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ALL NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

## Life After a Stroke

Lisa MacLennan was 41 and in the prime of her life. She was married with two young children, working in the disability sector, and two units away from completing a Bachelor of Social Work at University, when she was struck down by a severe stroke in 2012.

A stroke can strike at any time and without warning, so when Lisa collapsed during a lecture, everyone was in panic mode. Getting a detailed account of the day from her classmates, she says she blacked out and was comatose for the next two days. Her doctors didn't think she would survive.

"Once I woke, I knew exactly what had happened. I'd seen similar symptoms in one of the patients at work, so I knew I had survived a stroke. I couldn't talk, move or communicate what I was thinking, but my mind was still clear," said Lisa.

Family rushed from all parts of the globe to be by her side. Her daughter Ashley was 23 and her son Kurt was 14 at the time, and they found it extremely upsetting to see their mum in hospital, but they didn't leave her side.

The stroke had affected Lisa's right side of her body and the left side of her brain, which meant she had intense rehabilitation ahead of her.

Shenton Park Rehabilitation Centre was Lisa's home for the next seven months where she retrained her body to walk and speak again. This was a lonely time for Lisa as she was very isolated with only her close family able to visit.

She said, "I couldn't believe that I had lost everything. I was awesome before my stroke, I had big plans, lots of friends and had worked hard to complete my dream of being a social worker. I lost all of this and it was extremely difficult to stay motivated when stuck in my body."

Once able to move back in with her family, the friends that Lisa had once called her community had all but disappeared, but this turned around once she was introduced to MSWA. "I was nervous but excited that first time I went to MSWA's Rockingham facility. To be able to talk with people who are experiencing something similar felt amazing. I didn't realise how exhausting it was trying to fit my old life, around my new life. I've made some close friends thanks to MSWA." Lisa said.

Through the help of the experienced MSWA staff and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan, Lisa has been able to adapt her lifestyle to suit her needs. Including modifications to her car and accessing weekly physiotherapy and massage to keep her body active.



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On Tuesday's, she attends outreach sessions where she can spend time with her new friends and enjoy the morning doing creative activities. Lisa also receives domestic support three times a week, which helps her remain in her home.

"Irene my carer and now friend, has helped me in so many ways. It's the little things that I can't do anymore that can be frustrating. She's been a big part of my healing and acceptance process. She's shown me that it doesn't matter if I only have one good leg and arm, there are still things I can do to live a happy and full life."

"She was the one that got me on my bike, and I'll always be grateful for that. It was in the garden unused until she encouraged me to give it a go, and I haven't looked back since. It's given me a new-found freedom, I can pack it in the back of my car and go anywhere," she added.

Lisa's life has changed dramatically since 2012 but her determination is inspiring. She signed up for the 2018 MSWA Ocean Ride as a personal challenge and is looking forward to crossing the finish line in the 10km Family Ride.

"My children are a constant source of motivation, and my son Kurt didn't hesitate when I asked him to ride with me," said Lisa. "I'll always be grateful that I survived the stroke and have a second chance at life. Participating in the MSWA Ocean Ride will hopefully inspire others living with a neurological condition, to get back on their bike."