

Quick Guide To AT HOME EXERCISE

More “Tools” For My Recovery

My recovery has been judged by most to be my ability to eventually stand and walk without aids or assistance.

We got things started by doing light exercises in my hospital bed. I gradually moved to the side of my bed at home, and then standing next to my bed to perform my daily exercises.

Once strong enough, I used my walker to take short walks in the neighborhood and local parks. Eventually, I walked with a cane, and then without even the cane !

This accomplished, I was able to build my strength and confidence to the point where I could finally go to the local gym for a real workout.



This Quick Guide will cover my

Exercise At Home

On The Bed

Standing Next To Bed

Portable Equipment

Exercise At The Gym

Portable Equipment

Stationary Equipment

This combination of exercise venues formed the necessary path to my physical recovery.

Quick Guide Summary

My journey to recovery was unprecedented in my family. Up until my Stroke, no one in my close family had ever been so completely dependent on the help of others. With little warning, we were now required to work closely together on a still growing list of things we had previously taken for granted.

Our Journey Begins Together

I came home from the Acute Rehabilitation Hospital not being able to move my stroke leg and foot, and limited use of my stroke arm and hand. I was completely dependent on my Caregivers. This page includes a detailed inventory of the things **I COULD DO** and **COULD NOT DO** for myself on returning home.

Adjusting To Caregiving

For my Recovery to be successful, adjustments had to be made by me, and my caregivers, in our Activities and Schedule, and most importantly our Attitudes - mine in particular. Here we cover how we adjusted our attitudes toward each other, our activities and when best to perform the strict new criteria for keeping from having a second stroke. All of which combined to create a **NEW NORMAL** in our shared lives.

Organizing My Home Recovery Team

It was vital that my Caregivers and I worked as a team to ensure my Recovery was a success. We clearly delineated what I **NEEDED** and what was **EXPECTED** of us all. This included our specific assignments. Plus, the help I needed in sitting and standing, managing our sleep, managing my medications and nourishments, and the unique challenges with regard for my Activities Of Daily Living (ADLs).

Who Did What / When

My Caregivers, and I shared **RESPONSIBILITIES** in my homecare and recovery. They included these detailed responsibilities:

Safety	Stroke Awareness	Privacy	Relationships	ADLs	Finances
Appointments /Record Keeping	Medications	Rehabilitation	Transportation	My Environment	

All of these and some of the Special Considerations we've noted made the difference in my caregiving.

Equipment For My Caregiving

We shared the research, planning and procurement needed for **EQUIPPING** my recovery functions. We have detailed each of those items that proved necessary and valuable in my Caregiving. These details include the why, what, where, and how of:

Toileting

Transport

Assisted Walking

Our Safety

We wanted to get all of these items as soon as possible so as not to put any undue strain on helping with my recovery. As a result, all of the items we share in this guide we purchased. It is possible that some of these items could have been provided by some government agency, but while already facing supply chain challenges, we didn't want to encounter further delay by applying and waiting for government assistance.

Bed Exercises



Simple Routines At First

I could do a few arm exercises in my wheelchair. And, in the hospital I could get my heart rate up by getting myself to and from therapies. But really, for the first few months the bed (hospital or home) was the most comfortable place to exercise. It was soft and secure, with enough room to stretch out, especially when I got home to my queen size bed. On the bed I was able to perform a series of low impact exercises that would to focus on:

**Muscle Tone
Coordination
Deep Breathing
Increased Heart Rate**

This was also my way of attempting to send signals to individual parts of my body to encourage their reception and a measurable response from.

Fingers & Hands

Neck & Arms

Legs & Feet

Abdominal Muscles !

These movements went beyond the mere stretches I had already performed in my warm up. The exercises I invented would concentrate on muscle tone and coordination. Strength exercises would come later when I could safely sit up (and later stand, assisted) on the edge of my bed.

Fingers

Actually my exercising started in the hospital when I was given a squishy ball to help get coordination back in my stroke hand. (Everyone there were surprised by the strength of my grip, even as I could not hit my nose with my finger.) Looking back, it is remarkable just how valuable 10 fingers can be in nearly every thing I would do for the next several months. At home I added a 7 inch inflatable Pilates® ball to not only my finger workouts, but many more bed bound exercises.



Hands

Again, in the hospital, among the first body parts for me to exercise were the ISOMETRIC push and pull of my hands. The coordination of my stroke hand and arm had come back strong early in my recovery. Still, as I expanded my bed exercises I was reminded how important a set of strong hands would be to a full set of exercise routines, especially as they were eventually to handle and hold a growing list of exercise equipment and paraphernalia.

Bed Exercises

Simple Routines At First

Feet

You will recall, I could still barely move my Stroke(right foot) when I got home. And I could not wiggle my toes at all. Ankle rotations, helped me to keep sending concentrated signals to my foot. As you can imagine it took a long while to see appreciable movement in my Stroke foot. I started with any movement possible, building strength and coordination. To this day, getting my Stroke foot to respond is still my daily challenge. It reminds me that I am still in this . . . for the long haul !

Toe Points

Reps:10

Sets: 2

Hold 3 Sec

Daily: Several



Ankle Rotation

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Hold 3 Sec

Daily: 1



Legs

When I returned home I could, with a little help, lift my legs up on to the bed from a sitting position, and slide them around a bit. It took a little extra effort to get into my first bed exercise position for the Clamshell. Again, it was important I engaged my abs through each set.

Clamshell

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Hold 3 Sec

Daily: 1



Hip Rotations

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Daily: 1



Bed Exercises

Simple Routines At First

Legs

I wanted to strengthen my legs in every direction possible. The scissor, was especially difficult at first because I was fighting gravity. But, over time (alot of time) I could eventually raise my Stroke leg and hold it up to a count of 5 before steadily lowering it. And yes, this took a lot of time and repetitions.

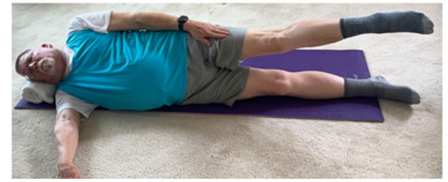
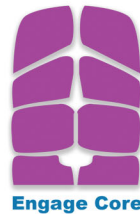
Scissors

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Hold 3 Sec

Daily: 1



The assisted leg lift was especially challenging in the beginning. Raising the other knee made a huge difference over the traditional leg lift. My stroke leg was quite wobbly in the beginning, waving all around. But, with perseverance and patience, I was able to finally steady it up at a 45 degree angle.

Assisted Leg Lifts

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Daily: 1



I really liked the leg crossovers. This really got my heart rate up. The key to this exercise was keeping the small of my back flat, even as my toe reached the opposite side of my body.

Crossovers

Reps:10 L / R

Sets: 2

Daily: 1



While challenging, the Bridge is very effective overall since you have to engage your feet, legs, core, arms and neck to raise up to the full 45 degree angle and hold it for the full 5 seconds.

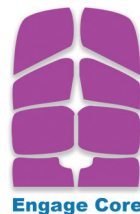
Supine Bridge

Reps:10

Sets: 2

Hold 5 Sec

Daily: 1



Sitting Exercises

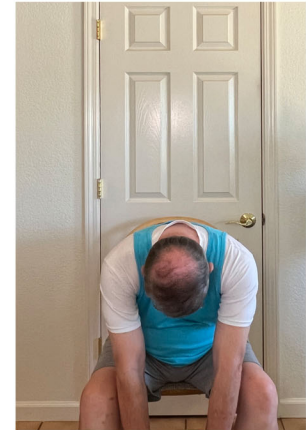


Applying Leverage

Once I was strong enough to sit on the edge of my bed at home, I could finally add my feet and legs to the list of body parts that I could exercise with vigor and vitality. Sitting on the bed (and later a chair) gave me the leverage to begin working my feet and legs against some serious resistances - gravity and the floor. And, it added a much wider range of motion in my arms, torso and legs. Eventually these parts combined to give me enough leverage to put exacting pressures on my feet, and really flex the large muscles in my legs. The strengthening of my feet and legs was vital to my standing successfully.

Expanded Stretches

As in all exercises, exercising on the bed's edge still required a period of stretching. I could do only so many stretches laying in bed. However, now my seat was firmly planted, I could get the leverage to maximize a fully range of warm up stretches from a seated position. These were the three stretches I most favored in a sitting position. Set my abs, stretch to fullest extend and slowly return with tension.



Arms

Seated in a kitchen chair, I had a greater range of motion with my arms. To capitalize on this I raised the weight of my dumbbells to 5 lbs and added to those dumbbell routines I had mastered in bed.



Dumbbell Curls

Weight: 5 lbs.
Reps:10 L and R
Sets: 2
Daily: Once



Horizontal Raise

Weight: 5 lbs.
Reps:10
Sets: 2
Daily: Once



Vertical Raise

Weight: 5 lbs.
Reps:10
Sets: 2
Daily: Once

These are the stretches and exercises I developed for me, for where I was in my early recovery and still confined mostly to my bed. Other Survivors are encouraged to research and devise, with the help of their PT therapist, sets of their own. The object is to arrest the deconditioning of the major muscles that began immediately following the stroke event.

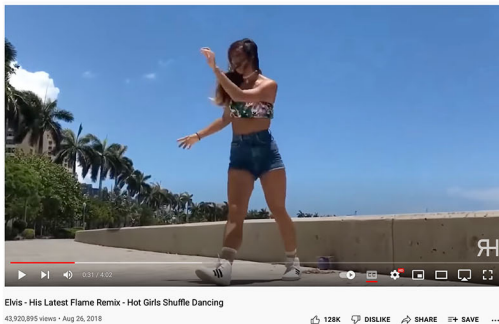
Got My Juices Going

At home, laying in my bed knowing I had to get my fitness routine going, I was stuck for some real motivation. Something that would get my juices flowing. My inspiration was music. It instantly made me feel up; and it offered me a beat. So, I opened my **YouTube** app and dialed up these tunes that would inspire me to move.



TOTO - AFRICA KM Music

To get me started I played TOTO - AFRICA. With gentle beat of the popular tune, my body came alive and I couldn't help but start tapping my good foot. This was to be opening tune in my daily "workout" collection of music. Over its 5 min of gentle sounds I would begin to slowly stretch my entire body in preparation to begin my exercises.



Elvis Remix - Latest Flame - Shuffle Dance

Next I would punch up my old friend "The King". With this new shuffle beat I would begin working my arms, then my good leg to a rhythmical beat. The beginnings of a real workout.



Step Back In Time - Dance Mashup

Later I wanted to take it to the next level. I needed a more robust beat that would keep me going for a full 8 or 9 minutes.



All Cardio - Pop Rhythms For A Real Workout

On those days when I wanted to really get my heart thumping I would stand next to my bed, holding my grannie walker and jiggle and soft step to a thumping 132 beats per minute.

Selecting tunes and rhythms that you like can help you find and maintain your dedication to the earliest rehab exercises.

These dance numbers became old and dear friends as my recovery progressed. They inspired me nearly every day to instill in my mind and body the idea that I could and would get better. They helped me to move from laying on my back when I could do little more than swing my arms; to sitting on the edge of my bed bouncing up to a standing position. And later they got BOTH of my feet moving with **strength and coordination** that grew more powerful and deliberate . . . every day !

Standing Exercises

Standing

The ability to STAND unaided was one of the most significant developments in my recovery. It meant that I had the confidence in my ability to perform a whole new set of ADLs on my own, first with only my walker to get me to and from my bed - only my own schedule ! Eventually I graduated to being able to stand to toilet, bathe, dress, cook, garden and work in my shop. It was a lasting taste of freedom.



From the early weeks of my recovery . . . to **STANDING** outside the door of my first hospital room **EXACTLY ONE YEAR** to the day that I was discharged and transferred to Acute Rehab in Vallejo !



The most important standing exercise was raising myself up from a sitting position on the edge of the bed or chair. At first I used my walker to steady myself upon rising. I would pause. Check for dizziness, and stand up. This would not have been possible without several weeks of concentrated BED exercises designed to strengthen my CORE sufficiently enough to engage the large muscles of my thighs.

So, in effect, there is only one standing exercise - STANDING. I repeated this one exercise at least a dozen times a day, in reps of 10, until I could pop upright off the bed, or a kitchen chair without bouncing or shoving off with my hands. It took me more than a month of repeating this one exercise every day, but of all my exercises, then or since, I never tired of performing this exercise and the great sense of achievement it gave me again and again.

Repetitions, and Neuroplasticity (The Brain's Ability To Re-Wire)

There is a direct connection between exercise and the re-training of the brain in Stroke Recovery. I learned in the hospital that any part of my body I wished to recover would take thousands of repetitive moves of any muscle set, to make significant and measurable progress. In my case, the neuroplastic improvements in my stroke hand/arm came more quickly. I'm told this is likely because my arm is closer to my brain. This could explain why it has taken much longer for me to realize improvement in the strength and movement of my stroke leg/foot. Improvement is possible because as my brain cells are regenerating and re-establishing neural connections around the now cells killed during my Stroke. Each of my tens of thousands of movements has encouraged the surrounding brain cells to build new neural pathways.

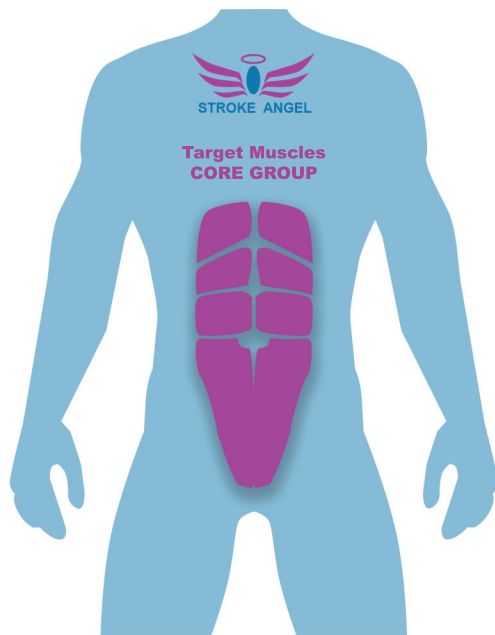
Spotlight CORE MUSCLES



The Root Of Nearly All Body Movement

The Core

I remembered early in my recovery that the abdominal core muscle group was vitally connected to nearly every movement of my body. The core is relied on for so many of the movements we take for granted every day.



Rolling Over In Bed

Key to repositioning upper/lower body.

Sitting Up In Bed

Raises, and Holds Me Upright

Standing Up From Sitting

Key to repositioning upper/lower bod

Balancing On My Bike

Keeps Me Anchored To Seat

Toileting

Sitting, Exertion

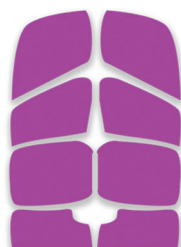
Bending Over

To Tie My Shoe

The abdominal core group of muscles are paired from the groin upward to just below the breast bone. I like to think of my core as the LEAD GROUP in most movements of my larger muscles. The core group is so very important to good posture, keeping the torso upright and taking stress off organs behind the abdomen.

There was really no other more important muscle group in my recovery. In fact, they had to be toned and ready before I could sit and stand again without external support. Now many months into my recovery I call on this group of muscles in every gym exercise I perform. And, they have taken on new importance as they help me to keep centered on my road and eBikes.

Throughout the review of the many exercises I perform in recovery, with an emphasis on the early ones I performed in bed, I have posted a reminder to be certain to engage my core before and during the duration of the individual exercise. The symbol below is my reminder.



Engage Core

Home Workout



With the exception of the stress ball and piece of rubber tubing I had with me in the hospital, I basically had to equip my home gym from scratch. Nearly all of my “kit” I ordered from Amazon, as it was difficult to shop around for the things I needed. I offer them here only as a reference, and my perspective on what I needed to equip a Home Gym for my recovery.

Items That Made The Difference For Me



Useful during hospital stay.



Tynctway 32 Oz Water Bottle
Motivational 32oz/ Time Marker
About \$12 on Amazon



KDG Hand Strengthener
Adjust 10-130lbs w/ Grip Count
About \$12 on Amazon



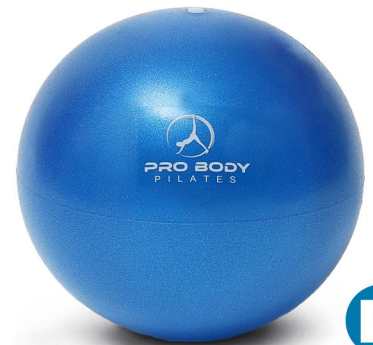
Fanwer Finger Exerciser
Strengthens Grim / Massager
About \$10 on Amazon



BalanceForm Medicine Ball
9 in 8 lb Dimple Grip
About \$35 on Amazon



Atercel Workout Gloves
Vented. Toweling On Each Back
About \$15 on Amazon



ProBody Pilates Exercise Ball
9 in. Breath Inflate
About \$12 on Amazon



VEICK Exercise Bands
5 Band Set, 10-50lb Resistance
About \$27 on Amazon



Gaia Dumbbells 3 & 5 lb
Vinyl Coated Sold Individually
About \$8 & 12 on Amazon



Coobons Fitness Strap Kit
Full Body Resistance Workout
About \$75 on Amazon

RECOVERY AT THE GYM



Finding The Right Gym

I worked long and hard at home to improve my health and fitness, but it wasn't until I found a gym that could appreciate my situation that I finally felt the last piece of my puzzle could be put in place. I was blessed yet again by my discovery of Anytime Fitness-AF, just a few blocks from my home. AF is a small but fully equipped boutique-style gym with a staff of Personal Trainers.

Finding The Right Staff

When I started going to AF I was in my 7th month of recovery. I had just graduated from a walker to a cane, and not yet driving. I was immediately sold on AF and the in-gym experience. After my consult with the manager, I was convinced this staff could appreciate what I had gone through and the special approach they would make to rebuilding the strength, balance, maneuverability, and confidence to rebuild my physical form.

Finding The Right Motivation

In spite of the gains my home exercise had provided, it didn't feel like I was getting the large muscle development I needed to stand for vigorous outdoor activities; and the fine motor skills that still evaded me in my quest to drive safely. I wanted to again be able to swing a golf club and tennis racket. And, I wanted to be able to drive myself to these activities.

Finding The Right Trainer

I realized there was one other advantage to being a gym client. My AF gym has what I consider to be a first rate Personal Trainer. What impresses me most is Daehun's attention to techniques that help to prevent injury during any exercise. This is critical when working with a client that has suffered a serious brain injury and requires an extra measure of careful instruction and guidance. Couple this to his sincere desire to see me succeed in achieving "our goals" is another huge blessing along my Journey Of Recovery !

There are over 5,000 Anytime Fitness locations in the U.S.
Each offering the opportunity to conveniently work out 24/7.



"Sarah"
Manager
Anytime Fitness, Rocklin, CA



"Daehun"
Certified Personal Trainer
Anytime Fitness, Rocklin, CA