



Kate's Journey

BY W. REED MORAN

KATE ADAMSON HAS SOMETHING important to say to stroke survivors and their families. And a large part of her message is how she is now able to say anything at all.

In 1995, at the age of 33, Kate's life seemed totally in control. A New Zealand native, she was living the American dream — a five bedroom house in a Southern California beach town, a loving husband and two healthy and happy young daughters. She exercised regularly, watched what she ate, and was about to start a personal training business.

One day she suddenly felt dizzy. She lost focus and balance. Within minutes, she was unable to speak or move. Doctors and nurses worked on her body, but didn't speak to her. She tried to talk. She tried to move. She felt pain, and tried to scream. Nothing happened.

Kate was in a living nightmare — totally awake and aware, yet trapped in her own body. No one knew that she was still able to think and yes, to feel pain.

The doctors inserted a breathing tube and a feeding tube, without giving her adequate pain killers. No one told her what was going on. Everyone assumed she couldn't understand.

Kate did understand two very important things: she was in serious trouble, and she had to find a way to connect with the outside world in order to survive.

Kate was lucky, she reports. "People from my church were there. My husband Steven was at my side every day, talking to me, trying to make contact. I watched as he fought with our insurance company over the phone, insisting I could make progress from what seemed an impossible condition."

Kate eventually learned she had suffered a double brain stem stroke — and that any kind of progress was far from certain. The brain stem is the area of the brain that controls body functions such as breathing, blood pressure, heartbeat, eye movements and speech. A brain stem stroke is usually fatal.

Steven closed his law practice for five months, completely devoting himself to the hope of his wife's recovery.

"Everyone has a disability. Some of them are visible, some of them aren't. It's all about what we can do, not about what we can't."

-Kate Adamson

That hope was rewarded in a small but very surprising and heroic way. "I discovered I could blink," said Kate. "I realized that if I could blink, I could 'talk' to other people. I wasn't completely helpless. In that moment, an entire world of possibilities opened up to me."

Her progress started with baby steps. "I focused on little goals, not the big picture," she said. "I just asked God to give me the strength to get me through what I



Kate has become a highly sought-after speaker on women's health issues.



Kate has appeared on CNN's Larry King Live more than once.

had to face each day. I couldn't allow myself to look back on what I'd lost, or to worry about the future."

Three months later, her focus and determination paid off. Kate had recovered enough to return to her family, in a wheelchair. "I wanted to have it all back, to go home walking," says Kate. "And it was then that I learned another important lesson."

"There is a secret to recovery from stroke or any other major life problem: Willingness. Willingness to face the facts of what is happening today, and in spite of that, to have the stubborn willingness to continue to fight."

Ten years after her stroke, Kate is a professional motivational speaker, an award-winning author, and champion of the possibility of positive change. "Near the end of my hospital treatment, and long before my life had any chance of becoming 'normal,' my husband and I decided this struggle, this journey, was much more important than just my recovery," said Kate.

And this is where Kate points the way to life-long purpose, happiness and satisfaction for herself and other stroke survivors. "The key is to find the value in helping others." Kate admits it's a leap of faith for everyone struggling with their own challenges. "Again the answer comes from willingness — the willingness to understand that helping others is the best way to help yourself."

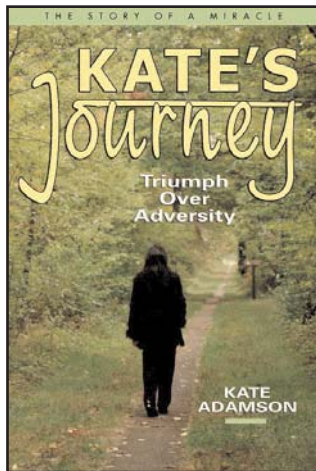
Kate's first effort was starting a stroke recovery support group, "Back on Track," with the Southern California chapter of

At National Stroke Association, we understand that stroke recovery is a lifelong journey. Immediately after your stroke, there may be things you can no longer do. Over time, you may regain function. Or you may experience new problems. To help you keep track of your changing situation, we've created the Stroke Recovery Scorecard. This useful tool allows you to rate how you are doing in a variety of different areas that can cause problems for stroke survivors. Use this scorecard as a guide to ask your doctor about your stroke recovery journey and how you can make it easier to manage. To order a free copy of the scorecard, contact National Stroke Association at www.stroke.org on the Web or call (800) STROKES.

Stroke Recovery Scorecard

Use this scorecard as a guide to talk to your doctor about your stroke recovery journey and how you can make it easier to manage. Please read each area and use the scale to rate how much difficulty you have with it.

The person filling this form out is (check one):		Difficulty Scale:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Stroke survivor	<input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver /Family member	1 = None	2 = A little	3 = Somewhat	4 = A lot	5 = Severe
How much time has passed since your last stroke? _____						
Stroke Rehab status:						
<input type="checkbox"/> In initial therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> Finished therapy and on home exercise program					
<input type="checkbox"/> Have returned to therapy	<input type="checkbox"/> Am not in therapy					
Changes in Activities and Participation		1	2	3	4	5
Communication – ability to talk with other people, write, understand what you read and what people say, and use body language. Includes aphasia, or the loss of ability to communicate normally, which may affect your ability to talk, understand, read, write or deal with numbers.						
Movement – ability and strength to walk, balance, lift and carry objects, pick up or grasp something, use public transportation, drive, move around on your own or with the help of equipment (eg, wheelchair, walker, cane) at home or in the community.						
Activity in Social, Community and Civic Life – ability and comfort level to be active in the social, community and civic events that you enjoy.						
Energy Level – fatigue or low energy, feeling worn down and exhausted. This is different from weakness, sleepiness or being over stimulated.						
Sexuality – the quality of your sexual relationship after stroke compared to how it was before the stroke. This differs from person to person.						
Support and Relationships – the ability to maintain interest in people and recreational activities, remain connected, relate with strangers, and cope with changes in how or with whom you spend time or deal with the attitudes of friends and family.						
Managing Daily Activities – managing the details of daily life, including things like looking after your health, bathing, washing hands, brushing teeth, shaving, grooming and bathing.						
Quality of Life – the ability to participate in things that are meaningful and that provide you purpose in life.						
www.stroke.org • 1-800-STROKES • (1-800-787-6537)		continued on back				



Kate Adamson recounts her amazing victory in her award-winning book, "Kate's Journey: Triumph Over Adversity." From life support to near complete recovery, hers is a miraculous story of

despair and determination, fear and faith. To order your copy of the book today, go to www.katesjourney.com on the Web or call (800) 641-KATE. Each book costs \$21.95 plus shipping and handling.

National Stroke Association. "I was amazed that I'd actually pulled it off," said Kate. "I never had anyone tell me I could do anything that mattered when I was growing up."

Kate went on to write the book, "Kate's Journey," and to appear twice before joint sessions of Congress and on multiple national television and radio broadcasts. She also speaks to conventions, churches and civic groups. "I know it's a gift to be able to speak again at all," said Kate. "It isn't always comfortable. Even now my body will tense up and sometimes an arm will suddenly fly out when I'm in the middle of talking in front of strangers."

But Kate understands the only thing that's really important is the message. "Everyone has a disability. Some of them are visible, some aren't. It's all about what we can do, not what we can't," she said.

Her final message? "Do whatever it takes to keep you inspired. Don't isolate yourself. Pick up that fifty-pound telephone and ask someone else, 'What can I do for you?'"

"Pretty soon you'll realize that while every day isn't a great day, every new day offers possibilities you never would've imagined."

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 - Drop rail for front or side access

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