

## Powerful Patient 2008 week 50

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

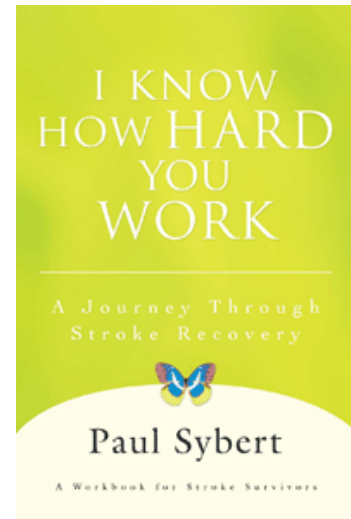
### Identifying and Recovering from Stroke

Paul Sybert shares his own experience in having an ischemic stroke (a blood clot in the brain), and working hard to recover from the experience. He and Joyce talk about how to recognize that someone is having a stroke, get immediate help, and recover.

#### 1) About Our Guest

**Paul Sybert** holds a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering. He has worked as an engineer, a software analyst and programmer, a songwriter, and a minister. Sybert currently lives in Endicott, New York.

For more about Paul, his book and his music, see <http://www.paulsybert.com>



#### 2) Recognizing a Stroke

A stroke is a "brain attack" that occurs when a blood vessel in your brain is clogged or ruptured. This interrupts the flow of blood and oxygen to your brain, and brain cells can start to die. Stroke can lead to death or long-term disability, such as partial paralysis or loss of memory, speech or other important abilities.

New treatments are available that can save lives or minimize the damage from a stroke. However, stroke victims must receive these treatments within 3 hours of the onset of stroke. And the sooner they are treated, the better their chances of full recovery. That's why it is important for everyone to know the warning signs and know what to do.

"Smile, the Stroke Song" is made freely available as a public service by MountainWings, an inspirational website. Its goal is to provide a short, memorable formula for testing whether someone you know is having a stroke.

Smile – is the smile symmetrical?

"It's a sunny day outside." – can they repeat this phrase without slurring?

Raise both hands – are both hands raised to the same level?

*Don't Wait – Don't Drive – Call 911*

This simple test is called the Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale. While it is extremely useful, it is not perfect. Additional stroke warning signs include:

- Sudden, unexplained severe headache or a change in the pattern of headaches
- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm, leg or one side of the body
- Difficulty understanding speech
- Sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye
- Unexplained dizziness, unsteadiness or falls
- Difficulty swallowing
- Loss of consciousness for seconds or minutes

*Don't Wait – Don't Drive – Call 911*

Describe the symptoms to the dispatcher. The goal is to get the person to the hospital as quickly as possible. The most successful treatment for stroke **MUST** be started within three hours of the onset of symptoms.

Paul was given the TPA (Tissue Plasminogen Activator) clot-buster drug.

See <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4751>

**3) What's it like to have a stroke?**

Brain researcher Jill Bolte Taylor studied her own stroke as it happened -- and has become a powerful voice for brain recovery. Jill Bolte Taylor got a research opportunity few brain scientists would wish for: She had a massive stroke, and watched as her brain functions -- motion, speech, self-awareness -- shut down one by one. She shares her astonishing story. See

[http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/jill\\_bolte\\_taylor\\_s\\_powerful\\_stroke\\_of\\_insight.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html)

**4) Recovery from Stroke or other brain injury**

Once the “acute” period is behind you, the recovery phase begins. It is important to listen to your doctor’s instructions – both what **TO DO**, and what **NOT TO DO**. In the early phases of recovery, it may be very important, for example, **NOT** to walk by yourself, even to go to the bathroom, because of the danger of falling. As you improve, though, there will be exercises **TO DO**, which are critically important to your recovery. It is only through persistence in doing these essential exercises that you will regain function.

Paul’s book describes his own recovery process. The recovery process can be a long one, and some functions may never get back to where you were before. Yet it is important to persevere, and do whatever you can do. Little by little, you will improve. And it takes a lot of work.

Having friends and loved ones acknowledge your little victories will help to encourage you. It helps to keep a journal – on paper or audio tape or whatever works – so that you too can see the progress. The pace may be slow, so it is helpful to be able to look back to last week or last month and see how far you have come.