

Greg Graham - AVM Superhero: How He Rebuilt Life After Losing Everything

Rebuilding Life After Stroke: Why You Can't Go Back - And Why That's the Point

There's a moment in stroke recovery that almost every survivor reaches. You look at the person you used to be. Your job, your relationships, your body, your identity, and you realise something that nobody prepared you for: you can't get that person back. The question is what you do next.

Greg Graham knows this moment intimately. An AVM (Arteriovenous Malformation), a rare tangle of blood vessels in the brain, changed the course of his life in an instant. What followed wasn't just physical recovery. It was the hardest work of rebuilding everything from the ground up.

What an AVM Stroke Takes From You

An arteriovenous malformation stroke happens when a cluster of abnormal blood vessels ruptures in the brain. Unlike ischaemic strokes caused by a clot, AVM strokes involve bleeding into the brain. The consequences depend heavily on where the bleed occurs, and for Greg, the impact was severe.

In the immediate aftermath, Greg found himself isolated. Six weeks of recovery largely alone. Relationships fractured under the weight of what had happened. The losses were not just physical; they were existential. The life he had built, piece by piece, was no longer available to him.

"I've lost everything. I don't see a way forward." This is the thought that lives underneath so much of early stroke recovery. It's not self-pity. It's the honest

reckoning that comes when the gap between who you were and who you now are becomes impossible to ignore.

Why “Getting Back to Normal” Is the Wrong Goal

The dominant narrative around stroke recovery in hospitals, in rehabilitation settings, in well-meaning conversations with family is built around return. Return to work. Return to independence. Return to your life.

But for many survivors, this framing creates a wall they can never climb. The person they’re trying to return to doesn’t exist anymore. The brain has changed. The body has changed. The world has shifted in ways that can’t be reversed.

Greg’s insight, hard-won through the kind of experience that can’t be faked, is that rebuilding life after a stroke isn’t about restoration. It’s about construction. Not returning to a previous blueprint, but laying new foundations with the materials you actually have.

What Rebuilding Actually Looks Like

Rebuilding after a stroke is rarely dramatic. It’s the accumulation of small decisions made under enormous pressure. It’s choosing to engage with rehabilitation when nothing in your body wants to cooperate. It’s finding a reason to get out of bed when the reasons that used to work have stopped working.

For Greg, the path through began with a fundamental shift in framing. Instead of measuring recovery by what had been lost, he began to ask a different question: what is actually possible from here?

That question is deceptively simple. But it’s the foundation on which real recovery is built. Because once you stop trying to recreate the past, you free up everything you have to build something new.

The Identity Question Nobody Asks

One of the least-discussed dimensions of stroke recovery is identity. Who are you now? Not in a philosophical sense, in a practical, daily, operational sense. If your work defined you, and stroke took your ability to do that work, who are you on a Tuesday morning?

Greg's experience speaks directly to this. The construction of a new identity after a stroke doesn't happen overnight. It isn't a single breakthrough moment. It's a slow, deliberate process of discovering what you still are and what you're becoming.

This is why Greg Graham calls himself the AVM Superhero. Not because recovery was easy, but because naming what you've survived and choosing to carry it with you rather than hiding from it is itself a form of strength.

Listen to the Full Conversation

Episode 405 of the Recovery After Stroke podcast is available on all major platforms. Greg's story is one that will resonate with anyone who has faced the impossible question of rebuilding when going back is not an option. You can also find more resources at Bill's book, *The Unexpected Way That A Stroke Became The Best Thing That Happened*, a practical guide to recovery and personal transformation written from lived experience.

If this show has helped you on your recovery journey, you can support it at patreon.com/recoveryafterstroke.

This blog is for informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your doctor before making any changes to your health or recovery plan.