design of your bath fixtures in many finishes and colors.

Resources:

Our contractor: Patryk Koj, Zone Construction. He works in the Maryland-DC-Virginia area and has experience with other accessible bathrooms, kitchens, etc.  
[http://www.zoneconstruction.biz/Home\\_Page.php](http://www.zoneconstruction.biz/Home_Page.php)

Weighted shower curtains, dam systems and other accessible bathroom and home products:  
<http://www.accessibleconstruction.com/services/bathrooms/>

Our next newsletter will cover some of the modifications we made in the kitchen.

\*\*\* Looking for even more inspiration & solutions for spouses and families? Read, "Conquering Aphasia & Stroke for Caregivers, Vol. 2: Stephanie Mensh's Guide for Caregivers"  
<http://tinyurl.com/Stroke-Caregiver-E-book>

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4. PAUL'S FAVORITES:  
Easy One-handed Holding Hooks

In my bathroom, I use large, sturdy suction hooks that grab onto the wall with a click & release that are easy for me to place on the tile walls with one hand -- the OXO Good

Grips StrongHold Suction Hook.

I use mine to hang my bath towels outside the shower in easy reach, and my long-handled scrub brush and wash clothes inside the shower.

No tools needed to install. To see one like mine:  
<https://tinyurl.com/Bath-hook-like-mine>

For details on other Paul-tested helpful books and products, visit:  
[http://www.strokesurvivor.com/reading\\_list.html](http://www.strokesurvivor.com/reading_list.html) and  
[http://www.strokesurvivor.com/lifestyle\\_products.html](http://www.strokesurvivor.com/lifestyle_products.html)

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** Cost-Conscious Aphasia & Speech Therapy in the Comfort
of Your Home **

Interested in an intensive aphasia program, but concerned about cost? The value and effectiveness of intensive aphasia treatment have been well researched and documented. And, you know that aphasia recovery demands frequent treatment and rigorous practice.

Try Aphasia Toolbox. Visit:
<http://aphasiatoolbox.com/>

Contact Bill Connors at:
bill@aphasiatoolbox.com or phone: 724-831-8353

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5. EATING FOR STROKE HEALTH  
Tasty Veges With One Hand

Roasted vegetables are easy to make and provide a tasty and healthy addition to your lunch or dinner. Many grocery stores now provide pre-cut fresh vegetables, like squash, bell peppers, zucchini, and Brussel sprouts. You can also roast your favorite frozen veges, like carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, and corn.

You can roast a few trays of veges to reheat later in the week or use cold to jazz up a salad. If I am roasting more than a pound, I use a second tray so I can lift it easily with one hand.

There are many recipes for roasting veges. One that I like was posted to the New York Times recently. The article said that the key to roasting all kinds of vegetables is to know the right temperature for cooking them. Dense, low-moisture vegetables like the roots and squashes in this recipe need lower heat and more time in the oven than vegetables with more moisture, like eggplant or zucchini.

The NYT recipe calls for:

- \* 2 to 3 pounds fresh root or dense vegetable, cut into 1-inch chunks or wedges: carrots, beets, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, radishes, rutabaga, winter squashes
- \* Oil (olive, coconut or grapeseed)
- \* Salt and pepper

To prepare: Heat oven to 425 degrees. Toss vegetables with

oil, salt, and pepper. Roast, 30 minutes to an hour, stirring at least once or twice during roasting for even cooking and browning.

To make it a meal, the NYT article suggests serving the roasted veges with fried eggs and/or yogurt, ground black pepper and your favorite fresh herbs on top.

Resources:

Roasted Vegetables Recipe from the NYT  
<https://tinyurl.com/NYTroast-vege-like-min>

For details on other Paul-tested helpful kitchen, shopping, and eating tips, visit:  
[http://www.com/lifestyle\\_products.html](http://www.com/lifestyle_products.html)

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6. WHAT'S NEW on the Stroke Survivor.com web site.

We're adding helpful new things to our web site all the time:

\* Aphasia Hope Foundation

We have many useful links for survivors, families and professionals on rehabilitation, motivation, and to regain fulfillment posted to our Resource Links pages. Visit:  
[http://www.strokesurvivor.com/resource\\_links.html](http://www.strokesurvivor.com/resource_links.html) and  
<http://www.strokesurvior.com>

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\*\*\* PERFECT GIFTS FOR STROKE SURVIVORS & CAREGIVERS Paul's best-selling books \*\*\*

\*\*\* FUN & EASY READING !! \*\*\*

Follow Paul's adventures and his creative, positive approach to living a full life after stroke...way beyond rehab!!

A WORLD-WIDE FAVORITE for SURVIVORS, SUPPORT GROUPS & BOOK CLUBS:

[1] "How to Conquer the World With One Hand...And an Attitude"  
[http://strokesurvivor.com/conquer\\_the\\_world.html](http://strokesurvivor.com/conquer_the_world.html)  
<http://tinyurl.com/HowToConquerWorld-Kindle>

BE CREATIVE...AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MUST-READ:  
[2] "How to Conquer Hobbies With One Hand: Stroke Survivor Paul Berger's 50 Tips & Tools to Make Things"  
<http://strokesurvivor.com/hobbies.html>  
<http://tinyurl.com/HowToConquerHobbies-Kindle>

SET NEW GOALS: IF PAUL CAN DO IT...  
[3] "You Can Do It! 105 Thoughts, Feelings, & Solutions to Inspire You"  
[http://strokesurvivor.com/you\\_book.html](http://strokesurvivor.com/you_book.html)  
<http://tinyurl.com/YouCanDoIt-Kindle>

E-BOOKS - BEST SURVIVOR & CAREGIVER TIPS..any time, anywhere!  
"Conquering Aphasia & Stroke" - 3 VOLUME SERIES  
\* Vol. 1: Paul's Guide for Stroke Survivors

<http://tinyurl.com/E-Book-Vol-1>  
<http://tinyurl.com/ConqAphasia-Stroke-Vol-1>

\* Vol. 2: Stephanie's Guide for Caregivers  
<http://tinyurl.com/E-Book-Vol-2>  
<http://tinyurl.com/ConqAphas-Strk-CaregVol-2>

\* Vol. 3: More Guidance for Survivors & Caregivers  
<http://tinyurl.com/E-Book-Vol-3>  
<http://tinyurl.com/MoreConqAphas-Strk-Vol-3>

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Contact us at Paul@strokesurvivor.com or 703-241-2375.
Special rates for newsletter & web: www.strokesurvivor.com!

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Would you like to view a previous month's newsletter? Visit our newsletter archive at:
<http://www.strokesurvivor.com/newsletter.html>

Lots more stuff at: <http://www.strokesurvivor.com>

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7. Stroke/Aphasia Reading problems?

After a stroke, many people have reading and other language problems, known as "aphasia." Hearing a sentence read aloud helps to understand it. You can hear this newsletter read aloud while each word is highlighted on the computer screen with the FREE text reader software described at:
http://www.strokesurvivor.com/disability_access.html
or <http://www.naturalreaders.com>

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