

From occupational therapist to stroke survivor to inspirational speaker!!



We think it's awesome that Emma Gee has taken the time to write a guest blog post. Emma is an occupational therapist, a professional speaker and a stroke survivor. In a moment, Emma's life changed from that of a professional health provider and long-distance runner to that of a stroke survivor. You can check out more about Emma at emma-gee.com

“How would you cope if you stroked at the young age of 24? Would you curl up and wish life didn't exist or would you STEP UP and choose to bounce back!”

At 24 years of age I did survive a stroke and as a full-time occupational therapist working with stroke survivors was suddenly confronted with what life was really like for my patients. In 2005, while undergoing brain surgery to remove an arteriovenous malformation (AVM) in my brainstem – a congenital deformity present at birth – I had a stroke. Thankfully I survived, but was faced a daunting list of physical challenges: I couldn't move, speak, swallow or blink. I was only 24.

Eight years into my stroke recovery, I have now reformed my identity and adapted to my life as a disabled person. During this time I have had intensive therapy – relearning how to speak and swallow in speech therapy, walk and blink in physiotherapy, adapted to my everyday activities in occupational therapy. Throughout this time, I also had to ensure I was not only physically recovering but that I was emotionally coping as well.

The emotional toll my stroke has had on my supporters and I has been huge.

I don't think I ever fathomed that the aftermath of stroke would continue for the rest of my life. I have personally found engaging in meaningful tasks like writing, yoga and swimming

has enabled me to deal with this grief better. Also, sharing my experiences with others, as both a patient and therapist, makes all that I've endured (and still do) worthwhile.

Now with this new-found insight, I have chosen to use my experiences to hopefully make a difference in others lives. I work part-time at the National Stroke Foundation but have commenced an Inspirational Speaking business at emma-gee.com. Learning to speak again post-stroke, and realizing the importance of sharing my story to help others, were the catalysts for me taking on speaking professionally.

Today, and thousands of presentations later, as an Inspirational Speaker I have had an amazing opportunity to speak to a broad client group: from healthcare (associations, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities); businesses & corporate events; community organisations; through to educational facilities. In this business I focus largely on the topics of client-centred care and resilience through my keynote presentations, workshops, writing and consultancy.

With a background in Occupational Therapy and as a Stroke Survivor, I guess I'm now a living example of what it takes to step in another's shoes and truly *bounce back* in life. Through my own business, I aim to both educate, captivate and challenge my audiences to consider what *IS* possible in their own lives. I am so passionate about enhancing client-centred service delivery and resilience in the lives of all I works with and try hard to leave my audiences inspired to bounce back and step up. To see them moving past life's hurdles to what's possible – to see is *“that it's not what happens to you that matters, it's how you choose to deal with it!”*

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<http://www.myhealthcareer.com.au/latest-news/occupational-therapy/emma-gee>